

## STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT



# Alabama Invests in Afterschool



## \$17.3 million for Afterschool

Alabama's first-ever permanent state investment in afterschool programs.

### The Challenge

For decades, Alabama lacked dedicated state funding for afterschool and summer programs, forcing local organizations to rely on limited federal and philanthropic support. This left thousands of students, especially in rural areas, without access to quality afterschool programs. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the consequences of this underinvestment, highlighting afterschool as both an educational and economic necessity.

### The Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic created a critical policy window as Alabama leaders sought solutions to learning loss, workforce challenges, and youth disengagement. Seizing this opportunity, A+ Education and the Alabama Expanded Learning Alliance (AELA) quickly mobilized to push for sustainable afterschool investments. Advocates aligned afterschool with the Alabama Literacy and Numeracy Acts, demonstrating how these programs support reading and math goals through hands-on, community-based learning. AELA backed their case with data from the Summer Adventures In Learning (SAIL) program and Alabama After 3PM, ultimately securing funding in both Acts for summer camps targeting students below grade level in math and reading.

By framing afterschool as a strategic solution to the state's biggest challenges—academic recovery, public safety, and economic growth—advocates highlighted its role in addressing literacy gaps, workforce shortages, and rural access. A widely circulated op-ed by Felicia Simpson and Dr. Terry Peterson underscored afterschool's broad impact, blending research and storytelling to build public and legislative momentum for long-term investment.

#### Strategies

- ▶ Tied afterschool and summer programs directly to state education priorities
- ▶ Used data, personal stories, and media outreach to build public and legislative support
- ▶ Built strong relationships with key state leaders and used momentum from a successful pilot program to secure dedicated state funding

#### Tips/Lessons Learned

- ▶ Start small, prove impact, then scale
- ▶ Build relationships early and sustain them
- ▶ Position as a component of state's education priorities

#### Timeline

- ▶ **2019–2021:** Alabama Extended Learning Alliance (AELA) and A+ Education Partnership organize and hold stakeholder conversations on the need for investment in afterschool and summer programs. Advocates release a research brief linking afterschool to literacy and math outcomes, and use data from Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) and America After 3PM to guide program implementation of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds
- ▶ **2022:** Governor Kay Ivey includes \$1.5 million in the state budget for a pilot afterschool program, Alabama's first dedicated funding for afterschool
- ▶ **2023:** Based on positive data from the pilot, the Governor and legislature double down with a \$2.8 million investment in afterschool programming statewide
- ▶ **2024:** Advocates' push for better coordination and program quality at the state level leads to the establishment of the Office of Extended Learning
- ▶ **2025:** HJR 100 passes and establishes the Joint Interim Study Commission on Expanding Access to High-Quality Out-of-School Education Programs. The legislature also approves a \$17.3 million investment for afterschool in the state budget



## The Result

In 2022, Governor Kay Ivey included \$1.5 million in the state budget to pilot afterschool and summer learning programs—the first dedicated investment for afterschool in Alabama’s history. Advocates at AELA and A+ Education tracked outcomes and shared community stories to demonstrate the program’s success, leading to a \$2.8 million expansion in 2023. Following strategic discussions with the Lieutenant Governor, Representative Terri Collins introduced and passed HJR 100 in 2025, creating a Joint Interim Study Commission to improve coordination and quality. That same year, Alabama approved a \$17.3 million investment, cementing its long-term commitment to out-of-school time programs.

## What’s Next

**Advocates are now focused on:**

- ▶ Protecting and sustaining Alabama’s investment in afterschool and summer programs
- ▶ Ensuring that state funding is effectively allocated and distributed to programs across the state and prioritized in future budgets
- ▶ Continuing the development of the professional development infrastructure to ensure high-quality afterschool and summer programs



**Afterschool Alliance**

The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. Learn more at: [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)



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