

10 Trends 2014 IN AFTERSCHOOL

As we welcome a new year, take a look at ten trends on the horizon for the afterschool field:

1} With the mission of creating more opportunities for youth to develop confidence and creativity, and to spark an interest in science, technology, engineering, math, and the arts, the “**maker movement**” and afterschool are natural allies in promoting learning through making. Look for afterschool programs to bring together museums, libraries, and other community institutions to engage young people in creative learning endeavors.

Check out what the **Chicago Digital Youth Network** is doing with their local public library system <http://www.youmediachicago.org/2-about-us/pages/64-digital-youth-network>

3} The tremendous focus on troubles in college and professional sports, may spike a growth in **sports-based youth development** (SBYD) programs—those promoting positive youth development principles in the context of organized youth sports. Programs such as the Up2US “Coach Across America” initiative are leading the effort to build life skills and athletic ability.

<https://www.up2us.org/coach-across-america>

6} The afterschool field has a huge opportunity to fill a crucial need: Conventional Schooling has not widely been able to focus productively on **social and emotional learning and development**. We predict much attention will be given to the role of afterschool programs in promoting the skills necessary for success in school and in life. NAA will host a daylong national thought leader’s summit on this issue, in early March.

7} As **Common Core** State Standards are being rolled out in states around the country, I predict that the implementation of these standards will provide more and sharing among afterschool staff and school staff. Our New Jersey NAA Affiliate, NJSACC www.njsacc.org, in cooperation with the New Jersey State Department of Education, recently completed a statewide pilot training program on the Common Core for afterschool program leaders. You can read more about that project and others in the **Expanding Minds and Opportunities** article on Common Core and expanded learning.

9} With her own daughters nearing college age, the first lady is turning her attention to the issue of **college access**. We predict afterschool programs to be major players in promoting and supporting this effort with the youth and families they serve. National programs such as the Urban League’s College Track are demonstrating impressive of college acceptance and completion rates among low-income students in their program.

www.collegetrack.org

2} While STEM continues to be a focus for the afterschool field, we predict 2014 will be a year to go deeper on **STEM instructional training** for the afterschool workforce. This resource guide prepared by Every Hour Counts as part of their Frontiers in Urban Education (FUSE) initiative provides a great roadmap for addressing this issue.

<http://www.afterschoolsystems.org/content/document/detail/3040/>

4} Until recently, getting recognition for skills and achievements gained outside of school has often been difficult. **Digital badges** provide a way for youth to be recognized for the skills and experiences they gain in afterschool programs. Potential employers, community members, and even college admissions staff could visit a student’s online profile to see a portfolio of badges—linked to the work and projects done to achieve the badges—to get a holistic understanding of the student beyond the classroom and beyond grades. Providence After School Alliance (PASA) <http://www.mypasa.org/hub-high-school/skill-recognition> is doing some amazing work in this area. We predict we will see more programs adopting the badging model for youth, and we’ll also see an interest in what it can mean for afterschool professionals.

5} On the subject of technology, we look forward to hearing from our NAA Annual Convention Keynote Speaker, Jaime Casap, Global Education Evangelist for Google, Inc. (<http://naaweb.org/keynote>). Jaime is sure to address how afterschool programs can help **close the “digital opportunity gap”** through innovative technology used.

8} Similarly, “**age three to grade three**” initiatives that promote seamless learning between preschool and early elementary will provide afterschool programs and professionals increased opportunities to collaborate with early childhood and elementary classroom teachers to promote student success.

10} Finally, consider this last item part trend prediction/part New Year’s resolution: 2014 will be the year NAA focuses on professionalizing the afterschool field. From our NAA Quality Standards to our Core Knowledge and Competencies, we have a tremendous framework on which to mobilize our partners and begin the “call to action” for **creating a professional field of practice**.

With so many amazing initiatives and opportunities, 2014 should be a great year to be an afterschool professional!

Thank you for the hard work you do every day to improve the lives of children! Here’s to a fantastic 2014!