



## **Policymaker Site Visits: Tips for Afterschool and Summer Learning Program Providers**

**Sources:** Adapted from a guide compiled by the Indiana Afterschool Network, which was, in turn, adapted from: the *Connect Resource Manual* from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the *Afterschool for All Challenge: Take Action at Home Kit* from the Afterschool Alliance; and the Alliance for Justice's series on non-profit and foundation lobbying and advocacy.

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## Site Visit Basics

### What is a site visit?

Local, state, and federal officials have a vested interest in understanding the existing services in their area of influence. A “site visit” occurs when a policymaker and/or their staff comes to a program site during normal hours of operation to see your work firsthand and to understand the benefit it provides. Many site visits include a tour and give the policymaker a chance to meet your staff and speak with the children and families who are benefiting from your program. A site visit allows them to see the work that you are doing and enables them to connect to it and better advocate for it.

### What’s the value of asking a policymaker for a site visit?

Asking your policymaker to visit your program is one of the most effective ways to familiarize them with your work and show off your successes. It gives you the opportunity to get to know the policymaker better and build your relationship with them. A policymaker who has seen what you’re doing for themselves is more likely to champion your issue/program in the future. A site visit can also create a sense of broader acknowledgement for students and families. It also provides some great photo opportunities!

### How do I start the process?

Policymakers receive many requests for site visits and their ability to accept your invitation will depend on many factors, including the policymaker’s schedule. The first step is to settle on a date. It is important to have a date (or a few dates) in mind when you first mention the subject, but it’s also good to make sure the policymaker and their staff knows you can be flexible. Avoid known conflicts (e.g., a state legislator will not be available during the annual legislative session in Santa Fe). As you work to finalize a date, you should also begin to develop an agenda for the visit and consider who else you will invite and how they will contribute to a successful visit.

# Site Visit Planning Guide

## Before the Invitation

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What do I want the policymaker to understand and remember about our work?
2. What is the objective of the visit?
3. What is my ask? (What do I want/need from the policymaker?)
4. Who will speak? What message(s) will each speaker deliver?
5. What do I want the policymaker to see during the visit?
6. Whom will they meet?

### Find a date for the visit.

Suggest a specific date (or two) for the visit. However, unless these are the only dates available, indicate the dates are flexible and work with them/their staff to find a date that suits the policymaker's schedule.

### Use your policymaker's time carefully.

Find out how much time the policymaker plans to spend. If they only plan to spend 20 minutes at your site, you want to make sure that everyone is well prepared and that they can deliver their messages concisely. If the policymaker plans to spend an hour or more, take advantage of this extra time; you could arrange for an informal roundtable with the policymaker and a handful of key partners who have great stories to tell about your program.

### Plan an activity.

You will want to include a fun, memorable activity with visual appeal – especially if there will be photographers from your organization, the policymaker's office, or the media. Some ideas include: a tour of the facility led (or supported) by children and/or families, a science experiment or other STEM activity, a physically active game, or preparing or eating healthy snacks.

### Make a Social Media Plan.

Try to create some excitement around the visit on Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram – before, during, and after the visit! Don't forget to "tag" or include the handle for the policymaker and other special guests, and highlight your key messages about the value of out-of-school programs. Ask families to sign photo releases if not already on file. See the [sample photo release](#) form on page 22.

### Invite widely but wisely.

If your policymaker’s schedule allows a lengthier visit and you have the space, consider inviting a wide variety of people—families, current and potential funders, existing and potential partner organizations and coalition members, and local civic leaders. Please consider inviting NMOST to attend. We would be happy to attend and/or help with the event if time and availability allow. Even for short visits, plan to invite one or two key people from among these groups. A visit from your policymaker is also an excellent time to invite any people whom you want to engage in your work but who have been reluctant to meet with you in the past. A note of caution: Some people or organizations may see your policymaker’s visit as an opportunity to advance their own agendas. Make sure everyone understands the focus and purpose of the visit to minimize potential distractions. See [sample invitation letter](#) on page 16.

### Carefully consider speakers and messaging.

Think strategically about who should speak and how their remarks fit with your overall message. Be sure to include your mission, services, and challenges in a way that is relevant to the policymaker. Also, be sure to mention partners and community and business support, if applicable. See “[Using Stories to Deliver Your Message](#)” on page 9.

