

Good afternoon. My name is Holly Morehouse, and I am the Executive Director of Vermont Afterschool. Thank you for holding this hearing.

I'd like to ask the committee to fund the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund with an appropriation of \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2017. The ELO Special Fund was created last year, but no money has yet been allocated. An appropriation of \$2.5 million would help ensure that all high-needs communities in Vermont are able to provide access to quality Expanded Learning Opportunities for their children and youth.

As our state leaders we ask that you address many difficult issues: poverty, addiction, hunger, the academic achievement gap, the shrinking middle class. While access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs won't solve all our problems, research tells us that without adequately addressing what is happening with our children and youth outside the school day and over the summer, we won't be able to make meaningful progress on some of our most critical issues affecting Vermont kids and families.

Take for instance the persistent academic achievement gap in Vermont. Studies have shown that where our students fall behind is not in the classroom but outside the school day and over the summer. In fact, up to 2/3 of the academic achievement gap can be attributed to differences in summer learning opportunities.

Consider working families. Over 79% of Vermont children have all available parents in the work force. For working families there is often a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are working and children are out of school. This gap is even bigger during the summer months and school vacation weeks.

Consider addiction. We know that the afterschool hours of 3-6pm are the peak hours for children and youth to engage in risky behaviors, experiment with alcohol and drugs, and commit crimes or be victims of crime. Every dollar invested in afterschool and summer learning programs can save Vermont tax payers \$2.18 down the line.

How about access to food? In many schools, lunch is served at 11:30am or even earlier. The snacks and suppers provided during an afterschool program may be the only healthy food a child has access to until the next day. In summer, access to food is even more important, and summer food sites reach many more kids when they are an integral part of a summer learning program than when they are a stand-alone meal site.

The benefits of regular participation in afterschool and summer learning programs are many. Currently 22,000 children and youth in Vermont need access to programs. One of the biggest barriers in Vermont is program cost. While Vermont ranked 4th in the nation in 2014 for afterschool programming, in that same report we were 51st in the nation for the percentage of low-income children and youth participating in these programs (14% in VT compared to 45% nationally).

We know from research and from practice, that afterschool and summer learning programs are essential to the health, well-being and future success of all of our children and youth. I appreciate the legislature's focus on some of our toughest issues and hope that you will make the financial commitment to "zap the gap" by appropriating funds for the ELO Special Fund. Thank you.

Investing in Vermont's Kids

Here's what an appropriation of \$2.5 million in the ELO Special Fund will support:



8,619

regular attendees
in high-need
communities



Afterschool and summer
learning programs in

111

communities with at least
50% poverty rate

Across **111** afterschool & summer learning programs
serving grades K-12 in high-need communities,



