RE: Docket No. ED-2022-SCC-0132; ICR reference number 202210-1850-007, School Pulse Panel Preliminary Field Activities

The Afterschool Alliance applauds the leadership and foresight of the Administration to institute additional data collection and reporting of findings from the School Pulse Panel (SPP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Center for Education Statistics' increased intervals of surveys, in conjunction with timely dissemination of findings, has provided valuable data of the pandemic's impact on students, teachers, administrators, and schools.

Given the historic federal investment flowing to states and districts to support pre-K-12th grade students, continuing to collect information on the strategies schools are implementing to accelerate learning is essential to understand what schools are prioritizing and where resources are being directed, and its effect on student learning. Although afterschool and summer programs are recognized strategies to accelerate learning, and there exists a strong body of evidence regarding the positive impact of quality afterschool and summer programs, information about the availability of afterschool and summer learning programs and the structures and supports in place through schools to connect young people and their families to these programs is sparse.

We believe the following recommendations will increase the accuracy and utility of the information collected as it relates to afterschool and summer programming:

1. Align the SPP's afterschool focused questions with the survey's summer focused questions.

The September 2022 SPP summer and afterschool questions take different approaches to determining the academic focus of programming, where the options for the summer questions ask about the type of programming provided and the options within the afterschool questions ask about students' intentions. Aligning the options in the afterschool focused questions to mirror the options included in the summer focused questions will provide data that can help users more clearly understand the supports that schools are offering students during the after school hours and how students are accessing those supports.

For example, in the September 2022 SPP survey,[1] question number FSP1a 4-1a. asks about the types of programs offered during the 2022 summer, such as "Summer school (required for certain students)," "Summer learning and enrichment programs- hosted by, or in coordination with, partner organizations," and "Summer learning and enrichment programs- hosted by your school or district." On the other hand, in the afterschool program set of questions, such as question number ASP1a 5-1a., the options include "After-school programs or services whose primary purpose is to provide instruction to students who NEED academic

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[1] Institute of Education Sciences. (2022). School Pulse Panel – September Survey. Retrieved from https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/school-pulse-panel/spp-sep-instrument.pdf

ASSISTANCE" and "After-school programs or services whose primary purpose is to provide instruction to students who SEEK academic ENRICHMENT."

Recommendations:
- *Amend options in ASP1a 5-1a., "Is your school offering any of the following after-school programs during the 2022-23 school year?," to include:*
    - *Tutoring programs or other academic-focused services after school for students who need academic assistance – hosted by, or in coordination with, partner organizations*
    - *Tutoring programs or other academic-focused services after school for students who need academic assistance – hosted by your school or school district*
    - *Academic enrichment programs or services after school – hosted by, or in coordination with, partner organizations*
    - *Academic enrichment programs or services after school – hosted by your school or school district*

2. **Determine if the afterschool and summer programs offered are a new support or has been expanded or enhanced.**

Looking at American Rescue Plan funds alone, $122 billion dollars have gone to states and districts to support students in pre-school through the 12th grade. Including a question in the SPP that asks if COVID-relief funding has helped to create new summer or afterschool programming, or expanded and/or enhanced summer or afterschool program offerings, would provide additional data to capture the ways in which COVID-relief funding has supported schools' efforts to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic in regards to students' learning during the out-of-school time hours.

Recommendations:
- *Include a follow-up question to question number ASP1a 5-1a. that asks, "You answered that your school is offering the following type of after-school programs. Please select if this programming is new or if it is an expansion or enhancement of pre-existing programming as a result of COVID-relief funding."*
- *Include a follow-up question to question number ASP1a 5-1a. that asks, "You answered that your school is offering the following type of after-school programs. Please select if the program(s) have been able to serve all students wishing to attend."*

Secondary recommendations

3. **Collect data on the systems and structures in place to support afterschool and summer learning programs.**

In its recommendations for future research, a 2022 Education Development Center report on district-led summer programs states, "A more in-depth examination of district summer learning programs and related supports would yield valuable information to help inform the field of OST and summer learning."[2]

