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The Benefits of Afterschool, Summer and Community Learning Opportunities

Talking Points

Annually, each young person in Minnesota has about 2,000 hours of discretionary, nonschool time, without structure or supervision – roughly equivalent to a full-time job. Helping them use their time wisely is a great investment for everyone:

- How young people use their time when they are not in school is directly linked to how successful they are as they learn, grow and develop through adolescence and into adulthood.
- When young people engage in meaningful afterschool, summer and community learning opportunities, they are more connected with their own education, with their schools and they are more civically connected with their community.
- When young people are engaged in meaningful afterschool, summer and community learning opportunities they are more likely to avoid crime and teen pregnancy. They are also less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Participants of afterschool, summer and community learning programs have better school attendance, better grades, more positive attitudes towards school, and higher aspirations for post-secondary education. Afterschool, summer and community-based programs are an important part

of the solution for addressing educational disparities and closing the achievement gap.

Studies show that adolescents who join youth programs are more likely to grow into people their families can be proud of – active, engaged voters who are employed, economically self-sufficient, settled in stable personal relationships, and happy with their lives.

Afterschool, summer and community learning opportunities provide young people access to learning about and building character skills in the safety of their communities with caring adults. These skills include decision-making, leadership problem-solving and team-building. Many business leaders are calling for these skills.

Afterschool, summer and community learning programs help protect investment in early childhood education. In fact, the percentage of children graduating from high school rises from 65% to 91% when investments in children's nonschool hours continue through childhood and adolescence.

Helping young people use their time intentionally is a wise investment for everyone.