









## American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Education Funding Opportunities for Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs, a critical support to so many struggling families and communities, have tremendous opportunities to benefit from the *American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA)*. Making good use of these opportunities to help keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families requires strategic thinking and planning on the part of afterschool providers and advocates. The Afterschool Alliance has launched a special project to pursue these opportunities, with an aim of realizing short and long term benefits for the afterschool community. Background, strategies, successes and ideas can be found in the Policy and Action Center at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org). Key education funding opportunities are outlined below.

**Title I (\$10B):** To help students in high-poverty schools meet academic standards. The Department of Education has suggested use of ARRA Title I funds for extended learning, including afterschool, summer and year-round programs.

*Mechanics:* States disburse funds to local education agencies (LEAs), which decide how the funds are used. Half of the ARRA Title I funds were awarded to states in April 2009 and the remaining funds were released in September 2009. States need to show they can meet ARRA reporting requirements before receiving the second round of funds. LEAs must spend down at least 85% of ARRA and FY 2009 Title I funds by Sept. 30, 2010. In late August 2009, the Department released updated guidance, *Uses of Funds for Title I, Part A and IDEA* citing explicit support for extended learning time activities that include before-and-afterschool programs, Saturday and summer programs.

*Decision Makers:* State and Local Title I Directors and Coordinators, Superintendents, Principals, Local Education Agencies.

*Challenges:* Many school districts are using Title I to fill gaps. School administrators are also concerned about minimizing the "funding cliff" when recovery funding expires. LEAs and local school leaders are hesitant to do anything "outside the box." Some programs do not have strong existing relationships with school leaders.

*Success stories:* There are several reasons to pursue Title 1 despite difficulties: the amount of potential resources; positioning programs for continued support via Title 1 post-ARRA; establishing better relationships with school leadership via ARRA outreach even if it doesn't lead to ARRA funding; natural fit for afterschool and one that the Department of Education has been encouraging. Some promising developments:

- In West Virginia, the **Statewide Afterschool Network** worked with the WV Department of Education to provide the Title I Director with a list of afterschool programs interested in partnering with schools and school districts.



expanded learning and community involvement as approved strategies for the turnaround and transformation models. Advocates should note that expanded learning opportunities like afterschool and summer programs can arguably be a strategy for all of the school reform models including *Restart*. State applications were submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on February 8, 2010. Advocates should contact their state education agency officials to obtain a list the eligible underperforming schools in their communities and explore opportunities to partner.

*Decision Makers:* LEAs, Superintendents of low-performing schools, state education agency officials.

*Challenges:* The SIG process is fast-moving, complex and subject to confusion. Afterschool is mentioned in the guidance but only as a permissive component rather than as a requirement; need to build relationships with key new players including education management organizations (EMOs) and charter organizations; guidance calls for a radical turn around of schools in a short period of time.

**Race to the Top (RTT) (\$4.35B):** Overseen by the U.S. Secretary of Education, this competitive grant program will reward states that have improved academic achievement. \$350M of these funds will be set aside via a separate RFP for rigorous assessments to support the new common academic standards being developed by states. The Department has said states that use recovery funds for reform strategies, including extended or afterschool programs will be well positioned to win grants. Governors can choose to include afterschool programs in their applications for grants. Applications must be signed by the Governor, the Chief State School Officer and the President of the State Education Board.

*Mechanics:* Awards for the RTT grant program will be made in two phases: Phase I applications were submitted by January 19, 2010 with awards expected in April 2010 and Phase II applications are due in April 2010 with awards made in September 2010. Applications from 40 states and the District of Columbia were submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for Phase I of the RTT awards. Among these entries, 16 state finalists were selected for special consideration for grant awards. It is likely that only a few winners will be chosen among this group of finalists because the Department does not anticipate spending more than \$2 billion dollars in Phase I. States that apply in Phase I but are not awarded grants may reapply in Phase II. Phase I grantees will receive full-sized awards and therefore may not apply for additional funding in Phase II. Grants must address four main areas of work: adopting internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and turning around lowest-performing schools.

Afterschool is written in the final requirements as an allowable strategy to be included in RTT grants. In section (E)(2), covering the core goal of turning around the lowest-achieving schools, "increased learning time" is specified as a required strategy for the Turnaround option, and as permissible strategy for the Transformational model of school intervention. The Department defines "increased learning time" in part as "instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-

based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations.” A second area, *Invitational Priority 6*, explicitly recommends “implementing new structures and formats for the school day or year that result in increased learning time” and that “effectively engage families and communities.” (This is not a core goal area; it reflects a policy the Secretary believes in but does not earn points on proposals.)

*Decision Makers:* Governor’s offices, State Recovery Czar, heads of state agencies, LEAs (The final requirements highlights LEA participation and buy-in as an “absolute priority” for successful state applications.)

*Challenges:* Access to state-level discussions on applying for funds; Department has signaled that there will likely be only a few, large grants so only a few states will actually receive these funds. Many afterschool advocates have reported difficulty in gaining access to the state-level discussions that are guiding the RTT applications. In most cases, the decision-making process is not very transparent and requires strong relationships with Governors’ top education officers and with other high-level state agencies.

*Success Stories:* Thanks to strong outreach from advocates, many states incorporated an afterschool component in proposals to increase student achievement and turn around struggling schools. Some promising developments include:

- **Pennsylvania:** Applications with emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) are well positioned to be successful in the RTT competition. Pennsylvania proposes to use RTT funds to create innovative opportunities for summer STEM programs, using popular draws like video game development to attract students to the area.
- **South Carolina:** The state’s RTT application proposes a research-based “Pilot Dropout Prevention and Intervention Model” which includes mentoring, afterschool tutoring and a four-week summer enrichment transition program. Additionally, their proposal urges schools to allow students to gain credit through courses offered before and after normal school hours. This offers students increased access to additional support structures through extending learning time opportunities.
- **Wisconsin:** The Wisconsin Initiative for Neighborhoods and Schools that Work for Children (WINS for Children) encourages connecting children and their families to a full range of community supports—including a mix of afterschool and out-of-school programs. Not only are some of these programs academic-based, but many are also aimed to strengthen youth self-esteem and sense of achievement. This proposal is modeled after Harlem’s Children Zone in New York City.

**Invest in Innovation (i3) Fund (\$650M):** Competitive grants to be awarded by the U.S. Secretary of Education to local education agencies and community based organizations that have made measurable strides to help close the achievement gap. Program evidence is underscored as a “formal eligibility requirement” for prospective applicants. The funds are intended to help drive and expand successful education reform strategies.

*Mechanics:* The i3 Fund will fund three types of grants, the largest of which will target programs that are proven, with capacity to be easily replicated. The three grant categories are: *Development* grants to provide support of up to about \$5 million dollars to

test new promising ideas; *Validation* grants to provide support of up to \$30 million for programs that need to build a research base or organizational capacity to succeed at a larger scale; and *Scale Up* grants to provide support of up to \$50 million for proven programs that are ready to grow and expand. The final i3 grant application and program priorities were made available on March 9, 2010. Applicants must submit a *Letter of Intent to Apply* by April 1, 2010 and applications are due on May 11, 2010. Grant funds may be used for 4-5 years.

*Decision Makers:* The U.S. Department of Education is the grant reviewer. Entities eligible to receive grants are also gatekeepers for those seeking to be part of I3 proposals; these are: local education agencies (including charter school LEAs) and nonprofit organizations working in collaboration with LEA(s) or a consortium of schools.

*Challenges:* Requires strong evaluation data demonstrating program success; competition for funds is likely to be stiff, especially from charter schools.

**New Assessments and Standards to Drive Ed Reform:** The U.S. Department of Education has created a \$350 million fund to help states develop assessments around a new [Common Core Standards](#) that 46 states have committed to use (the standards are being developed under the leadership of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers). The Department of Education has stipulated that assessments should measure whether students are mastering complex materials and can apply their knowledge in ways that show that they are ready for college and careers. Guidance has not yet been released on the assessment fund, and Secretary Duncan has noted that the public will be given opportunities to comment on the criteria used to develop the assessment tools. There is interest in measuring not only classroom instruction but also intervention measures outside of the classroom that help boost achievement. The Secretary has cited for example, the need to capture the effectiveness of early learning programs and other social support services including expanded learning opportunities.



## Take Action in Your Community with *Afterschool for All*

*Afterschool for All*, is a national petition and searchable database designed by the Afterschool Alliance to bring together the diverse individuals and organizations who believe in quality, affordable afterschool programs for all children. More than 25,000 partners from all 50 states—representing more than 30 million Americans—have joined *Afterschool for All*.

Use the *Afterschool for All* advocacy toolkit to help grow and strengthen your advocacy efforts for afterschool. Here are just a few of the ways you can build support and raise awareness for afterschool using the *Afterschool for All* advocacy toolkit.

Download the sample invitation letters, emails and afterschool talking points to jumpstart your advocacy outreach with high-level state, city and community stakeholders at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerTools.cfm>

### Successful partnerships with Mayors:

The National League of Cities made a call to action for more city leaders to join the *Afterschool for All* effort. As a result, we're pleased to report that more than forty city leaders, including several mayors, council members and superintendents signed on to become *Afterschool for All* partners.

Are your city and state leaders represented on the national list of *Afterschool for All* partners? To see whether your mayor, council member, senator or governor has signed on, simply search the *Afterschool for All* database at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartners.cfm>

Use the *Afterschool for All* community petition at your events to help mobilize parents, teachers, youth and community leaders for afterschool. A sample petition is available at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerPetition.cfm>

### Success story from Kansas:

The Kansas Enrichment Network (KEN) hosted a successful community outreach for their state campaign, *Afterschool for All Kansas*, to build awareness among local college students. Marcia Dvorak, Director of the Kansas Enrichment Network, organized a petition drive in a student cafeteria at the Johnson County Community College. Marcia says: "Successes came from venturing away from the booth, clipboards in hand, to the tables and work stations. Little resistance was found among this population. Most of the students had been associated with a program, some had worked in an afterschool environment, and almost all quickly agreed with the need to provide safe places for younger youth."



Help lead state-wide *Afterschool for All* efforts in your community in partnership with your State-wide Afterschool Network. Nine states have partnered with the Afterschool Alliance to launch co-branded state campaigns: *Afterschool for All* Kansas, Wyoming, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, New Hampshire, Iowa, South Carolina, Oregon and New Jersey. These campaigns represent a collective effort by state partners to build awareness and increase support for afterschool in their communities.

*Success story from New Jersey:*

NJSACC, the network for New Jersey's afterschool communities, launched an effort to collect 10,000 signatures from New Jerseyans who support quality, affordable afterschool programs for all New Jersey children. Advocates in the state have teamed up with *Afterschool for All* to lend a national angle to a state-wide advocacy effort that is already underway, "New Jersey Celebrate Afterschool Outdoors in the Garden State." By partnering with the *Afterschool for All* effort, advocates leveraged the project's national reach and utilized our advocacy tools including a dedicated website with a searchable database, sample petitions, letters, talking points and other materials that can help make the case for greater support for afterschool. They also received ongoing technical assistance from the Afterschool Alliance's national team to help build capacity and increase the number of supporters for afterschool in New Jersey.

Community mobilization is crucial to building support for afterschool with key sectors and stakeholders. Contact the Afterschool Alliance if you would like to launch a state-wide *Afterschool for All* campaign in your state.

