INTRODUCTION: POLICY UPDATES

USICA/COMPETES Letter from the Afterschool Alliance

On April 19th, the Afterschool Alliance, along with several members of the STEM Hub sent a letter to the conference committee members negotiating the United States Innovation and Competitiveness Act (USICA)/America COMPETES Act urging them to recognize the role informal STEM learning programs play in sparking interest in STEM careers among young people. Recipients included the chairs and ranking members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, along education committee members serving on the conference committee.

Specifically, the letter highlighted the support of:

- The rural STEM education provisions included in the House and Senate bills
- The hands-on learning provision included in S. 1260, the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021. Noting a preference of this version over the House version (Sec. 10312) as it expands eligibility to smaller, community-based organizations in addition to larger youth-serving organizations.
- The inclusion of the following provision from H.R. 4521, The America COMPETES Act: Sec. 10304 (a): Pre K-12 STEM Education: Supports a decadal survey to be carried out by the National Academies to identify research priorities in PreK-12 STEM education and an additional study on barriers to the widespread implementation of STEM education innovations. And, establishes a program to fund multidisciplinary research and translation centers to scale STEM education innovations in both formal and informal learning settings.
Additional organizations who signed on to the letter were: National Girls Collaborative Project, Girls, Inc., National AfterSchool Association, and ExpandED Schools. It is expected that the Alliance will author additional letters related to USICA/COMPETES and that other organizations will have the opportunity to sign on if they wish.

MATERIALS: NEW TOOLS AND RESOURCES

National Science Foundation (NSF) "Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST)" Grants Are Open Now (August 2022 deadline)

The ITEST program is one response by the NSF to address the challenge and opportunity to provide all students with equitable access to a STEM education related to the technical and scientific workforce. ITEST is an applied research and development program with goals to advance the equitable and inclusive integration of technology in the learning and teaching of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) from pre-kindergarten through high school. The program’s objective is to support all students’ acquisition of the foundational preparation in STEM disciplines.

Proposed ITEST projects are expected to (1) engage students in technology-rich learning to develop disciplinary and/or transdisciplinary STEM content knowledge, including skills in data literacy and evidence-based decision-making and reasoning; (2) prioritize the full inclusion of groups who have been underrepresented and/or underserved, including but not limited to Blacks and African Americans, Alaska Natives, Hispanics and Latinos, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Native Pacific Islanders, persons with disabilities, neurodiverse students, and women in the STEM and information and communication technologies (ICT) workforce; (3) motivate students to pursue appropriate education pathways to technology-rich careers; and (4) leverage strategic and community partnerships to expand education pathways in communities through public and private partnerships and collaborations.

ITEST supports three types of projects: (1) Exploring Theory and Design Principles (ETD); (2) Developing and Testing Innovations (DTI); and (3) Scaling, Expanding, and Iterating Innovations (SEI). ITEST also supports Synthesis and Conference/Workshop proposals. ITEST will support one 5-year resource center starting in FY23.


New Resource -- SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMER PROGRAMS FUNDED BY PANDEMIC RELIEF

The Afterschool Alliance is pleased to unveil a NEW map illustrating where funds have been invested in comprehensive afterschool and summer enrichment and learning programs. Thus far, they have gathered more than 100 examples and have representation from almost every state. For now, most cover state education agencies’ use of funds, as those funds flowed first and had specific guidelines for investing in afterschool and summer. However, the larger portion of funds available to support afterschool and summer programs lies at the school district level and have yet to be expended in total.

Do you have an example of a STEM program to add to the list of strong examples of uses of funds? Email the Alliance at info@afterschoolalliance.org
Introducing Brite, a new online summer STEM program from NGCP and The Hello Studios

Brite is an online, interdisciplinary STEM program for self-identifying girls, ages 13-16, centered on collaborative learning with diverse women STEM role models. Implemented in the summer of 2020 and 2021, Brite was designed to fill gaps in summer learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to reimagine STEM learning through online, community-building experiences with diverse peers and role models.

Brite 2021, a joint venture between NGCP and The Hello Studios, consisted of two courses: Art x Science, featuring role models and activities at the intersection of art and science, and Dream Big, Take Risks, featuring role models and activities that introduced girls to pioneering, multi-disciplinary careers in STEM. In July 2021, 70 girls from around the country from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, came together over two weeks to learn and interact with role models on Zoom. Role models shared the personal and professional aspects of their STEM journeys, the risks taken, the challenges encountered, and the enjoyment they have for their work. The role model experience demonstrated the intersectional forms of oppression women in STEM often experience as well as interdisciplinary aspects of STEM pathways. Through daily conversations with role models, girls had opportunities to connect to the lived experiences of role models. The program also forged a sense of community through icebreaker activities, collaborative small group projects, Flipgrid videos and responses, robust discussions with role models and peers, and celebratory showcases of individual and collaborative projects.

To learn more about NGCP’s mission and initiatives, visit their new website. On the Brite program page, NGCP features related resources and details about upcoming workshops and presentations. There you will also find the Brite Case Study, which explored how participants perceived and found meaning in the online role model experience, and the evaluation report by SJLR Solutions.

METHODS: UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Final Call for Feedback: 2022 STEM Hub Member Survey

As a follow-up to the survey of STEM Hub members in 2018, the Afterschool Alliance is again seeking to better understand our role as convener, coordinator, and curator of the STEM Hub.

This survey is a request for feedback from members about our current and future work in convening national organizations, bringing them into alignment about OST STEM goals and messaging, and driving engagement in federal STEM policy.

LINK TO THE SURVEY: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STEMHUB2022
(10 minutes or less to complete)

Your participation in this online survey is much appreciated and, should you be interested in participating in a conversation with more in-depth questions (about 20 minutes), please indicate this and share your contact information at the end of this survey.
If you wish to unsubscribe from our newsletter, click here.