### Stage the room.

Think about how you want to arrange the room where most of the site visit will take place. If it’s a smaller group, you may want to arrange the seats in a circle, or around a table, to create a more casual environment that will foster the sharing of ideas.

### Share a personal story.

Choose one student or family who has benefited from your work to explain how it has affected their life. Be sure this person is a constituent of the policymaker. Often, the true story of a single person carries more impact than any other part of a visit.

### Invite media.

Check with the policymaker’s press secretary before your event to find out if the office plans to invite media, and whether the policymaker will be holding other media events that day. If they are not issuing a press release, write your own and share it with the press secretary for approval in advance. The press secretary may be able to provide you with a list of media outlets and a quote from the policymaker.

### Appoint a key contact.

Appoint someone to greet and guide the policymaker through your event. This person should also establish contact with the staff person who will accompany the policymaker on the visit. Be sure that the policymaker and their staff person receive briefing materials, including a site visit agenda before the visit. Depending on the type of visit, staff may request talking points for the policymaker, project results, relevant data, or a guest list.



### Share the limelight.

Acknowledge funders, board members, community/civic leaders, and your staff members who have contributed to your work or program success. If there is time, consider giving them a few minutes to explain why they have supported your work.

### Consider takeaways.

An art project to make a poster or card to give to the visitor(s) helps connect them to the program. Offering a program T-shirt or other memorabilia gives them a keepsake reminder of their visit.

## Event Checklist

- **Food**

You don't have to try to impress anyone but do serve appropriate snacks and beverages.

- **Photographer**

Have a photographer – maybe someone on staff – document the event. These photos will come in handy. If you don't already have photo releases on file, be sure to secure proper permissions with consent forms for students, staff and families. See [sample photo release](#) form on page 22.

- **Notetaker**

Arrange for someone to take notes during the visit and prepare a written report afterward.

- **Name tags**

Name tags, at least for the adults, will be very helpful for the policymaker and their staff, as well as other guests.

- **Materials**

Be strategic in selecting the materials for the meeting. Limit yourself to just a few key documents, keep them brief, and make sure that your contact information is on everything you provide to the policymaker and their staff. The [one pager](#) about the state of afterschool in New Mexico and other [infographics](#) from the Afterschool Alliance make nice handouts.

- **Social Media person**

If possible, it's great to share photos, quotations, or other highlights from the site visit.

- **Greeter**

Make sure your greeter is familiar with the objectives of the visit and knows the schedule for the day. Make sure they will recognize the policymaker upon arrival and knows everyone they need to meet during the visit.

## After the Visit

### Many thanks.

Send thank you letters to any staff members who helped you set up the visit, as well as to the policymaker. In the letter to the policymaker, recognize the staff members who were particularly helpful to you or who offered to do additional work on your behalf. Copy those staff on the letter to the policymaker. Consider also sending thank you notes from the children and teens who participate in the program, especially those who may have met with the policymaker. Share some photos from the visit on Twitter and Facebook and be sure to thank (and tag!) your policymaker and any other guests. See [sample thank you letter](#) on page 17.

### Stay in touch.

Keep the policymaker's staff updated on events and the impact you are making within the community. Keep them on your e-mail list.

### Send photos.

Follow up with an email and share a few of the best shots with the policymaker and their staff. Encourage them to post on their website or share in their newsletter.

### This is just the beginning.

If the policymaker agrees to take some action on your behalf, determine which staff person is the point person who will work with you to follow up. It's important to stay in touch and work with that staff person to make it happen.



## Using Stories to Deliver Your Message

“A good story can transform a polite listener into an engaged champion of your work.”

### The Power of Stories

Stories can make facts and statistics come alive and make you and your work memorable to your audience. Stories can be used to:

- ✓ Initiate emotion and outrage
- ✓ Explain facts
- ✓ Explain successes
- ✓ Persuade

### Tips for an Effective Story. Try to...

- ✓ Use your story to illustrate a key point about your work—a success, a challenge, a unique way your work addresses the issue at hand.
- ✓ Craft your story in a way that gives policymakers a better understanding of a specific problem facing the communities they represent and how your work improves the lives of kids and families in those communities.
- ✓ Seek out stories or examples that tie into your audience’s feelings or their specific interests. For example, if your representative is on the Public Health committee, perhaps you can talk about children who really benefit from the healthy food or physical activity offered in your program.
- ✓ Keep the plot simple and vivid—not every detail is important.
- ✓ Repeat memorable phrases.
- ✓ Be concise.
- ✓ Share your optimism and resolve!