**Don't be shy about showing your support for afterschool.**

- Invite your friends, colleagues and community leaders to join *Afterschool for All*. Sign on at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aJoin.cfm>
- Display the *Proud Partner of Afterschool for All* web banner on your website.
- Use *Afterschool for All* talking points to make the case for afterschool programs.

*Afterschool for All* tools and resources can be found on the *Afterschool for All* website at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4a.cfm>.

Questions, comments? Contact us:

*Afterschool for All*

1440 Broadway, 16<sup>th</sup> FL

New York, NY 10018

Tel: 646.943.8662 / Fax: 646.943.8664

[info@afterschoolalliance.org](mailto:info@afterschoolalliance.org)



## Petition for Afterschool

[date]

[addressee]  
[address]

Dear [Elected Official, Candidate for Office]:

The purpose of this petition is to show that I support quality, affordable afterschool programs for all youth who need them and to ask for your help in making more afterschool activities available in **[insert city/district/county]**. Afterschool programs combat juvenile crime, help working families and provide our youth with enriching opportunities to grow into successful adults. Kids in afterschool programs do better in school, and are less likely to get in trouble. However, there are not nearly enough afterschool programs in our communities to serve all of the youth who need them.

I am proud to be part of *Afterschool for All*, a national group of more than 25,000 individuals and organizations representing more than 30 million Americans who believe in the importance of afterschool programs for our communities. *Afterschool for All* partners include governors, mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors, colleges and universities, parents, educators, youths and advocates as well as prominent organizations representing a broad array of sectors including the YMCA of the USA, the NAACP, the National Council of La Raza, the National PTA, the National League of Cities, AARP, Time Warner, IBM, the NBA, NFL, MLB and the NHL.

**Please print your name, zip code, city, email and sign your signature below. SIGN ONLY ONCE.**

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## Petition for Afterschool

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## Petition for Afterschool

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\*Signers of this letter are partners of *Afterschool for All*, a project of the Afterschool Alliance. There are no stated requirements for being a partner in *Afterschool for All* and partner information is not shared nor sold. The list of *Afterschool for All* partners will be used in outreach materials, press releases and posted on the Afterschool Alliance and the *Afterschool for All* websites. This partner list illustrates the broad range of individuals, organizations and sectors that believe afterschool is critical to children and their families.



## TIP SHEET & SAMPLE MATERIALS: Organizing a Site Visit for a Policy Maker

*Inviting policy makers to visit your afterschool program is a powerful way to help them understand the benefits your program provides to the community. Below are suggested steps, a timeline and a sample schedule for your event, as well as a sample invitation and thank you letter. Consult the Key Dates to see when your Members of Congress will be back in your community.*

**Step 1: Find the home district address and phone number for your elected officials.** Visit the Afterschool Alliance website, [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org), and look for the Contact Congress box on the left side of the homepage. Enter your zip code to access contact information for your law makers. (You can also visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) to find this information.) Most Senators and some Representatives have more than one district office. Select the office closest to you. If you do not have access to the Internet, look in the blue government pages of your local phone book.

**Step 2: Identify a few dates during the next Congressional recess when you could host a visit to your program.** Using the date that is most optimal for you, write an invitation letter based on the sample provided in this packet. Have the letter on hand when you call the district office.

**Step 3: Call the district office.** Tell the person who answers that you would like to schedule a visit to your afterschool program for the Senator or Representative. You may be connected with a legislative aide or a scheduler.

**Try for the top.** Ask if the law maker can visit during the next Congressional recess. Provide options for dates and times if your first choice does not work. Be sure to mention that staff and parents will be on hand for the visit and offer to invite media as well. Point out how your program relates to the policy maker's interests (literacy, improving academic achievement in public schools, keeping communities safe by decreasing juvenile crime, helping families, etc.). Offer to re-send your "Invite Letter" and more information about the program and who will be at the visit. Encourage the policy maker to bring staff members.

**Be flexible.** If the law maker is not available, ask whether a senior staff person can visit instead. Even if the law maker agrees to come, keep in mind that elected officials' schedules can change with little notice. Several days before the visit, call to confirm the event and be prepared to reschedule.

**Mail or fax your personalized invitation letter (sample here).** Be sure to send along a program profile, brochure and background materials about your program.

**Step 4: Before the visit.** Identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your program. Ask them to be available for the visit and give them background material on the policy maker, so they will feel comfortable at the event. Share the basic schedule for the visit and clarify their roles. Make sure to invite key partners, supporters, your school's principal and even school board members. Send a media advisory to invite press and prepare a press release for the day of the event. (Go to Program Tools, Media or the *Lights On Afterschool* area of [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org) for tips and samples.)

**Step 5: The visit.** On the day of the visit, have someone wait outside the building to greet and direct the visitors to the right location. Be sure to have program brochures or a program profile on hand. You may want to make copies of any articles, youth essays, parent letters, awards or other documents that demonstrate community support for your program. Be sure the policy maker gets to hear from the young people at your program. Let him/her ask questions of the students or facilitate a discussion to get their perspectives on afterschool and what they gain from the program. Other ideas: ask parents

to share their perspectives; ask a principal to talk about the ways the program affects students; ask a police officer, youth counselor, pediatrician or health leader talk about the benefits to youth who attend it; invite community members to comment on how the program keeps kids out of trouble.

At some point during the visit, perhaps early on and then again near the end of the visit, consider identifying an “ask” that you would like to make to the Member of Congress. Examples include asking for the Member of Congress to support increased funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC during the appropriations process; or asking him or her to cosponsor legislation such as bills to support older youth programs or those in rural areas; or asking him or her to support expansion of the federal afterschool meal/supper program.

