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## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS CAN OFFER STUDENTS A MORE ROBUST LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOL REOPENING DURING COVID-19**

Maryland schools are reopening to students at the end of August and beginning of September amid big challenges around safety, instructional models, and student and family support. Throughout the summer, the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST Network) worked with students, families, and other youth development organizations from around the state to produce a set of recommendations and resources to aid in school reopening and community rebuilding through community partnerships.

According to America After 3PM, “87% of Maryland’s parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program and 64% agree that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind.” The MOST Network compiled the data from its series of regional and state-wide visioning and listening sessions that focused on how community partners like OST programs, mentoring, and community schools could help schools and school districts provide support and virtual programming for students and their families as they return to school. The final report provides a set of recommendations and examples for schools and community organizations to build strong collaborations during the pandemic.

According to the report, [\*Bolstering Learning for Maryland’s Students during the Pandemic: The Case for Partnership\*](#), “students in Maryland want out-of-school time (OST) activities that support their health and reimagine extended learning time and support for students and families.” The MOST Network found that community organizations have provided necessary services, supports, and opportunities to students and families both before and during the pandemic. These organizations have helped provide meals, digital and tech access, and maintained the relationships and support systems that helps students thrive. They also found that students involved with OST programs, like afterschool, mentoring, and the arts had better attendance and performed better in academics.

“Partnerships with organizations that bring resources to students can have exponentially more impact if the partnership recognizes the partners’ respective strengths and challenges, as well as their unique contributions to children’s achievement.”

Read the report [HERE](#).

*The MOST Network is a statewide youth development organization, dedicated to more and better opportunities in the out of school hours for all of Maryland's young people. MOST Network is the state affiliate to the National AfterSchool Association, the voice of the out-of-school time profession. As the Statewide Afterschool Network, MOST is a part of the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks, which brings together established statewide afterschool networks in their collective mission to build partnerships and policies that are committed to the development and sustainability of quality afterschool programs. Currently 50 statewide afterschool networks are funded, in partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, to coordinate and influence the systems that support the success of children and young people.*