

# Changemakers: Addressing Current Issues in Out-of-School Time

Out-of-school time (OST) programs play a critical role in supporting the healthy development and academic achievement of youth. However, these programs face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to reach their full potential. This article will explore some of the current issues facing changemakers working in OST, highlight innovative approaches that are addressing these challenges, and discuss the impact of these programs on youth development.



## Changemakers! (Current Issues in Out-of-School Time)

by Samuel Applebaum

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## Current Issues

### 1. Funding Gap



OST programs are chronically underfunded, with many relying on a patchwork of grants and donations to operate. This unstable funding stream makes it difficult for programs to plan long-term and provide high-quality services. According to the Afterschool Alliance, in 2020, the average annual funding per child for OST programs was just \$76.

## **2. Lack of Access**



Not all youth have equal access to OST programs. Factors such as transportation barriers, limited program availability in certain areas, and the cost of participation can prevent many children from benefiting from these programs. This lack of access disproportionately affects youth from low-income families and communities of color.

### **3. Lack of Trained Staff**



OST programs rely heavily on the dedication of their staff to provide high-quality services. However, many OST staff are underpaid and lack adequate training. This can lead to high staff turnover rates and a lack of continuity in programming.

#### **4. Narrow Focus**



OST programs have traditionally focused on providing academic support and recreational activities. While these services are important, they do not address the full range of needs that youth face outside of school hours. OST programs need to adopt a more holistic approach that incorporates social-emotional learning, leadership development, and mentorship.

### **Innovative Approaches**

Despite the challenges facing OST programs, changemakers are developing innovative approaches to address these issues and improve the lives of youth.

#### **1. Funding Diversification**



OST programs are exploring new ways to diversify their funding sources. This includes partnering with businesses, foundations, and government agencies to secure long-term, sustainable funding.

## **2. Community Partnerships**



OST programs are forming partnerships with schools, community centers, and other organizations to increase access and reduce transportation barriers for youth. These partnerships also allow OST programs to offer a wider range of services.

### **3. Staff Development**



OST programs are investing in staff development to improve the quality of their services. This includes providing training on topics such as trauma-informed care, positive youth development, and cultural competence.

#### **4. Comprehensive Approach**





OST programs are moving towards a more comprehensive approach that addresses the full range of needs that youth face. This includes incorporating social-emotional learning, leadership development, and mentorship into their programming.

### **Impact of OST Programs**

Research has shown that OST programs have a significant impact on youth development. These programs can help to improve academic

achievement, reduce risk-taking behaviors, promote social-emotional learning, and increase civic engagement.

A study by the Wallace Foundation found that students who participated in high-quality OST programs were more likely to graduate from high school and college, and less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and drug use.

Another study by the National Dropout Prevention Center found that OST programs can help to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve school attendance rates.

OST programs play a vital role in supporting the healthy development of youth. However, these programs face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to reach their full potential. Changemakers are working to address these challenges through innovative approaches such as funding diversification, community partnerships, staff development, and a comprehensive approach to programming.

Research has shown that OST programs have a significant impact on youth development. These programs can help to improve academic achievement, reduce risk-taking behaviors, promote social-emotional learning, and increase civic engagement.

Investing in OST programs is an investment in the future of our youth. By providing these programs with the resources they need, we can help to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed.

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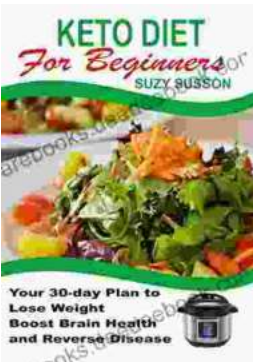
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