### Sample Schedule

- 3:00 p.m. Policy maker and staff arrive at the program and are greeted by the program director or other lead host.
- 3:05-3:15 p.m. Lead the policy maker and staff on a tour. Let them see the youth activities.
- 3:15-3:30 p.m. Afterschool snack time! Let the policy maker enjoy a snack and talk with the children about their favorite parts of the program. Ask the kids where they would be if they did not attend afterschool or what their friends outside the program do after school.
- 3:30-3:45 p.m. After the snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and the policy maker. Ask the parents to explain how the afterschool program helps their families.
- 3:45-4:00 p.m. Ask your invited guest (principal or superintendent, police officer, youth counselor, etc) to talk about the benefits they see the program offering youth.
- 4:00 p.m. Thank you and goodbye!

**Step 6: Send a Thank You letter.** See the “Sample Thank You Letter” in this packet.

### Planning Timeline

Work backward from the date of the policy maker visit to make sure you are well-prepared. Use the suggested timeline below as a tool to help you plan. Allow at least one month between the invitation and the actual visit to be sure you have enough time to coordinate guests and schedules.

Time Prior to Visit	Task
1 month	Invite policy maker
3 weeks	Invite parents, community members, school officials, youth
2 weeks	Develop schedule for the day; identify roles
1 week	Finalize program agenda
3 days	Call policy maker’s office to confirm visit
2 days	Invite the media (see Program Tools at <a href="http://www.afterschoolalliance.org">www.afterschoolalliance.org</a> for sample media advisory and other materials)

## Sample Invitation Letter to Send Your Member of Congress

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable Ruth Smith  
500 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

I would like to invite you and your staff to visit the **[Bright Lights Afterschool Program]** during your next district working session. Our program provides 300 middle school children with safe, educational afterschool activities during the critical hours from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., when many parents are still working and juvenile crime rates triple. Students in our program are not only safe; they are doing better in school, and show more interest in learning.

We would like to take you on a short tour of our program on **[date]** at **[time]**. If that time is not convenient, we would be happy to work with you to find a time that is. I have also invited members of the local **[Rotary Club]** and several parents to attend. They are eager to talk with you about the importance of keeping afterschool 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. Afterschool programs such as ours are important because they inspire students to learn, keep kids safe and help working families. The **[Bright Lights]** community relies on us.

A profile of the **[Bright Lights Afterschool Program]** 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]**  
**[Phone Number]**  
**[E-mail Address]**

## Sample Thank You Letter to Send to Your Member of Congress

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable Ruth Smith  
500 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to tour our [Bright Lights Afterschool Program] during your recent district working session. 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, afterschool 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 afterschool 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]  
[Phone Number]  
[E-mail Address]

*NOTE: A copy of this letter should also be sent to the district office. It is also a good idea to thank staff members who joined the policy maker on the visit to help further your relationship with the office.*



## Take Action Success Stories: Two Site Visits & A Legislative Breakfast

### Nurturing Relationships with Local Officials Boys & Girls Clubs of East Los Angeles

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**What:** Multiple visits to Anna Araujo's Boys & Girls Club (BGC) afterschool site by local elected officials and their staff.

**Goal:** To develop a climate of support among local elected officials for afterschool programs in general, and the Boys & Girls Club in particular.

**Results:** Araujo reports that stronger relationships with elected officials are responsible for increased support and resources for her program. Her access makes it possible to make specific requests – for new equipment or discretionary funding, for example – to staff and officials.

**How it was done:** Araujo has worked hard for several years to develop consistent relationships with local elected officials and their staff members. Among these is

a member of the county board of supervisors with jurisdiction over her area. Araujo inherited a less than ideal relationship with the supervisor, owing to staff problems at the Boys & Girls Club that occurred before she arrived. But with consistent efforts to keep elected officials informed about Club activities, make the Club available to them for visits and photo opportunities, and provide officials with ready access to groups of children for various media-friendly events, she has turned the relationships around. Araujo has focused attention not just on the officials themselves, but on their key aides – field representatives and schedulers.

It's important to be in touch with local elected officials and staff even when you're not asking them for something. If I have an event that I think will allow an official to shine, I make sure their field representative knows about it, and knows their boss is welcome to stop by and say a few words.

- Anna Araujo

#### Lessons Learned:

- **Nurturing relationships with officials' key staff members pays off.** They are often the ones to decide whether and where the official will appear, and they play important roles in policy making as well. So she maintains regular contact with aides, sending personal emails, newsletters, annual reports, and individual thank-you gifts (art from students, for example) after visits.
- **Help elected officials' staff envision a successful visit** by their boss. When staff members visit, Araujo tries to make it easy for them to visualize a successful and media-friendly visit from the elected official. She distributes t-shirts to students, takes staff to see photogenic activities, shows them a stage area where presentations could be made, etc.
- **Extend the network of contacts.** Araujo finds that staff turnover can be high with elected officials, but that the same people turn up in new jobs with different officials – thus extending her network of contacts.
- **Invite elected officials or their staff members to sit on event-planning committees.** Araujo says that by involving officials, they become more invested in program activities – even if they don't actually participate in the planning process.



- **Let officials and their aids know that your students are available for events.** Araujo is often asked by officials for help in gathering a crowd of children for various announcements or ceremonies. She works hard to be responsive to those requests, giving her children exposure to the political process while helping nurture relationships with important officials.
- **Be straightforward in describing your program and your event.** When inviting officials to come to an event, Araujo is careful not to overstate expected turnout or otherwise “over-hype” the event. Officials and staff understandably want to know what to expect, and unpleasant surprises can sour a relationship.