## Questions to Keep in Mind

Despite the science behind storytelling, being successful is an art and it takes practice. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you craft your story:

- ✓ **Who are you talking to?** How does your story appeal to the specific interests of your representative? What links to your member's interests can you include?
- ✓ **What's your message?** Make sure that the story transitions smoothly into your message and ask. One way to do this is by thinking, if not saying aloud, "I tell you this story because..."
- ✓ **How can I keep this short?** Your story doesn't have to be long and complicated and neither do your sentences. Keep your writing and delivery short, punchy, and impactful.
- ✓ **What are some telling details?** The difference between a story that resonates and sticks with your audience and one that falls flat is the detail that makes it genuine. Paint a picture through some small detail that brings the subject to life. If you're talking about a person, tell us how many children they have, or the exact number of miles they have to travel to get to school or to see a doctor. Specific details take your story to another level.
- ✓ **Does this story have suspense?** If the end of your story is predictable, it's also forgettable. Surprising or counterintuitive endings stick with people.
- ✓ **How does the policymaker fit into the story?** Be careful not to cast your policymaker as the "villain" or the barrier to a good outcome. Show them how they can be part of the solution.
- ✓ **Do you personally care about this story?** If you don't genuinely care about your story as you're telling it, your audience will know.

For examples of compelling stories, visit America's Afterschool Storybook:

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/storybook/gallery.cfm>

## Pitching Your Site Visit to Local Media

### Preparing a media list

If you don't already have a list of reporters, editors, columnists, photo editors, and producers who cover education, children and families, parenting, workplace, and feature stories in your media market, now is a good time to create one.

#### Resources to tap for a start:

- ✓ The policymaker's office may be able to provide you with a list of media outlets and/or reporters.
- ✓ Public relations offices at community colleges are sometimes willing to share their media lists with other education agencies.

You can also make a list of all local TV and radio stations (including college and university-affiliated stations), daily and weekly newspapers (including ethnic, community, and other specialty papers), wire services and magazines, locally-oriented websites, and newsletters or bulletins from interested community and faith-based organizations.

Call and ask for the name of the editor, reporter, or producer who covers education, children and families, parenting, workplace, and features. Request the phone number and e-mail address for each person. Ask also for the names of and contact information for producers at broadcast news and talk shows that cover issues like afterschool, and columnists who cover education and family issues at local newspapers of all kinds.

Media lists should be updated twice per year as journalists tend to shift beats and jobs fairly often.

## Inviting Media to Attend

Check with the policymaker's office before your event to find out if the office plans to invite media. If they are not, and they are OK with it, you can invite the media yourself! A short pitch note is all you need, but you may also want to write a detailed press release, which you can add to the end of the email. Be sure to make sure this is OK with the policymaker's office.

## Sharing News with Media Who Didn't Attend the Event

Some publications – especially those with smaller staffs – may not be able to send a reporter to the event but will still write a story afterward. They may be interested in publishing photographs that you have taken.

## Writing a Press Release

### Key tips about news releases:

- ✓ News releases should sound like a news story written by a sympathetic reporter. That means that they should be written in a reporter's voice, not an advocate's. Commentary in a news release should be in quotes and attributed to a spokesperson.
- ✓ News releases should have a headline. Some may also have a "subhead," or a second headline.
- ✓ News releases should have a "lead paragraph" that clearly states the news of the release, and answers the Who, What, When, Where, and Why questions.
- ✓ Many news releases are structured as follows (see Sample below):
  - » Lead Paragraph: Who, What, When, Where, Why
  - » 2nd Paragraph: Quote from organizational spokesperson
  - » 3rd Paragraph: More information about the announcement
  - » 4th Paragraph: More information and examples
  - » 5th Paragraph: Second quote from another organizational spokesperson
  - » 6th Paragraph: Contact information for the organization

You may be able to get a quote from the policymaker to include in the release. You can draft a quote yourself and offer the policymaker (or their staff) the opportunity to read the release and either (1) approve the quote, (2) revise it, or (3) replace it with one that they have written themselves.

