INTRODUCTION: POLICY UPDATE

There’s been no shortage of policy news in the first two months of 2021. Shortly before his inauguration, President Biden released his American Rescue Plan, a $1.9 trillion package to help the United States weather the COVID pandemic as vaccine delivery ramps up. The plan would provide a historic investment in education, and a portion would support afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs if the bill remains unchanged. The president and congressional democrats are eyeing passage by March 14. Read the latest about the relief efforts here.

And this wouldn’t be a STEM newsletter without a little STEM news. With attention now shifting to helping students recover from pandemic inflicted learning loss, STEM education has begun to reenter the picture as a promising intervention in learning recovery efforts. We can anticipate STEM, particularly informal STEM learning in afterschool and summer programs, gaining traction in state and federal efforts to support students as the return to classrooms. Here’s a bit more detail on those prospects in Congress.

MATERIALS: NEW TOOLS AND RESOURCES
Engineer for the Week provides a high-quality, cost-free curriculum that helps students ages 11-18 develop computer science skills and explore engineering as they design a prototype to achieve positive social impact.

To run a one-week EFTW project with your students, register by March 14. Facebook provides technical assistance for you to run the project anytime from March 15 to May 14. Through our partnership with EFTW, stipends will be awarded to the first 18 programs that complete the project: the first 8 programs will receive $500, and the next 10 programs will receive $200.

Register now!

Developed and managed by the National Girls Collaborative Project, the IF/THEN Collection® is the largest free resource dedicated to increasing access to authentic and relatable images of real women in STEM. In this digital library, you will find thousands of photos, videos and other assets that authentically represent women in STEM. One of the primary purposes of the IF/THEN® Collection is to provide educators, museums, nonprofit organizations, parents, and students with high-quality free STEM content.

The Collection is part of the IF/THEN® Initiative, a national effort sponsored by Lyda Hill Philanthropies® to inspire young girls to pursue STEM careers while creating a culture shift in how the world perceives women in STEM.

Do you want to learn more about the IF/THEN Collection®? Reach out to Jessica Hay, NGCP Marketing and Partnerships Manager, at jhay@ngcproject.org. Jessica is available to support organizations in utilizing the IF/THEN Collection®.

The Institute for the Study of Resilience (ISRY) created a brief entitled Hosting a Virtual Conference During the Pandemic: Lessons Learned to share an example of the process and lessons learned as we designed and hosted a virtual NSF-funded conference. Although virtual conferences have become commonplace in the age of COVID-19, we anticipate many more virtual conferences in the future because of technological innovation. This format poses both challenges and opportunities for
organizers to design, implement, and engage participants. We hope that our conference story will guide others to build meaningful connections and productive discourse while remaining physically distant. This conference brief, entitled Hosting a Virtual Conference During the Pandemic: Lessons Learned, is now available on CAISE’s InformalScience.org website.

METHODS: UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

NAA is proud to offer a new series of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) starting this March. PLC participants will engage in learning with an intimate cohort of colleagues from across the country. Together, you will gain tools and supports to discover essential leadership skills, build culturally agile skills to walk the talk of equity and inclusion, strengthen social and emotional learning, and practice intentional self-care to be the leader you envision.

NAA PLCs are designed to inspire meaningful connections where participants join top NAA Convention facilitators and national experts for collaborative 6-8 week guided learning experiences focused on the most important topics in afterschool.

PLCs are priced at $150 each and include at least 10 hours of learning and a certificate of completion.

RESULTS: IMPACTS OF CORRDINATED ADVOCACY

Lend your voice to continue to raise awareness of the effects of the pandemic on your program! As we start a new year, afterschool and summer programs continue to face the challenges posed by the pandemic. We once again need your help to tell the story of the ways in which COVID-19 is impacting your program and the kids and families you serve. By taking Afterschool Alliance’s short survey, you are lifting up challenges programs face as the pandemic continues, and, more importantly, your answers will raise awareness of the short- and long-term effects of COVID-19 on the afterschool field.

Take the survey now and have a chance to win a $50 gift card! Five winners will be selected at random each week the survey is open.

This is the fourth wave of the Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19 tracking survey, with findings from previous waves shared with federal policy makers and featured in publications such as Education Week and Youth Today.

The survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time and your responses will be anonymous. The survey will close 11:59 p.m. PDT, Sunday, March 14.

Thank you for sharing information about your afterschool and summer programs!

If you need assistance completing the survey, please contact Lydia Redway at redway@edgeresearch.com. If you would like more information about the research, please contact Nikki Yamashiro at nyamashiro@afterschoolalliance.org.

Take the survey!
The Institute for the Study of Resilience (ISRY) at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School hosted an NSF-funded virtual conference in May/June 2020 focused on the integration of STEM and social-emotional development (SED) in out-of-school time programming. This conference considered measurable qualities and skills that are important for youth success and prioritized by both the STEM and SED fields. Participants (including 49 experts from 37 organizations) provided insights and examples on how to conceptualize STEM+SED in OST, how the turbulent national context elevated the urgency of integrating STEM+SED in all educational settings, and how STEM+SED can support social justice and equity, among other themes. One clear result is that foundational research is needed to create a common framework, including clear definitions, to build coherence, capacity, and collaboration to support meaningful integration of STEM+SED in OST. For more information about the conference, entitled Mapping Connections between STEM and Social-Emotional Development can be found here and here.

For more publications from the ISRY team check out: