

Executive Summary

THE EXPANDED CLASSROOM

A report from five education- and youth-serving organizations on how Indiana can leverage the current inflection point in K–12 education to integrate out-of-school time programs with the traditional school day so that all kids have access to added learning and emerge prepared to succeed.

The COVID-19 pandemic upended K–12 education, and it won't be the same again. Prolonged building closures forced a rethinking of the K–12 school day, exposed existing gaps in student readiness, and hurt academic outcomes across the board. Between 2020 and 2023, national math scores for 13-year-olds dropped to a low not seen since 1990, threatening to cost the U.S. \$28 trillion in lifetime earnings, equivalent to shutting down the nation's economy for a year. In Indiana, only two out of every five students are proficient in math or English/Language Arts, and only three out of ten are proficient in both. These realities prompted Indiana Education Secretary Dr. Katie Jenner to convey, "The urgency is real, and requires all of us to keep our foot on the gas pedal."

This reality presents a crisis, unless action is taken to avert it. But it also presents Indiana with an opportunity to do things differently. The classroom has been the primary venue for helping students learn, build relationships, and develop skills for the workforce. But in the current era, such activities must transcend the classroom to help kids fully recover from learning loss, close longstanding achievement gaps, and prepare students for 21st-century careers. We have to leverage out-of-school time (OST)—such as afterschool and extended breaks—to engage students. For kids from affluent households, this kind of out-of-school engagement happens frequently and naturally. But for too many low-income students,



Indy Summer Learning Labs sites.



To read the full report, visit themindtrust.org/expandedclassroom or scan the QR code.

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non-school hours are spent at home and unsupervised, due to parents' work schedules and limited resources to pay for out-of-school time programming.

In Indiana and across the country, high-quality out-of-school time programs have proven to help students thrive academically and achieve long-term success. Our state is home to some long standing programs like the Boys & Girls Club of St. Joseph County and newer initiatives such as Indy Summer Learning Labs and Indiana Learns. All of these initiatives have been fueled by pandemic-era funding, and all of them are helping students achieve remarkable gains. For example, students who participated in Indy Summer Learning Labs, a five-week summer intensive program administered by The Mind Trust and United Way of Central Indiana, saw incredible gains. In 2022, the number of students participating in Indy Summer Learning Labs who tested basic or proficient grew by 25 percentage points in English and 24 percentage points in math from pre-program test to post-program test.

New federal and state funding has helped expand high-quality OST programs to serve more students since the pandemic, but access gaps remain, and the funding will run out in the next two years. For every student enrolled in a high-quality OST program in Indiana, there are three more who lack access. And the state and federal funding sources that have helped more students benefit from high-quality, out-of-school time experiences will expire by June 2025—even though a state analysis of the programs supported by the funding said while progress is evident, the problem is far from solved.

We have an opportunity to make high-quality out-of-school time programming part of every student's K-12 experience. That requires better integrating OST with the traditional school day and supporting this marriage with sustainable funding. And we need everyone to come together—from parents to policymakers to education leaders and practitioners—to make that opportunity a reality. In that way, Indiana can emerge as a leader in addressing post-pandemic learning loss recovery and closing persistent learning gaps so every student can emerge from their K-12 experience prepared for success in life and work.



Indiana Learns community outreach.



Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Joseph County.



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