## Planning a Visit from a Member of Congress Dream Team Action Clubs, St. Mary's County, Maryland Public Schools

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**What:** A tour of an afterschool program by U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader and senior member of the Appropriations Committee. The Representative stayed for two full hours at the Lexington Park Elementary School program in St. Mary's County, Maryland, where he toured the program, met with children and staff, made a speech, and talked with media.

**Goal:** To buttress Representative Hoyer's already solid support for afterschool programs, to encourage him to take even stronger leadership in support of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative, and to increase local visibility of afterschool issues. Hoyer's office had requested that the Maryland State Department of Education arrange a visit to a site in St. Mary's County, one of five counties in his district.

**Results:** The event earned considerable local media attention, including a story in the *Washington Post*, and helped solidify the relationship between the local afterschool program and the Representative's office.

**How it was done:** Smith worked for several weeks to iron out every detail of the Representative's visit, including contingency plans for what to do if the Representative arrived late, if other speakers spoke too long, etc. In fact, the visit had to be delayed several weeks when a snowstorm closed school. Smith invited a number of local officials, including school board members, to join in the visit. Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant attended as well.

We worked hard to make sure we showed off all the good things about afterschool. Because of Representative Hoyer's leadership role, we knew his visit could have national influence. And it certainly had a great effect locally, with afterschool suddenly becoming a hot topic and lots of powerful people looking at how we can find continued funding.

-Mark Smith

### Lessons Learned:

- **Remember that other officials or allies who attend an event with a Member of Congress will often have an interest in talking to the Member about non-afterschool issues.** So make sure you're able to keep the visit focused on your issues.
- **Be flexible.** Smith had to reschedule the event because of a snowstorm. And despite ample planning and coordination with Representative Hoyer's staff, the Representative spoke earlier and stayed longer than expected. Flexibility matters.
- **Be sure to have a camera handy,** along with an experienced photographer to operate it.
- **Connect with the staff of the visitor.** Smith had many phone and email conversations with Representative Hoyer's legislative assistant in charge of education issues to plan details of the visit. In the process, he briefed the staffer about afterschool programs, providing information on afterschool that she ended up using in news releases. Smith plans to build on the relationship with future events.
- **Bone up on your afterschool facts so that you'll be ready to answer detailed questions about the program** – how many children, how much money, etc.
- **Assign someone the task of working with journalists who attend,** getting their contact information, and helping make sure they have what they need to file their stories.

## **Pennsylvania Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs Recognize “Youth of the Year” at a Legislative Breakfast**

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**What:** The Pennsylvania Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs held an award ceremony/legislative breakfast to reward local “Youth of the Year” candidates and announce the selection of the “Pennsylvania Youth of the Year.”

**Goal:** The event showcased the youth to legislators to demonstrate the value of Boys & Girls Club (BGCA) programming to garner state budget support for Boys & Girls Club programs.

**Results:** Over the past four years, the statewide Boys & Girls Club movement and its programs have received recognition from the educational establishment of the state, removed administrative unwillingness to support club budgetary initiatives and have increased state funding to \$1.35 million.

“[Boys & Girls Clubs] have provided me with a safe place to learn and grow; ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals; life-enhancing programs; character development experiences and hope and opportunity.” -**Nick Khan, 2009-10 Pennsylvania Youth of the Year**

**How it was done:** The Legislative Breakfast initiative has been a regular part of the state “Youth of the Year” program for the past four years with an ever increasing number of state legislators and administrative officials participating and/or attending the event. Invitations to the breakfast are sent out two months prior to the event with follow-up phone calls. Other personal contacts are made by the local Club executive staff and or Board members to their local Representatives and Senators. Specific and influential legislators and Administrative officials are selected to serve as hosts of the event and participate as speakers and/or presenters at the event. In the past four years the following people served in various capacities at the breakfast: Senate and House Appropriation chairs; chairs of the House and Senate Education committees; the Secretary of Education; and the Lt. Governor.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- **Develop and/or nurture existing relationships between local club staff, board of directors and local legislators.** This builds a strong grassroots network that can be useful in critical times as legislators are pressed to cut state budgets in order to meet budgetary requirements. Strong local support will make a difference as to whether your budgetary requests are either reduced or eliminated or are championed by your local legislators.
- **Develop a strong relationship at the state level with Administration officials and staff.** Relationships provide the opportunity to demonstrate the value of your afterschool program and possibly, reduce any opposition to your efforts by state leaders.

- **Develop a strong and active role within the educational establishment of the state.** Work with other non-Administration groups to find common ground and present a unified non-competitive image to the Administration and the Legislature.
- **Develop a strong and working relationship, at the state-level, with Legislative staff.** This will increase the access to Legislators for their participation and/or attendance at the Legislative Breakfast and encourage them to champion the afterschool cause.
- **Encourage local “Youth of the Year” winners to offer their assistance to local Legislators in serving as tour guides for their constituents and as possible youth voices in any town meeting or panel discussions that the local Legislator may want to sponsor.**
- **Encourage local Legislators to publicly recognize their local “Youth of the Year” winners through Legislative Resolutions and other awards.** This provides local Legislators with “feel good” opportunities within their local districts and further encourages them to become part of the local family of supporters.



## After the *Afterschool for All Challenge*: Media Outreach Ideas and Tips

There are many ways for afterschool advocates to generate news coverage about the challenges afterschool programs face, particularly during the current wave of funding shortfalls most programs are experiencing. Following are ideas, along with some how-to information, for getting out your message about afterschool. At a minimum, consider sending out a news release and/or a letter-to-the-editor about your visit to Washington, D.C. But you'll also find in this packet other ways to generate media coverage. Contained here are tips and sample materials for you to:

- » Send a Letter to the Editor of Your Local Newspaper(s) (template to use is on flash drive)
- » Send a News Release about Your Trip to Washington, D.C. (template to use is on flash drive)
- » Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show (template to use is on flash drive)
- » Write an Opinion Article for Your Local Newspaper
- » Look for a Local Cable Television Interview Opportunity
- » Talk with the Editorial Writer(s) of Your Local Newspaper
- » Post a Blog on your Trip on Your School District's or Another Blog

### Messages That Work

The Afterschool Alliance recommends the following messages with the media:

- Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.
- 2009 research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, finds that 15.1 million K-12 children are unsupervised in the afternoons. That includes 3.7 million middle school students and 1.1 million elementary school children.
- Just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs - but the parents of another 18.5 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.
- The recession has taken a harsh toll on afterschool programs, with many cutting back hours and some forced to close altogether.
- The President's budget proposal for FY2011 would effectively cut funding for afterschool, by folding a community schools program into the same funding stream. If the President's proposal is adopted, funding for afterschool will be reduced by \$13 million, meaning that 13,000 fewer children nationwide will have access to afterschool programs they need.
- In addition, the President's Blueprint for Education Reform - the Administration's recommendations for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (formerly *No Child Left Behind*) - would restructure the federal afterschool initiative (21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers) in several ways that could make it harder for afterschool programs to survive. For example, the Blueprint calls for diverting funds now set aside for afterschool to other programs, reducing funds available to afterschool programs, and therefore reducing the number of children they can serve. The Blueprint also calls for an end to state-administered grants, pulling grantmaking back to Washington. Some states and communities will win, others will lose, and rural communities that may not have expert grant writers are likely to suffer.

- America needs more afterschool programs. We need lawmakers, businesses and foundations to come together to ensure that afterschool programs get the funding they need to serve our children and our communities.

**Send a Letter to the Editor to Your Local Newspaper(s)** (See specific file included)

**Send a News Release about Your Trip to Washington, D.C.** (See specific file included)

**Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show** (See specific file included)

### **Write an Opinion Article for Your Local Newspaper**

Do some research on your newspaper's opinion page. Check every day for several days to see if it runs locally generated editorials (called op-eds, short for OPposite the EDitorial page, or guest editorials). Some newspapers only use staff or syndicated columnists, but most do take some pieces from readers. If your paper does accept op-eds, call and ask for the opinion page editor, and say you're thinking about writing an op-ed on the funding challenges afterschool programs in the community are facing and what it means to families. Then ask what the procedure is - how long the piece can be, who to submit it to and how, and any other guidelines the paper observes. Write it, submit it per the newspaper's instructions, and then call the next day to be sure it arrived.

Here are four tips for writing an op-ed piece:

- First, never exceed the word limit.
- Second, because it's an opinion article, write with a point of view but without being shrill.
- Third, back up what you say with real facts, and tell real stories.
- Fourth, start with a lead paragraph that captures the reader's attention, and gives a sense of where you're headed. For example: "Every weekday afternoon in Little Rock, more than 9,000 students stay after the final bell - not as punishment, but as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers' afterschool program. The program keeps them safe, inspires them to learn and relieves their parents of child care worries. But with funding lagging so far behind community needs, many of our children have no safe, adult-supervised place to go in the afternoon."

If you are not successful placing your op-ed piece in your community's major daily newspaper, consider community papers (often weeklies), or look for a website (the school system, an ally, your own program) that will publish it.

### **Look for a Local Broadcast or Cable Television Interview Opportunity**

Broadcast and cable television programming varies from market to market, so there are no firm rules about what kinds of local interview opportunities may be available to you. But, at a minimum, many broadcast stations run public affairs programs, and most cable systems have a channel devoted to local government or a local school system. Look through the listings of your local cable system to see what's possible in your community, and then send a pitch letter (like the radio letter provided here). Particularly for TV, offer to bring several children from your program.

### **Talk with the Editorial Writer(s) of Your Local Newspaper**

There's nothing quite like having an editorial on your side to help generate support from policy makers. Editorial writers are often looking for topics, so if you think your newspaper's general editorial disposition might favor full or increased funding for afterschool, see if you can convince the editorial page editor to write an editorial saying so.

First, call the newspaper, ask for the editorial page, and ask who writes editorials on local education issues. Depending on the size of the paper, it could be the editorial page editor, a columnist or even a reporter.

Ask to be connected with that person, and then request a meeting to talk about the funding challenges facing afterschool programs. If s/he agrees to meet, bring whatever fact sheets or other material you may have, as well as information on the impact of budget shortfalls - check the Afterschool Alliance's website at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

Be prepared to explain the threat to local programs, what inadequate funding would mean for children and families, and how many would likely be affected if the federal government fails to increase afterschool funding next year.

Remember, the writer will be thinking in terms of how he or she might write an editorial, so be sure to provide a local angle (that should be easy!) and specific facts that support your case.



## Send a Letter to the Editor to Your Local Newspaper(s)

Look at your newspaper's letters page. Scan the page itself, and the newspaper's website letters section, for instructions on word counts and where to send your letter. If you can't find instructions, count the number of words in a given day's letters. Also, see whether published letters all refer to stories or editorials the newspaper recently ran—some newspapers insist on it, some don't. Then write a letter that reflects what you've learned—length, tone, keyed to a story already published in the newspaper or not, etc.

Be sure your letter says that:

- Afterschool is the key to inspiring students to learn, keeping them safe and helping working families.
- Afterschool programs face severe funding shortfalls that are forcing many to cut back their services to kids and families, and others to close their doors altogether.
- The President's budget request and proposal for transforming the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative - the principal federal funding stream for afterschool programs - would result in even less money being available for afterschool.

Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter, and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication), where the paper can call to confirm that it's actually from you!