79%

of children ages 6-17
have all available
parents in the work
force



\$1,148

average cost per pupil
at recommended
dosage level



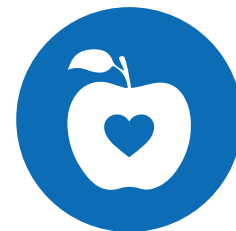
33%

of students are
likely to attend ELOs
on a regular basis

FOOD

60

summer
meals



185

afterschool
suppers

served per student
plus healthy snacks

HOURS

240 hours
of
programming



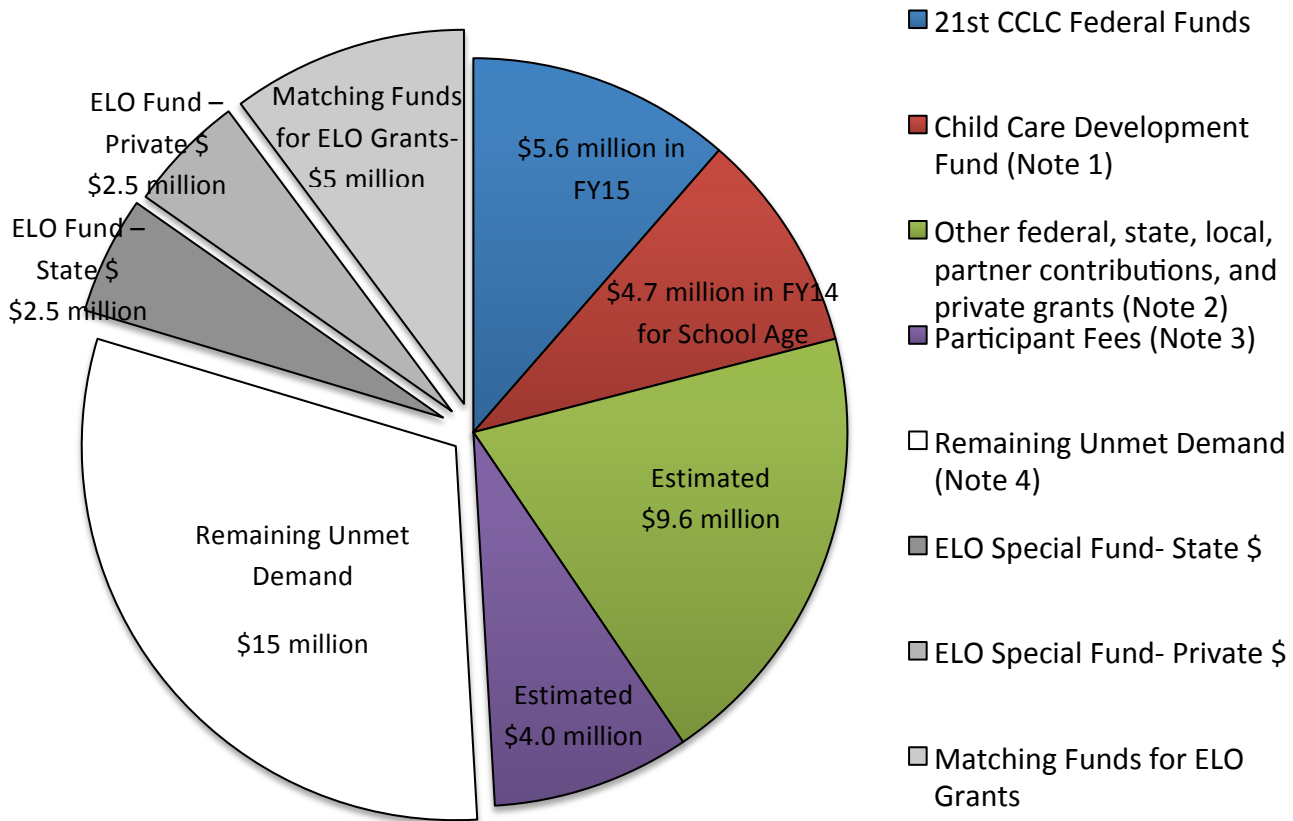
per student
over the
summer

555 hours
of
programming



per student
over the
school year

ELO Funding in Vermont: Sources and Needs



The Gap: 22,000 more children and youth in Vermont would be in afterschool and summer learning programs if more programs were available and accessible

Notes and References

Note 1: Total FY14 Child Care Development Funds in Vermont were \$14,771,095. The federal share was \$9,872,288. 32% of children receiving childcare subsidies in Vermont were school age (ages 5-13). Additional funding for child care subsidies is included in the next category.

Note 2: Estimate based on data from VT Agency of Education, 21st CCLC Program, sustainability charts. Also includes additional funding for child care subsidies not already accounted for in Note 1 (waiting further confirmation from DCF).

Note 3: In 2011, 70% of afterschool programs reported charging participant fees. The average amount of annual fees per program was \$13,000. (*Vermont's Landscape for Expanded Learning*, Feb 2011, Vermont Afterschool)

Note 4: An estimated 22,000 Vermont children are in need of afterschool programming. The average program cost per student is \$1148/year. Some, but not all, of this demand would be met by the ELO Special Fund under the scenario presented. (*Closing the Gap: Vermont's ELO Special Fund*, report by the PreK-16 Council's Working Group, Nov. 2015)

Note 5: Recommendation for the ELO Special Fund is that it be set up as a matching grant process.