Don't forget to include at the top of the document a name and phone number of someone the media can contact to follow up. Be sure to date the document.

## Message Guide

These talking points and supporting data were developed in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance and its key partners to help state networks and other important stakeholders communicate clearly and consistently about the promise of and demand for quality afterschool programs. The linked one-pagers include core messages and facts that help illustrate the growing unmet demand and strong public support for afterschool programs, as well as the many ways afterschool programs benefit children, families, and communities.

### Main Talking Points (click for details):

- [Working Families Depend on Afterschool Programs](#)
- [Afterschool Programs Keep Children Safe, Help Them Avoid Risky Behaviors](#)
- [Afterschool Programs Help Children Succeed in School and Life](#)
- [Afterschool Programs Prepare Students for College and the Workforce](#)
- [Afterschool Programs Provide Opportunities for Healthy Living](#)
- [Afterschool and Summer Programs work to eliminate opportunity gap between the rich and poor](#)

## Lobbying Considerations for Nonprofits

When it comes to advocacy and lobbying, there are common misconceptions about what 501(c)(3) organizations can and cannot do. Because of this lack of clarity, many organizations simply avoid advocacy altogether. But 501(c)(3) organizations have every right to express their views to their legislators and mobilize their supporters. In fact, if they do NOT express their views, an important voice will be missing when policy is formed. For afterschool in particular, the voices of non-profit providers are absolutely indispensable.

Many funders place restrictions on use of their funds for lobbying, so it's important to know the distinction between lobbying and advocacy. We strongly recommend that all programs acquire a basic understanding. The following resources from the [Alliance for Justice](#) (AFJ) are excellent sources of information and training opportunities.

[Bolder Advocacy](#) – an AFJ website dedicated to Enabling nonprofits to shape the public debate on important social issues.

[A Roadmap for Success](#) - provides a roadmap to success for nonprofits that want to secure and maintain robust sources of funding for their advocacy work.

[Training Opportunities and Events](#) from AFJ.

## Appendices

1. Sample Letter of Invitation
2. Sample Thank You Note
3. Sample Pitch Note: Inviting Media to Attend
4. Sample Pitch Note: Following Up After Visit
5. Sample Press Release
6. Talking Point Supporting Data

## Sample Letter of Invitation

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

[Policymaker title] [Policymaker name]

[Policymaker address]

Dear [Policymaker Title] [Policymaker Name],

I would like to invite you and your staff to visit the [Name of Your Program] this [period (e.g. summer or semester)].

Our program provides [### of [middle school] children] with safe, educational out-of-school time activities during the summer months. Research shows that summer learning loss is a significant contributor to the achievement gap; students from low-income families typically lose two to three months in reading achievement and two months of math skills during the summer months. Students in our program have valuable opportunities to [be physically active; learn to garden, cook healthy meals and explore new interests; and support their communities through service projects]. We would like to take you on a short tour of our program on [date] at [time].

If that date or time is not convenient, we would be happy to work with you to find one that is. I have also invited members of the local [e.g. Rotary Club] and several parents to attend. They are eager to talk with you about the importance of keeping out-of-school time programs open and making these programs available to more children.

I hope you will join us and see our program, and our students, in action. Out-of-school time programs such as ours are important because they inspire students to learn, keep kids safe, and help working families. The [Program Name] community relies on us.

A profile of the [Program Name] is enclosed for your reference. I will contact your office within the next two weeks to follow up. I look forward to seeing you on [date].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name], [Your Title]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]



## Sample Thank You Note

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

[Policymaker Title] [Policymaker Name]

[Local Office Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [e.g. Senator Smith],

Thank you for taking the time to tour our [Program Name] on [date]. The youth, parents, and program staff enjoyed meeting you tremendously, and we were delighted to have the chance to share our activities with you.

I hope your visit helped reinforce how much our community values this program. As we discussed, and as I have witnessed firsthand, out-of-school time programs keep kids safe, inspire learning, and help working families.

I look forward to meeting with you again to further discuss the ways in which we can work together to ensure that out-of-school time programs stay open and are available to more children in our community and our state. Thank you again for taking the time to visit!

Sincerely,

[Your Name], [Your Title]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

## Sample Pitch Note: Inviting Media to Attend

### Subject line:

Invitation: Mayor Millstone to Tour STEM-Focused Afterschool Program

### Email body:

Hi, [reporter name].

Next week, Mayor Stephanie Millstone will join the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, along with business leaders and local families, for a tour – including viewing child-led demonstrations of science projects – of Stevens Middle School’s STEM-focused afterschool program, Just For Kids.

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students’ math and science grades, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.

[I have pasted the full press release about the event below]. If you, or someone else at the Rivertowne Gazette, is interested in attending the event, please let me know!

Best,

[name], [title]

[email address]

[phone number]

## Sample Pitch Note: Following Up After Event

### Subject line:

Photos, Interviews Available: Mayor Millstone Tour of STEM-Focused Afterschool Program

### Email body:

Hi, [reporter name].

Last week, Mayor Stephanie Millstone joined the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, along with business leaders and local families, for a tour – including viewing child-led demonstrations of science projects – of Stevens Middle School’s STEM-focused afterschool program, Just For Kids.

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students’ math and science grades, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.

[I have pasted the full press release about the event below]. I have some great photos from the event that I would be happy to share for publication. If you are interested in speaking with Mayor Millstone or Michael Koss (Principal of Stevens Middle School) about the new program, or in seeing the photos from the event, please let me know!

Best,

[name], [title]

[email address]

[phone number]

## Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jill Smith  
jsmith@sample.net  
(513) 555-1234

### MAYOR MILLSTONE TOURS STEM-FOCUSED KIDS' AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Program Provides Supervised Activities, Including Learning Opportunities Focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math for Local Middle School Students

Rivertowne, Ohio - Mayor Stephanie Millstone joined the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, business leaders, and local families today for a tour of Stevens Middle School's afterschool program, Just For Kids. Nearly a third of the students attending Stevens Middle School have already enrolled in the program that will provide three hours (3 p.m. - 6 p.m.) of supervised afterschool activities, including homework assistance, arts and crafts, and recreation, with a special focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). The program is open to students in grades six to eight.

"The need and demand for high quality afterschool programs in our city is tremendous," said Mayor Millstone. "Too many children are unsupervised between the time the school doors close and parents get home from work. Just For Kids will help give children educational, safe, exciting places to spend their time after school, and will improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) interest and skills for young people in our communities. "

More than 28 million school-age children have either their only parent or both parents working outside the home. More than 11 million "latchkey children" go home after school each day to a house with no adult supervision and without the opportunities to learn that afterschool programs can provide.

"Colleges' and employers' demand for STEM skills is growing, and we are proud that our school is helping to better meet the needs of our students and their families," said Michael Koss, Principal of Stevens Middle School. "Afterschool programs pay enormous benefits. They inspire children to learn. They keep kids safe in the sometimes perilous afterschool hours. And they help working parents keep working, free of fears about what their kids might be up to after the end of the regular school day."

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students' grades, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.



Rivertowne Student Success program is a collaborative effort of the Mayor’s office and the Rivertowne School District with the goal of making afterschool programs available to every public elementary and middle school student in the city.

For more information about Rivertowne Student Success program, contact Jennifer Greene at (513) 555-4567. Parents interested in enrolling their child in Just For Kids should call (513) 555-2345.



## Sample Photo Release

I hereby give permission to [Provider] to photograph, film, and/or videotape \_\_\_\_\_, and to use and adapt the image(s) in any material promoting afterschool and the [Provider], forever. I understand that [Provider] may authorize the use of the image(s) by any other existing person or entity that wishes to use that likeness for the benefit of [Provider]. I am giving this permission recognizing the many benefits that [Provider] provides in educating the public on the importance of afterschool programs.

I have the authority to give this permission on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, a minor child.

Print Name of Parent/Legal Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Working Families Depend on Afterschool Programs

For the moms and dads who are still at work when the school bell rings, the afterschool hours can present a real challenge. Families report that the gap between work and school schedules can be up to 25 hours per week. This leads to stress and missed work time for parents. Parental concerns about afterschool care result in decreased productivity that costs businesses nationwide up to \$300 billion per year.

[Afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind and help them keep their jobs.](#)

Afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs by ensuring that children are safe and learning while parents are still at work. Among New Mexico parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 85% agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.
- 86% agree the programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work.

[Parents value afterschool programs for many reasons and are highly satisfied.](#)

Parents view afterschool programs as more than just a safe environment for children. They recognize that these programs provide a wide range of activities and enriching learning opportunities for children and teens. Parents want their child's out-of-school experience to be fun and varied--and they want it to provide learning activities that are not offered during the regular school day.

Among New Mexico parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 92% are satisfied with their child's overall afterschool program experience.
- 91% are satisfied with the safe environment of their child's afterschool program
- 87% agree that programs provide children opportunities to be physically active.

New Mexico parents cite several factors as very important when selecting an afterschool program. They want a program that:

- their child enjoys.
- provides a safe haven.
- offers high quality of care.
- has a convenient location.
- has hours that meet parents' needs.

[Afterschool programs provide critical support for working parents and the economy.](#)

Parents are increasingly turning to afterschool programs to meet their own and their children's needs in the hours after school. Parents who are fortunate enough to have access to afterschool programs are highly satisfied, but the demand for available programs far exceeds the supply. We need policymakers, philanthropies, and businesses to step up because every child who wants to participate in an afterschool program should have that opportunity.

## Afterschool Programs Keep Children Safe, Help Them Avoid Risky Behaviors

Close to one in five New Mexico children (almost 60,000 in total), are alone and unsupervised from 3 to 6 p.m. every day. Those are the peak hours for kids to commit crimes or become victims of crimes and to experiment with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sex.

[Afterschool programs provide a safe environment and help kids develop valuable life skills.](#)

Afterschool programs give kids a safe place to play, learn, and engage with positive role models who help them develop leadership skills and the ability to make responsible decisions. Kids who regularly attend these programs:

- are more aware of the dangers of alcohol, drugs and other risky activities.
- learn how to manage their aggression and avoid situations that negatively impact their academics and future goals.
- are less likely to take part in criminal activities and have lower incidences of drug use, violence, and pregnancy.
- improve their self-perception and develop positive social skills, like cooperation and helping others.
- earn better grades, behave better in school, and are more likely to graduate from high school.

[Parents depend on afterschool programs; believe they keep kids safe and out of trouble.](#)

Today over 46,000 New Mexico children participate in afterschool programs, and demand continues to grow. Another 124,000 children would participate if a program were available.

Among New Mexico parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 75% agree the programs keep kids safe and out of trouble.
- 80% say the program can help reduce the likelihood that kids will engage in risky behaviors like crime, drug use, and sexual activity. Afterschool is a smart investment.

Every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves \$3 by reducing crime and juvenile delinquency, improving kids' performance at school, and increasing kids' earning potential. We need to invest in afterschool programs --at the federal and state level--to ensure that afterschool is available to all.



## Afterschool Programs Help Children Succeed in School and Life

Success in school and life requires a solid academic foundation as well as skills such as the ability to work collaboratively, problem solve, make responsible decisions, and communicate effectively.

Kids who regularly participate in afterschool programs perform better academically. They demonstrate gains in reading and math and improved school attendance, work habits, and grades. They also are more likely to advance to the next grade and have higher graduation rates.

Afterschool programs help children develop the skills they need to learn, grow, and thrive in school and in life. Students who regularly participate in quality afterschool programs:

- develop strong social skills.
- make better decisions.
- improve their self-perception and esteem.
- are excited about learning.
- behave better in the classroom.

### Parents believe afterschool programs help their kids succeed.

An overwhelming percentage of parents with kids in afterschool programs in New Mexico say the programs help kids:

- interact with peers and build social skills. 88%
- get homework help. 65%
- take part in STEM learning opportunities. 64%
- learn life skills. 83%
- build confidence. 85%
- build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors. 79%

### Investing in afterschool is critical to kids' success.

Afterschool programs offer enriching experiences that engage students, encourage creativity, and inspire a love of learning. They help students stay in school, graduate, and gain valuable life skills. All children deserve the opportunity to take part in afterschool programs that provide the building blocks they need to thrive in school, in career, and beyond.

