

## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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### **After-School Programs Aid Academic Success, Provide Safe Havens for Children *Number of Programs in U.S. More than Doubles During 1990s* *Survey of Principals Suggests***

Alexandria, VA— September 24, 2001— Public schools are increasingly stepping in as providers of after-school programming, according to a new survey released today by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Two-thirds (67 percent) of elementary school principals said that their schools now offer optional programs for children after regular school hours. Another 15 percent of the principals say they are considering offering an after-school program in the future.

These extended-day sessions provide additional opportunities for learning and enrichment in a safe, supervised environment to children, who might otherwise be alone, says Vincent L. Ferrandino, executive director of NAESP. “We are in an era when schools are being asked to do more for children, both academically and socially,” Ferrandino says. “This is one important way that principals are responding.”

Among the findings of the principals who had programs:

- Use of after-school programs has risen dramatically in recent years. Six in ten (59 percent) principals report that their programs began within the past five years and three in ten (29 percent) said their programs are less than three years old. A 1988 informal NAESP survey of principals found that 22 percent had after-school programs at their schools. As recently as 1993, the *National Study of Before and After School Programs* from the U.S. Department of Education found that just 28 percent of all after-school programs were in public schools.
- More than three-fourths (79 percent) of the principals say the decision to start their programs was driven “a great deal” or “somewhat” by their personal interest, and over a third (37 percent) direct their programs themselves. Almost two-thirds (61 percent) of the principals say they have a great deal of involvement with their schools’ programs.
- Principals believe their extended-day programs are well worth the effort. More than three-fourths (77 percent) say it is “extremely important” for their schools to maintain their programs. Nine in ten (91 percent) of the principals rate their programs as successful. Asked to identify their programs’ biggest achievements, principals cited improving student academics (34 percent) and providing a safe place for students (26 percent).
- Today’s after-school programs are designed to support academic success. Almost all (96 percent) of the principals said their programs offer students help with homework. Most say they also provide literacy and reading enrichment (85 percent) and math enrichment (85

percent), science (69 percent), the arts (63 percent), and computers and technology instruction (62 percent). Two-thirds (67 percent) of principals say students' after-school learning activities are linked to their regular classroom learning.

- After-school programs are not all schoolwork, however. More than three-fourths (78 percent) of principals say their programs offer recreation and sports activities, while many offer opportunities to develop important social skills, such as leadership (50 percent) and conflict resolution (49 percent).
- As successful as they are, the programs do face challenges. Funding (56 percent) and staffing (49 percent) are the issues that principals identify as most troubling and most likely to stand in the way of expanding their programs.
- Nearly all (95 percent) of after-school programs are located on-site at the schools. Of the schools identified by their principals as having programs, 27 percent also have before-school programs, while 40 percent offer only the after-school sessions.

“Principals have embraced the added responsibilities of after-school programs because there is clearly a need,” says Ferrandino. “Most see the payoff in terms of benefits to the children. If they are helping children make progress academically and helping to keep them safe, those are very good incentives to keep going.”

NAESP has taken the lead in developing innovative programs and services to help principals respond to the challenges and opportunities of after-school programs. In 1993, the association published the groundbreaking *Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care*, a guide to help principals research and establish sound child-care programs in their schools. Five years later, NAESP published an updated edition, *After-school Programs and the K-8 Principal*, that reflected the growing trend towards incorporating educational enrichment, cultural, and recreational opportunities in after-school care.

Working with the results of the new survey, and noting the kinds of help principals indicated that they need, NAESP intends to develop resources and programs, publications, workshops, and Web-based networking sites for principals. As part of the current initiative, NAESP is part a consortium of organizations that will research and publish a Web-based *National Notebook of Promising Practices in After-school Programs*.

The telephone survey of 800 elementary school principals was conducted in May-June 2001 for NAESP by Belden Russonello & Stewart in association with KSA-Plus Communications, Inc., and funded by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Established in 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals serves 28,500 pre-K-8 principals in the United States, Canada, and overseas.

To view the complete 120 page report, fact sheet, executive summary, or survey-instrument questionnaire visit [www.naesp.org/afterschool/survey.htm](http://www.naesp.org/afterschool/survey.htm) or call June Million, 703-684-3345.