You'll find a sample fill-in-the-blanks letter-to-the-editor following this document that's keyed to your trip to Washington, D.C. The Afterschool Alliance urges you to modify the text of the letter, so that if the newspaper asks if the letter is being submitted to other papers around the nation, you can honestly answer that it is unique. Newspapers are increasingly sensitive to that issue.

## Sample Letter to the Editor

April [22], 2010

Letters to the Editor  
[name of newspaper]  
[Address]  
[City, state, zip]

To the Editor:

Every afternoon in the United States, millions of children leave school with no organized activity or adult supervision awaiting them. It's no surprise that the afternoon hours are when they are most likely to be the victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

But there are better alternatives, and afterschool programs provide them. Keeping kids safe in the afternoon is one of many reasons we need quality afterschool programs - many more than we already have. New research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, reveals that the parents of 18.5 million children not already in afterschool programs say they would sign their kids up if a program were available. Unfortunately, President Obama's proposed Blueprint for Education Reform would make that harder, by effectively cutting the funding available for afterschool and by federalizing the competition for grant dollars rather than making sure each state gets its fair share.

Last week I was proud to join hundreds of afterschool supporters at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* in Washington D.C., sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance in conjunction with the National AfterSchool Association. We met with Members of Congress and their aides to discuss the urgent need for more funding for afterschool programs. We'll all be better off when lawmakers hear that message.

Sincerely,

[Your name]  
[Your program]  
[Your phone numbers, not for publication]



## Send a News Release About Your Trip to Washington, D.C.

Many advocates have found that local newspapers, television or radio stations are interested in doing stories on their trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the *Afterschool for All Challenge*. So on the trip home, fill in the blanks of the news release that follows. Then distribute it to local media as soon as you can. (Don't let the release grow stale in a clearance process - it won't be news if it's three days old.)

In filling in the blanks of the news release, make certain that you fairly characterize what your Representatives, Senators or their aides said in your meetings. If an aide said the Member of Congress would support increasing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) afterschool appropriation, but didn't say to what level, be sure not to suggest an amount.

Send the news release to:

- Assignment desks of local TV and radio stations;
- Local education reporter(s) at daily newspaper(s);
- Assignment desks (or education reporters) of any community, ethnic or specialty newspapers;
- The newsletter editor for interested organizations - the school system, the PTA, the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA and others; and
- School system and community cable stations.

Don't overlook ethnic or other specialty outlets. Adjust the quote in the news release as you see fit, and be sure to mention in your quote any commitments from lawmakers or their aides - just be sure not to overstate what they told you!

If anyone in your traveling party maintains a blog or has posting privileges on one, you might consider arranging for an entry about the trip (see sample blog post in this packet).

## [Program Letterhead]

News Release  
[April 22, 2010]

Contact: [Name]  
[Phone]

### [Your City] Leaders Say Congressional Meetings Provided Valuable Chance to Discuss How Afterschool Programs Help Kids, Families

#### *'Breakfast of Champions,' Afterschool Rally & Congressional Meetings Send the Message: Afterschool Kids Need More Federal Support*

Afterschool supporters from [city or state] returned home today after a three-day visit to Washington, D.C., where they met with Members of Congress including [list any Senators or Representatives from your state who attended the Breakfast or met with your group] to educate legislators about the unmet need for more funding for afterschool programs. The visit was part of the ninth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance in conjunction with the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual convention of the National AfterSchool Association.

[Your name,] [your title] of [your organization,] declared the visit a "valuable chance to educate lawmakers about the many ways afterschool programs help students and support families and our community." Joining [last name] on the trip were [name other local participants including their role and organizational affiliation].

A highlight of the conference was a day-long visit to Capitol Hill during which afterschool leaders met with hundreds of Members of Congress and their aides, as well as a rally hosted by television's Judge Glenda Hatchett. [Insert information on anyone from your state who was honored or participated in the program. Or make note of any locally recognizable speakers.] [City or state] conference participants met with [names of Senators, followed by names of Representatives,] as well as aides to [Senators followed by Representatives].

"Afterschool programs face critical challenges this year," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Members of Congress need to hear from their constituents about the remarkable work afterschool programs are doing across their districts and states. That's the best way to remind them of the need to keep these programs going, and to grow the federal contribution to afterschool. Our advocates sent a loud and clear message this week - one we think will be impossible to ignore."

The goals of the visit were to give lawmakers information about the unmet need for afterschool programs as they set priorities for federal funding and prepare to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, formerly *No Child Left Behind*.

In [name of community], a federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant supports the [name of afterschool program], but other worthy applicants were turned down because there were not enough funds available. The Afterschool Alliance is urging Congress to increase funding for afterschool programs.

"The *Afterschool for All Challenge* was a great experience," said [name and title]. "We're all very passionate about afterschool programs, because we see on a daily basis the difference it makes in kids' lives, keeping them safe, inspiring them to learn, and helping working families. We think we made an impression on our Members of Congress. [Senator/Representative] said [s/he] would [support increased funding for afterschool, and we were very glad to hear it

OR consider our request, and we're hopeful he/she will conclude that the enormous benefits from afterschool programs are worth the modest investment.] Without secure federal funding, afterschool programs and the children and families they serve will suffer."

In October 2009, the Afterschool Alliance released [America After 3PM](#), a nationwide household survey on afterschool, sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. Among its key findings:

- 15.1 million K-12 children are unsupervised in the afternoons, including 3.7 million middle school students and 1.1 million elementary school children.
- By contrast, just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs.
- The parents of another 18.5 million children say they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available.

[You can replace or supplement the data above with numbers from your state's America After 3PM news release, available on the Afterschool Alliance website.]

[Add local information about afterschool in your community - some combination of information about your program, local funding challenges, major providers, local evaluations of programs, etc.]

*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

[Add a one- or two-sentence description of your program.]

