

## 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.