

Forging Futures with Texas Youth

Strengthening Systems of Support in Out of School Time that Will Benefit Generations to Come



Today's students need a strong ecosystem of support and robust learning opportunities that empower them to realize their full potential. Afterschool, summer, and other community-based enrichment programs that serve youth outside of school hours are essential to that ecosystem.

Out of school time (OST) programs expand learning opportunities for kids, keep them safe, and support their healthy development, while also connecting families to food, technology, healthcare, and other local resources. Moving ahead, we must build on our innovations and collaborations to meet the needs of Texas kids and families today and create a stronger future together.

[Research](#) shows students who participate in OST programs attend school more regularly, do better in school, and develop skills vital for today's economy, including teamwork, critical thinking, and communications. OST programs complement

classroom learning and support whole child [development](#), giving youth time, space, and freedom to find their passion, purpose, and voice; solve real-world problems; lead in their community; and explore [careers](#) under the mentorship of caring educators. These rich, stimulating environments spur the [brain](#) to form and strengthen connections that promote further development and learning.

But Texas has never had enough programs to serve all the families who need them. Statewide, only about [750,000 kids](#) participate in OST programs—the other 90% of kids in Texas deserve the same access to these vital programs.

Looking ahead, we must ensure OST learning opportunities for every child who wants to attend. Texas has much work to do to realize that vision and forge a future where **every** kid in **every** community is cared for, included, educated, and inspired.

TXPOST Priorities for the 88th Legislative Session

> Stem the youth mental health crisis

More than [350,000](#) young people in Texas experienced a major depressive episode in the last year, and of those, 73%—the worst rate in the country—did not receive mental health services. OST programs can help meet this need. They serve both as a fundamental setting for [healthy development](#) and as an [intervention](#) through which youth develop skills to cope with stress, use their voice, and build healthy relationships. In fact, common activities in OST programs are already aligned with promotion, prevention, and early intervention strategies. In Texas, we must recognize the OST field as a key opportunity for providing Texas youth with a solid base of supportive programming that promotes their mental health and well-being—and ensure that providers have the funding and resources needed to deliver these supports.

Protecting youth mental health

The [2021 Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health](#) encourages community-based organizations to “implement evidence-based programs that promote healthy development, support children, youth, and their families, and increase their resilience,” calling out afterschool as an example of this type of youth enrichment program.

> Increase access to high-quality OST programming

Learning depends on deep [connections](#) across a variety of skills, attitudes, and character traits, and for K-12 students, more than 80% of their time is spent [learning outside of school](#). In addition to helping youth make [gains](#) in reading and math and improving their test scores and graduation rates, OST programs offer experience and observational [tools](#) that foster positive [youth development](#) and build connections between young people and caring, engaged adults. Texas students need strong OST programs to ensure they have the support they need to succeed in school and in life. Expanding access to these critical programs will require addressing challenges identified in a 2020 poll of Texas parents who reported cost, lack of transportation, and lack of available programs as the greatest [barriers](#) to participating.

> Align and integrate education and youth development goals to maximize youth outcomes

We all agree that we want our youth to be prepared for their futures for their own sake and the sake of all Texans. With deeper integration of high-quality OST programs into educational ecosystems, we will help kids do better in school, graduate, go on to college, or serve in the military, and explore and succeed in fulfilling careers that spark their interests. We can do this by building partnerships to broaden the coalition around the table and identifying innovative opportunities to leverage diverse experiences and disparate resources in pursuit of our shared goals.

> Incentivize community partnerships to develop healthy education ecosystems

OST programs operate at the nexus of families, schools, and communities. They have strong roots in the communities they serve, often with a focus on supporting under-resourced students and families. Their relationships with families can help foster better connections with schools to address youth and community needs more sustainably, while leveraging organizational strengths on both sides. When multiple partners coordinate efforts, they are able to ensure equity in access and promote quality. Healthy ecosystems offer youth and families a continuum of learning and developmental opportunities so that every kid is seen and valued.

> Invest in infrastructure to improve the quality, sustainability, and connectivity of OST programs

No matter where a child lives in Texas, they deserve access to the same, high level of quality in their OST program. Investing in intermediary organizations as the infrastructure that supports them is the most promising strategy for achieving this. Intermediary organizations, including nonprofits working at the local, regional, and state level, are the backbone for vital direct service OST providers. They provide technical assistance and capacity building to drive quality improvement efforts; facilitate strategic partnerships across complex systems; and assimilate different data sets to tell a comprehensive story of impact. Investment in intermediary infrastructure will generate greater program sustainability and higher quality outputs to better serve, support, and engage Texas youth.

About TXPOST

The [Texas Partnership for Out of School Time](#) (TXPOST) is a statewide intermediary whose mission is to convene, educate, and advocate to improve the quality and increase the availability of out of school time (OST) opportunities for Texas youth. TXPOST works in partnership with vital leaders at local and regional levels who invest deeply in their own communities to offer professional development opportunities, engage in system building work, advocate for the OST field, and support local programs.



Strengthening the quality and availability of afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities for Texas kids.

Learn More about Out of School Time Programs in Texas

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