## Afterschool Programs Prepare Students for College and the Workforce

Given our complex and changing world, today’s students need to be critical thinkers who can tackle modern challenges. Learning in science, technology, engineering, and math — the subjects called “STEM” — builds knowledge and skills that help students reason through tough problems and come up with creative, effective, and reasonable solutions. Young people also need to develop 21st century skills necessary for success in the global economy, such as leadership, cooperation, shared understanding, and civic engagement.

### Afterschool programs help students graduate from high school and gain workforce skills.

Students who participate in afterschool programs are more likely to advance to the next grade and have higher graduation rates. Afterschool programs also are stepping up to offer learning experiences that prepare students for jobs in high demand.

### Parents value afterschool STEM.

- Afterschool programs offer kids across New Mexico STEM learning experiences.
- Most New Mexico parents (56%) with children who participate in afterschool programs are satisfied with the STEM learning opportunities provided.
- 57% of New Mexico parents agree that when selecting an afterschool program, STEM and computer science learning opportunities are important

### Afterschool programs help our nation’s kids prepare for the future.

Afterschool programs do more than support learning that takes place during the regular school day. The afterschool space gives young people the freedom to explore outside of core curriculum subjects and engages them in hands-on learning that promotes collaborative thinking, leadership, and civic participation.

We have much more work ahead of us to ensure that all children are afforded the opportunities afterschool programs offer. It will take a united effort to increase the availability of quality afterschool programs that help children reach their full potential and succeed in school, college, career, and beyond.

## Afterschool Programs Provide Opportunities for Healthy Living

Access to healthy options such as quality food and exercise is not equally dispersed among populations. The United States has reached a point where almost 1 in 3 children and teens qualify as overweight or obese. Obesity is connected with further ailments such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and asthma. Healthy eating and exercise reduce the risks of obesity yet only 42% of kids get the recommended amount of daily activity and only 10% are eating a recommended amount of vegetables. Instruction and access to healthy lifestyles can promote a healthy habit lifestyle and bring further rewards in how a student feels about themselves and their mental and physical energy.

[Afterschool programs provide important access to nutrition and exercise.](#)

Among New Mexico parents with children in an afterschool program:

- 87% of New Mexico parents agree that programs provide kids opportunities to be physically active.
- 71% of New Mexico parents agree that afterschool programs provide healthy beverages, snacks, or meals.

[Afterschool programs boost opportunities for healthy lifestyles.](#)

The fact that afterschool programs offer recreational activities for youth that engage them in extra time with physical activity supports national efforts to stem obesity and focus on wellness. Additionally, with programs often receiving support for meals and snacks, children are exposed to healthy eating habits and nutrition education that feeds their growing bodies and minds. Some afterschool programs go even farther, teaching students cooking lessons or having children grow and prepare their own local dishes directly from program-based gardens. The opportunities for creativity and engagement are broad and the rewards can be seen in the short and long term academic and health outcomes of our youth.

## Afterschool and Summer Programs work to eliminate the opportunity gap between the rich and poor

The academic achievement gap between students from lower -and higher-income families has grown by 40% in 30 years. Research points to one reason for this disparity is unequal access to opportunities. For example, low-income students lose more than two months of educational progress over the summer months, while middle income students make slight gains. In fact, this loss makes up about 67% of the achievement gap in reading among ninth graders. More generally, higher income students often have more access to the tutors, mentors, homework help, and enrichments that provide them with the extra time and attention they need to build and hone their skills toward school, college and career success. Ensuring that all students regardless of family income have access to academic, artistic, social and other types of enrichment should be a top national priority.

### Afterschool Programs can Equalize the Playing Field.

Programs stem the tides of intergenerational poverty by providing opportunities to low-income students.

- 69% say programs provide opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)
- Research shows that quality programs can reduce or reverse summer learning loss

### Afterschool Programs bridge divides between “haves” and “have nots.”

Having resources means being able to provide one’s children with the benefits of academics supports and cultural enrichments when school is out, yet not having resources should not be a reason that young people are denied access to these essential supports. Afterschool and summer programs provide the links that many students need to the school day to keep their progress on-going. Without these links, gaps grow, and inequalities entrench; with these links, all students have an opportunity to thrive and move up the ladder together.