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National Foundation Awards Local Nonprofit \$8 Million to Improve After-School Programs for DC Students

The Trust Seeks to Raise Additional \$8 Million to Improve Programs

WASHINGTON, DC – The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (the Trust) announced today that The Wallace Foundation is investing up to \$8 million over three years to improve out-of-school programs for students in the District of Columbia.

The District is one of five cities chosen by the New York–based foundation to participate in its Learning in Communities initiative, which aims to develop comprehensive systems for out-of-school learning with consistently high standards. The other cities are Providence, New York, Boston, and Chicago.

The initiative will begin in three pilot middle schools in January and will serve a total of about 600 children. Those schools are Charles Hart Middle School, Kelly Miller Middle School, and Lincoln Middle School. More sites will be added in subsequent years. Ultimately, the goal is that all middle-school children in the District will have access to high-quality activities outside of the school day – in the afternoons, on weekends, and during the summer.

“A high-quality after-school program has the power to dramatically change a young person’s life,” said Greg Roberts, president and CEO of the Trust. “We believe this initiative will engage more students in the District in after-school programs that are safe, enriching and of the highest quality.”

Begun in 1999, the Trust is a nonprofit that works to increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of services for children, youth and families in the District of Columbia. It funds programs that serve about 10,000 children a year. The Wallace Foundation supports effective ideas and practices that strengthen education leadership, arts participation, and out-of-school learning.

Led by the Trust, this new initiative is a broad partnership of community agencies and groups, including the Mayor’s office and other branches of DC government, the DC Public School system, business leaders, local universities, private funders, parents, and the community. Nearly 50 individuals from all sectors of the city have been involved in planning the initiative.

“This generous grant from The Wallace Foundation will enable Trust and city leaders to help all students in our city achieve their fullest potential,” said DC Mayor Anthony Williams. “The only way we, as a city, can solve our problems is by tackling them together. And that’s what this initiative does.”

In addition to the \$8 million from the Wallace Foundation, the Trust plans to raise another \$8 million from local foundations and business leaders to expand the effort. That effort already has begun, and several private funders already have shown strong interest. By the fall,, businesses also will be able to support the effort by encouraging employees to volunteer as mentors or tutors. The Trust also will seek partnerships with community organizations, such as local sports teams and a youth-oriented, hip-hop radio station.

The initiative is starting its pilot projects in middle schools because recent national research shows many urban children are “lost” during those years. One study shows that children entering middle school with even one of four risk factors have only a 10-percent chance of graduating from high school on time or at all. The four factors are: failing English, failing math, poor behavior, and truancy.

In the District of Columbia, middle-school children face additional challenges:

- 54 percent live in homes headed by single women
- 27 percent live below the poverty line; 60 percent live in families with annual incomes below \$50,000
- 22 percent live in homes where English is not the primary language
- 24 of the 27 public schools serving grades 6 to 8 failed to meet adequate yearly progress goals under the federal No Child Left Behind law
- 720 middle and junior high school students were picked up by DC police for truancy in 2004-05
- More than 735 students in grades 6 to 9 dropped out of DCPS in 2002-03

“As in all big cities, many of our children need additional supports beyond the school day,” said DC Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Clifford B. Janey. “The school system is committed to this exciting initiative because we know it will reinforce what youngsters are learning in school and help them succeed academically.”

National studies show that high-quality out-of-school-time programs can improve school attendance, graduation rates, test scores in reading, math, and English as well as cultivate positive attitudes toward school. Research also shows that such programs can reduce risky behaviors and increase children’s aspirations and decision-making skills.

The District has more than 150 programs that serve at least some middle-school students – programs ranging from academics to sports to arts to mentoring. But the District lacks the right out-of-school programs in the right places for the needs and interests of children and their families. Local research conducted for this initiative showed that 60 percent of children participate in out-of-school-time activities between one and five days a week. On average, students were spending only two days a week in after-school activities, but indicated they likely would attend four days a week, if given the opportunity. Many community-based program providers also expressed a desire for higher-quality options for middle-school children.

This out-of-school-time initiative aims to build a more coordinated system to improve the quality of after-school and summer programs for all DC as well as to increase access to and enrollment in those programs.

“Cities across the country want better ways to provide high-quality out-of-school learning opportunities to children who need it most—through understanding need, aligning programs with those needs, and tracking participation,” said Nancy Devine, Director of Arts and Communities at The Wallace Foundation. “Washington, DC is already recognized as a leader in after-school, and we hope that this grant will help our nation’s capital move even closer to its goals, and provide useful lessons for other cities.”

The new out-of-school-time initiative will strengthen the District’s efforts in five key areas:

- Building closer partnerships among schools, other city agencies and community-based providers to achieve better outcomes for children
- Producing diverse high-quality programs that fit children’s needs and interests
- Developing quality standards for programs and training providers
- Assembling a database that will permit officials to match children with quality after-school programs and other services
- Conducting a communications campaign to build awareness of the value of after-school programs for students.

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The nonprofit DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation works to increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of services for children, youth and families in the District of Columbia. The Trust disburses public and private funds to community organizations for out-of-school time programs, youth entrepreneurship programs, and early childhood development programs and parent centers. For more information, visit www.cyitc.org

The Wallace Foundation is an independent, national foundation dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. Its three current objectives are strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement; enhancing out-of-school learning opportunities; and expanding participation in arts and culture. For more information, visit www.wallacefoundation.org