# # # #

NOTE: For more information about afterschool, including *America After 3PM*, or other research data, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org) or call Gretchen Wright or Johanna Diaz at 202/371-1999. For more information on the trip, contact [name and phone number].



## Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show

Want to be on local talk radio? It's easier than you might think. Here's how:

First, scout local talk shows. Most medium-size or larger markets have a talk-news station, and that's probably where you'll have the best luck. Check listings for that and other stations carefully - they're often available on the web. Don't overlook public radio and college/university stations. See which programs are locally produced - you're not likely to be on a national program on National Public Radio or a nationally syndicated one like the Rush Limbaugh Show.

Then listen to each show to get a sense of whether any of them would give you the chance to get your message out.

Put together a three-paragraph "pitch letter" like the sample that follows. It should explain briefly (in less than one side of a piece of paper) why quality afterschool programs are important, why and how these programs are threatened, how funding shortages affect local children and their families, and why you are qualified to talk about it.

Don't forget to mention that you recently traveled to Capitol Hill to talk with Members of Congress and their aides. Address the letter to the show's producer (call the station for the name). Send the letter, then call to follow up the day after it arrives. When you call, be ready to repeat a distilled version of your basic "pitch" to the producer.



## Sample Pitch Letter to Radio Talk Show

[April 22, 2010]

[Name of Producer]

[Name of Show], [radio station name]

[Address]

Dear [Mr./Ms. Producer]:

As any working parent in [name of community] can tell you, the hours immediately following the regular school day can be a time when parents worry about what their children are doing - whether they're safe and constructively engaged, or getting into trouble. Over the last two decades, afterschool programs have helped millions of families across the nation. But millions more are without the afterschool programs they need because of severe funding shortages - a problem made even worse by the current recession.

As the director of the [name of program] in [name of community], I've seen first-hand what a difference afterschool makes in the lives of our kids, our families, and our communities. I've just returned from Washington, D.C., where I joined with hundreds of afterschool advocates from across the country in educating our Senators and Representatives about the benefits offered by afterschool programs and the need for more resources to support them. I met with several elected representatives from [state] and their aides for a wonderfully successful day of education on behalf of our kids.

I think the issue would be of interest to your listeners. According to recent research, the parents of more than 18 million children nationwide would sign their children up for afterschool programs if programs were available. Many of your listeners are probably in that group! If you're interested in doing a segment or show on the subject, I'd be happy to join you, and to help identify a parent or student who has benefited from afterschool, as well as a teacher or school principal who could describe the vital role afterschool programs play in reinforcing academic learning from the regular school day. I'll be in touch to follow up. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your title]

[Your phone number]



## Blog about Your Trip to Washington, D.C.

Many school districts around the country have blogs where parents, faculty and other community members can learn about news and events related to the district and education. If your school district has a blog, you might consider submitting a post about your trip to Washington for the *Afterschool for All Challenge*.

Blog posts are usually short, so keep yours fairly brief. You also want to communicate the excitement and importance of the *Challenge* and what it was like to meet with your Members of Congress and their aides, and to participate in this national advocacy effort.

The template that follows is also on your flash drive.



## Advocating for Afterschool

This week, I joined hundreds of afterschool directors, staff members, students and other advocates from across the country to spend three days in Washington D.C. for the ninth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) in conjunction with the National AfterSchool Association. We learned about how to educate policy makers, networked, and met with Members of Congress and their aides to encourage them to increase funding for afterschool.

Highlights of the *Challenge* included a rally for afterschool programs on Capitol Hill, and a “Breakfast of Champions” at which we honored various champions of afterschool. We also heard from young people from around the country about how important afterschool programs have been in their lives. Over the course of the three-day conference, we heard from two television celebrities - actor Hill Harper from “CSI - NY,” and Judge Glenda Hatchett. Guitarist Mark Bryan of Hootie and the Blowfish was on hand to entertain and offer his support for afterschool programs. It was inspiring and motivating!

While on Capitol Hill, I had the opportunity to talk to **[list any Senators or Representatives from your state who met with your group]** about how important afterschool programs are in our community and all they do for children and working families. **[Add interesting information about what Senators, Representatives or their aides said to you, being careful not to overstate what they said.]**

We carried critical messages about the benefits offered by afterschool programs. President Obama’s recent budget proposal for fiscal year 2011 effectively cuts funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) afterschool initiative by folding another program into the same funding stream. We let lawmakers know that, if the President’s proposal is adopted, funding for afterschool will be reduced by \$13 million and some 13,000 fewer children across the country will have access to afterschool programs they need.

Just as important, the President’s Blueprint for Education Reform - the Administration’s recommendations for the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (formerly *No Child Left Behind*) - would restructure the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC initiative in several ways that could make it harder for afterschool programs to survive. Among other things, the Blueprint also calls for an end to state-administered grants, pulling grantmaking back to Washington. Some states and communities will win, others will lose, and rural communities that may not have expert grant writers are likely to suffer.

We’ve seen modest progress on federal funding for afterschool in the last few years, and are hopeful that, as lawmakers learn more about the work we do in these programs, momentum will continue.

Last year, the Afterschool Alliance released [new research](#), sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, that told us just how far we are from making afterschool available to all who need it. Among the most telling findings was that the parents of more than 18 million children not already in afterschool programs say they would sign their kids up if a program were available to them locally. That’s exactly the problem, of course: not enough programs to meet demand.



# Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

We believe that, by educating lawmakers about how afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire students to learn and help working families, we will have a chance at securing more money for afterschool programs so fewer kids will be on the streets and more kids have access to the programs they need. That was a message our lawmakers needed to hear, and we were proud to deliver it!

For more information on how you can help, visit the [Afterschool Alliance](https://www.afterschoolalliance.org) web site.