

September 27, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

Afterschool and summer learning programs around the nation have enthusiastically embraced STEM programming and are engaging children and youth in STEM learning—including those who may not otherwise be selected to, or choose to, participate in STEM programs.

These programs host varied modes of intervention, allowing educators to match learning experiences to student interests and to use project-based learning that drives home the relevance and importance of STEM in daily life. **The afterschool setting uniquely gives young people the opportunity to learn through solving problems and through failing**—an experience crucial to research, experimentation and innovation and developing the persistence the fields require. Additionally, **research shows mentoring and exposure to role models—key components of afterschool—are particularly effective in engaging youth of color.**

What can Congress do? Federal policies that seize on afterschool programs and their unique role in inspiring interest and success in STEM education will engage more young people in the STEM fields so important to the country. To this end, we ask you to:

1. **Raise the profile of afterschool and summer learning programs as partners in STEM education programs and policies.** Convene briefings, hearings, and support other activities to show the crucial role afterschool programs and providers play in inspiring and nurturing interest and success in STEM fields.
2. **Require partnerships with afterschool or other informal science education providers in broad-based STEM education reform efforts.** Require that an informal science education entity, such as an afterschool provider or science center, be a partner in efforts to implement high-quality K-12 math or science standards.
3. **Include afterschool programs and informal science education providers as partners in existing federal programs that provide or improve STEM education.**
4. **Integrate afterschool educators into federal professional development programs.** Explicitly encourage joint professional development for teachers and afterschool educators in existing federal programs that support teacher professional development to ensure complementary STEM content delivery and effective implementation of high-quality K-12 math and science standards.
5. **Integrate stakeholder perspectives on ways to improve the effectiveness and coordination of federal investments in informal science education and STEM programs.** Explicitly include afterschool as an eligible activity or strategy and/or afterschool providers as partners in federal STEM education programs; continue to invest in existing STEM education programs at NASA, NIH, NOAA, and other mission-based federal agencies, while working to create a funding strategy for afterschool STEM programs and providers.
6. **Build the knowledge base about what works in afterschool and other informal science education STEM programs.** As the Congress considers the reauthorization of the Education Sciences Reform Act, ask the Institute of Education Sciences to examine STEM education in afterschool settings and informal science education programs.

High-quality afterschool and summer STEM learning programs work. A recent study showed participants had improved attitudes toward STEM fields and careers, increased STEM knowledge and skills, and a higher likelihood of graduating and pursuing a STEM major in college. We look forward to building on this success and working with you to improve policies that address STEM learning in the hours outside of the school day.

Thank you,

International and National Organizations

Addictive Science
Afterschool Alliance
After-School All-Stars
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)
American Statistical Association
Association of Science-Technology Centers
Camp Fire
Coalition for Community Schools
Computer Science Collaborative Project
Computing in the Core
Destination Imagination
Education Development Center
FIRST Robotics
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers-USA
National Afterschool Association
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Coalition for Aviation and Space Education
National Collaboration for Youth
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Girls Collaborative Project
National Science Teachers Association
National Summer Learning Association
SAE International
Sparkfun Electronics
STEM Education Coalition
Think Global Flight
Time Warner Cable
Triangle Coalition for STEM Education
United Way Worldwide
YMCA of the USA
Young Adult Library Services Association

Regional, State and Local Organizations

Altshuller Institute for TRIZ Studies Inc. (MA)
American Educational Products LLC (CO)
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Black Family Technology Awareness Association (MO)
California STEM Learning Network

Dycet Research Group (IL)
Funutation Tekademy LLC (IL, MA, MD, MI, OH, VA)
HUNSTEM (Houston Urban Network for STEM)
Indiana Afterschool Network
Iowa Afterschool Alliance
Kansas Enrichment Network
Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance
Maryland Out-of-School Time Network
Maryland Science Center
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
Michigan After-School Partnership
Mid-Atlantic Girls Collaborative (DC, DE, MA, VA)
Missouri AfterSchool Network
Museum of Science, Boston
Nebraska CLC Network
New Jersey School Age Care Coalition
New York State Afterschool Network
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
Ohio Afterschool Network
Oklahoma Afterschool Network
Oregon AfterSchool for Kids
Orlando Science Center
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool Youth Development Network
Project SYNCERE (GA, IL)
School's Out Washington
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
STEM Fuse (MN, SD)
Sunshine Hope (PA)
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time
University of Connecticut McNair Scholars Program
Utah Afterschool Network
Vermont Afterschool, Inc.
Wisdom Tools Inc. (IN)
Youth Building Success Enhancement (TX)