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[2] Goodyear, L., Streit, T., Na'im, A., Bledsoe, K., Broadstone, M., Coleman, K., Greller, S., McMahon, T., Rodriguez, S., Rosenberg, H., & Shawa, S. (2022). Supporting Quality in Summer Learning: How Districts Plan, Develop, and Implement Programs. Education Development Center, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/supporting-quality-in-summer-learning-how-districts-plan-develop-and-implement-programs.aspx

Gathering data on coordination; resources—such as dedicated personnel, funding, and transportation; professional development opportunities; costs of participation; family engagement and outreach; and partnerships as it relates to support for both afterschool and summer learning programs can help identify challenges to provide programming, lift up promising practices, and promote strategies that increase access to afterschool and summer learning programs.

4. **Collect detailed data on afterschool and summer learning programming hosted by partner organizations.**

   Strong school-community partnerships can provide high-quality programming after school and through the summer months that address the opportunity gaps of local students and families. Building on recommendation #1, learning if and where partnerships are taking place between schools and local organizations—including groups such as community-based organizations, libraries, universities, and faith-based organizations—can help to document where partners in the community are being leveraged and highlight promising partnership models. For example, in Bloomington, Illinois, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds helped the Bloomington Public Schools District 87 offer a full-day summer enrichment program in collaboration with several local community-based organizations, with school-day teachers leading academic programming in the morning, and community partners—such as Children's Discovery Museum, Illinois State University for Math and Science, and local Boys & Girls Clubs—providing enrichment activities in the afternoon. While there are pockets of information on these types of collaborations, school-community partnership questions in the SPP will create a more comprehensive picture of the prevalence and nature of these partnerships.

5. **Construct questions that capture the diverse set of learning opportunities that take place after school.**

   There are a wide range of activities and programming offered during the hours outside of school. Based on school district spending plans of ESSER III funds alone, the many forms of programming taking place after normal school hours that districts classify as "afterschool programming" is evident, from one hour of high-intensity tutoring two times a week, to comprehensive afterschool programs that provide academic enrichment and build young people's foundational skills, such as working in teams and communicating effectively, that are offered for a few hours a day and a few times per week.[3]

   Given that these are distinct approaches to learning with diverse priorities and learning objectives, building on recommendation #1, survey questions that allow for findings that distinguish between the various out-of-school-time activities will provide a more comprehensive set of data to better understand the types of learning opportunities taking place during the hours after school. For instance, during the hours between when the school day ends and 5-6 p.m., activities can include organized sports teams, volunteering, scouting, special lessons (like art, music, or dance), tutoring, and comprehensive afterschool programs that provide both academic enrichment and building young people's foundational skills. Additionally, gaining clarity about by whom the instruction is being provided will add to the understanding of what out-of-

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[3] Gupta, M. & Kamen, A. (2022). ARP investments in comprehensive afterschool: Connecticut case-study. Afterschool Snack. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolsnack/ARP-investments-in-comprehensive-afterschool-Connecticut-case_08-05-2022.cfm

school time programming looks like. For example, learning if tutoring is being done by school day teachers, youth development professionals, volunteers, or some combination of staff.

6. **Gain a better understanding of attitudes toward afterschool and summer learning programs among school administration.**

    Anecdotal stories from school and out-of-school staff alike suggest that attitudes toward afterschool and summer learning programs vary widely, ranging from programs being an absolute necessity to not at all a priority for school districts. Questions related to attitudes toward afterschool and summer learning programs can help unearth strategies to encourage participation in and remove barriers to afterschool and summer programs.

Afterschool and summer learning programs are providing life-changing opportunities for students, where young people are able to engage in hands-on learning, collaborate with their peers, find their passions, and explore new interest areas that can lead to future careers. The addition of these clarifying questions to the National Center of Education Statistics' School Pulse Panel will provide invaluable information to education leaders, community-based organizations, others who are working to ensure that all young people have access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs.