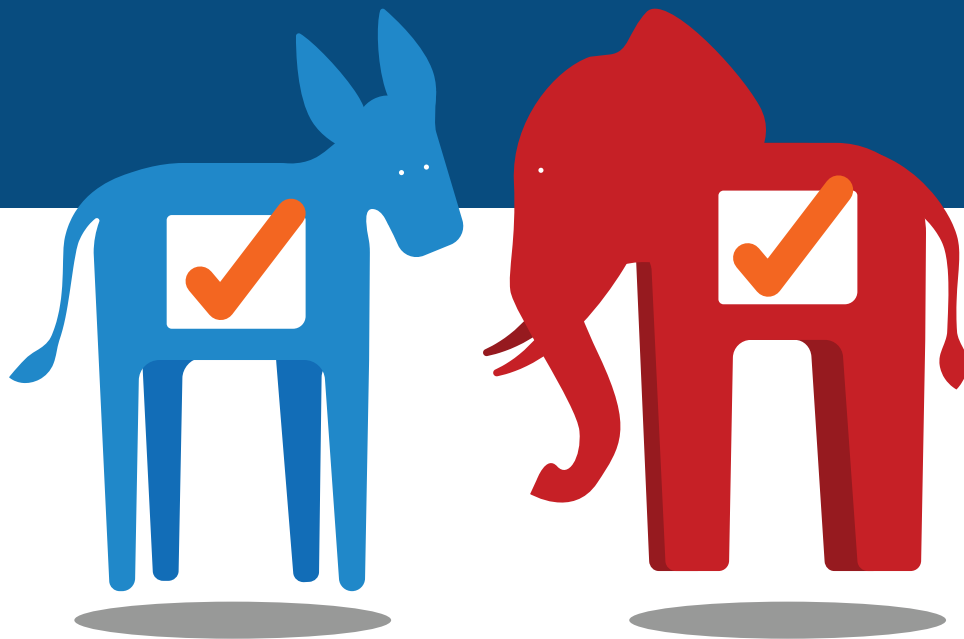


CAMPAIGN FOR AFTERSCHOOL TOOLKIT



Making Afterschool An Election Issue

2018



Afterschool Alliance

Table of Contents

Introduction	
What Do I Need and Where Do I Start?	3
Campaign Timeline	6
Election Do's and Don'ts for 501(c)(3) Organizations	
What can 501(c)(3) Organizations Do?	7
What 501(c)(3) Organizations CAN NOT Do	9
Frequently Asked Questions	10
Making the Case: Educate & Be Prepared to Persuade	
Talking Points	12
Familiarize Yourself with the Impact of Afterschool Policy	15
Build a Strong Case for Afterschool and Economic Development with Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)	16
Reaching Out:	13
Media Outreach	
Letters to the Editor	20
Editorial Board Meetings	21
Outreach to the Field	
Website	22
Using Social Media	23
"Get Out The Vote"	25
Reaching Candidates	
Get Candidates on the Record	26
<i>Lights On Afterschool</i> /Site Visit	27
Candidate Forum	29
Public Opinion Polling	31
Post-Election/Transition	
Follow-Up with Elected Officials	32
Follow-Up with the Field	32
Appendix Materials	
Sample Letter to the Editor	34
Sample Polling Questions	35
Candidate Questionnaire	37
Sample Follow-Up Letter to Newly Elected Officials	38



Introduction



The Afterschool Alliance election page is also a great resource for smaller steps that you can take to make afterschool an election year issue.

<http://bit.ly/1ROveBy>



Election season presents an important opportunity to put afterschool on the radar of policy makers and the public in a visible and meaningful way.

During election season, voters' concerns are brought to the forefront of the public debate and discussed widely in the media. But what concerns will be raised? Whose voices will be heard? What will the candidates and pundits choose to care about and talk about? Ultimately, the voices of people like you in local communities drive candidates' campaigns.

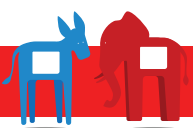
We have the power to make afterschool a key issue in elections at every level—from presidential to Congressional and local.

If you are facing an election in your community, now is the time to tell the candidates: "I support afterschool, and I vote!" We have the power to make afterschool a key issue in elections at every level—from presidential to congressional and local. Whether you have the time and resources to run a coordinated, multi-pronged afterschool issue campaign, or you are just looking for some ideas on how to raise the profile of afterschool during election season, this kit can inform your planning, help you assess what you can undertake and hopefully make your job easier.

What Do I Need & Where Do I Start?

To execute a campaign to make afterschool an election issue, it is important to understand your community and the election that you are targeting. Consider:

- **Who are potential partners?** Some organizations orchestrate campaigns to raise social issues in every election cycle. Find the organizations in your area whose agendas fit well with yours. Chances are they will be working on a broader issue, such as education or children's welfare, but will welcome the chance to bring you (and your valuable grassroots contacts and supporters) in as a partner. Some examples of organizations to consider: Children's Leadership Council, Every Child Matters and Rock the Vote. Also think about the groups that typically organize candidate debates or forums, such as universities or public television stations. Approaching them early and offering your assistance can help ensure afterschool has a place in the event.





To arm yourself with the afterschool research and messages that will be most effective in your area, check out these resources!

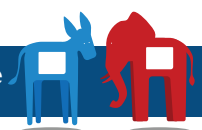
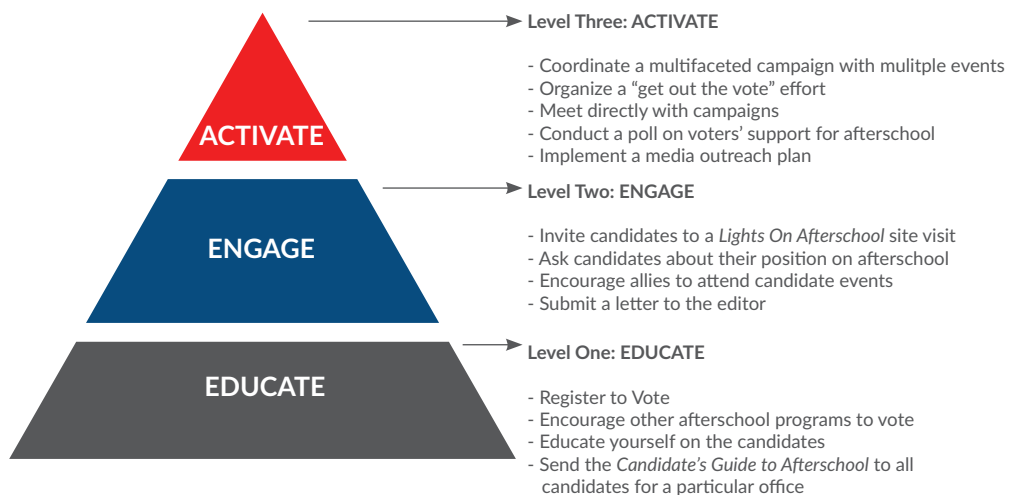
Download the 2018 *Candidate's Guide to Afterschool*:
afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElectionsCandidate.cfm

Visit the Facts & Research section of our website:
<http://bit.ly/1RQklpk>

Read the "Making the Case" section of this kit on page 11.

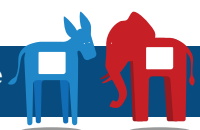


- **What are your campaign goals?** You should be able to clearly articulate your goals for the project. This will be especially important when recruiting funders and partners.
- **Show me the money!** Identify community trusts, local foundations and other groups that may want to fund an initiative like this. Remember, you are more likely to find funders when you undertake a campaign like this with partners.
- **How will you make the case for afterschool?** This toolkit and our website has up-to-date facts and research that will help, and downloading our *Candidate's Guide to Afterschool* is a good start. The candidate guide can be sent to all candidates as a primer on the importance of afterschool programs as a campaign issue—just remember that if you send it to one candidate, you must send it to all candidates for a particular office. It is also important to know the political lay of the land in your area. Are statewide or local polling numbers available on afterschool? Do you know where the candidates stand on the issue? If any of them are current office holders, have they sponsored related legislation or signed resolutions?





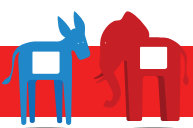
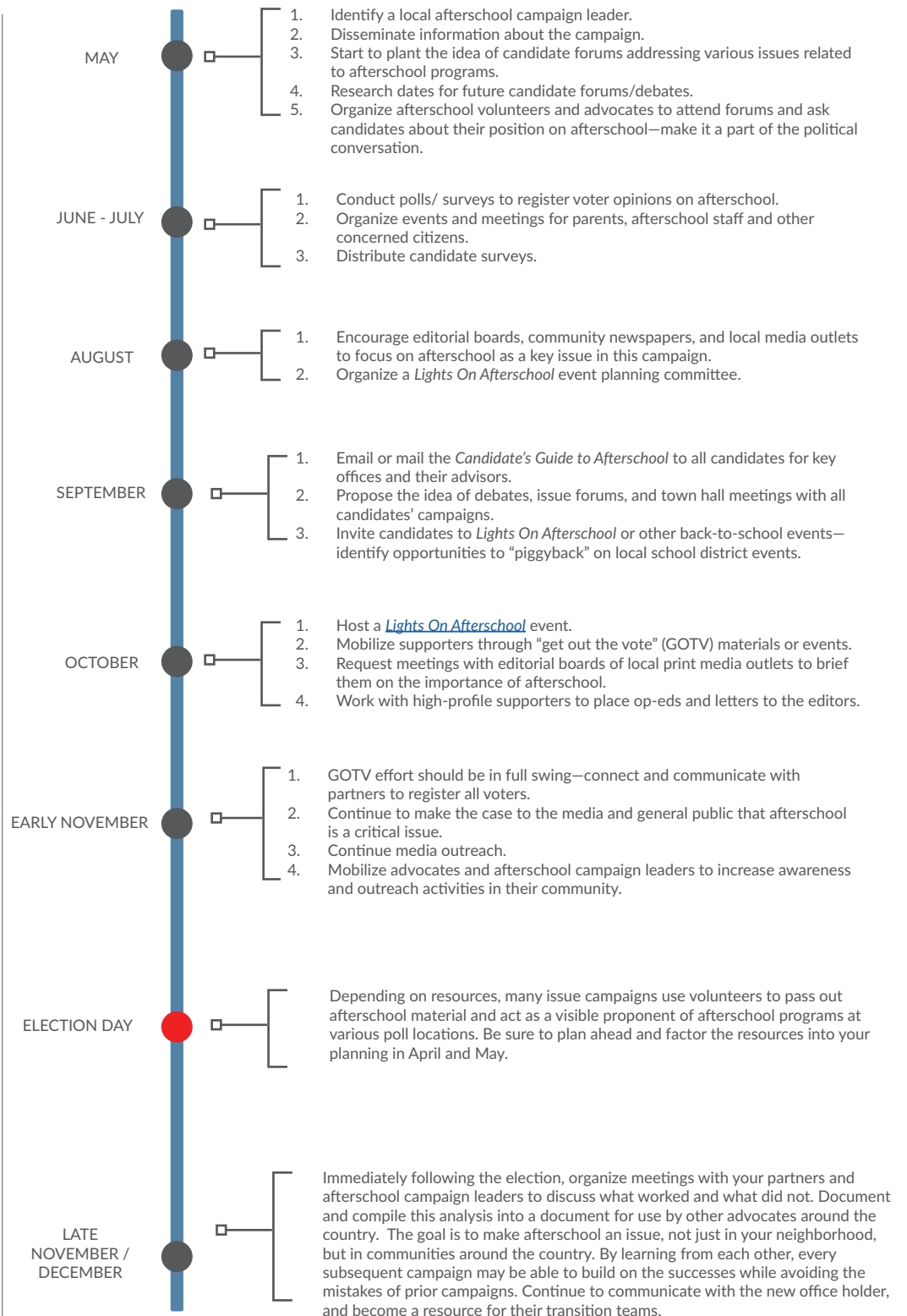
- **How will you communicate with the public and your supporters?** Two basic communication tools are contact lists and a website. At the outset, you and your partners may want to pool your lists to create a master database. You should continue to build this list throughout the campaign by hosting voter registration, public education and other “list building” events. Your contact list will allow you to call or send out blast emails to your supporters and encourage them to take action. A campaign website will allow you to post event and campaign information, conduct polls and allow the general public to find out more about your issue. Our social media guide on [page 23](#) offers more outreach suggestions.
- **What are the “rules of engagement” for nonprofits?** There is little risk to nonprofits participating in a nonpartisan voter and candidate education campaign, if the activities are managed carefully; the goal is to elevate the issue of afterschool, not a particular candidate or political party.





Introduction: *Campaign Timeline*

Ongoing: Disseminate your information to staff and candidates and throughout the community, register voters, and add contacts and advocates to your database.





Election Do's and Don'ts for 501(c)(3) Organizations*



It can be confusing to know how you can involve yourself in an election if you work for a nonprofit organization. There are a few simple ground rules that you need to follow:

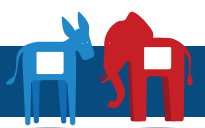
- 1. Equal Outreach:** all contact with and materials sent to campaigns should be the same for every candidate running for a particular position. For example, if a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian and Independent are all running for mayor, you must send the same information to all four candidates. If a candidate requests additional information, you may provide materials your organization already has created, but your organization may not create new materials tailored to a candidate's needs. Document your contact with the candidate. If other candidates reach out to you, you must provide them information that responds to their requests; be responsive to all candidates equally.
- 2. Documentation:** keep a calendar of each time you reach out to a candidate and every time a candidate contacts you. This will help you keep track of your outreach efforts.

What CAN 501(c)(3) organizations do?

Whether you're a seasoned advocate or completely new to advocacy, there's no reason to scale down your advocacy efforts during an election year. Advocacy and lobbying activities may take place during election season provided you follow the rules detailed below. You may engage in the following activities:

- **Issue advocacy:** You may provide information on your issue as you always have. Of course, if you think an activity may cross the line into electioneering or political activity, consult a lawyer regarding these rules; remember equal outreach.
- **Speakers:** If you invite an office holder to an event in their official capacity rather than as a candidate, you don't need to invite opposing candidates, but make sure the event has a very clear non-election purpose and ensure the speakers do not discuss the election in their remarks.

* This document is intended to provide guidance on federal lobbying laws, but it is not legal advice. We advise you to consult an attorney if you have specific concerns. This information was adapted from the Alliance for Justice's series on nonprofit and foundation lobbying and advocacy. Visit www.afj.org for more information. An overview of General Lobbying Rules for Non Profit Organizations can be found at afterschoolalliance.org/Advocacy_basics.cfm.



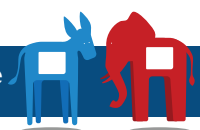


Additional Information from the IRS

Section 501(c)(3) provides a federal tax exemption to a charitable organization, so long as it “does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” The IRS also forbids such organizations from trying to prevent a public official from being re-nominated.



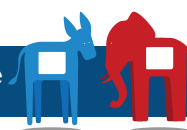
- **Sponsor a debate** between candidates as long as:
 - You invite all qualified candidates;
 - An independent panel prepares the questions;
 - The topics cover a broad range of issues, including those of particular importance to your organization;
 - Every candidate has an equal opportunity to speak;
 - The moderator is neutral and states at the beginning and end of the program that the views expressed are not representative of your organization.
- Try to **persuade candidates to agree with you on issues and to make those issues part of their campaign**—but that is as far as you can go; do not ask candidates to sign a “pledge” or other public barometer of support for your organization’s issues.
- Work to get your positions included on a political party’s platform by:
 - Delivering testimony to both parties’ platform committees;
 - Including a disclaimer in both oral and written testimony that the testimony is being offered for educational purposes only;
 - Reporting the testimony and any responses in your regularly scheduled newsletter to members.
- **Operate a nonpartisan voter registration** or “get out the vote” drive. Note that “get out the vote” activities must be designed solely to educate the public about the importance of voting and must not show any bias for or against any candidate or party. In a voter registration drive, voters must be registered regardless of their party preference or their support (or lack thereof) for your organization’s issues. Do not ask where voters stand on an issue before offering to register them.





What 501(c)(3) organizations CAN NOT do

- Support specific candidates or parties in races for elected office, including:
 - Support or oppose a declared candidate or third-party movement;
 - Conduct efforts to “draft” someone to run; and
 - Conduct exploratory advance work.
- Endorse a candidate or contribute to a campaign with money or time:
 - Members can, of course, donate or volunteer on their own time.
- Contribute any cash or in-kind support:
 - Includes loans or paying to attend partisan political dinners;
 - An in-kind contribution is considered providing anything of value to a candidate, political party or political organization when you are not paid the fair market value in return.
 - Creating new materials in response to a candidate’s request for information may constitute an in-kind contribution. For example, while it is fine to provide a candidate with an existing research report or brochure regarding a particular issue in response to their request for information, an organization may not write a speech or op-ed for that candidate to use.
- Send partisan political communications to their members or employees telling them how to vote.
- Sponsor joint fundraising events or solicitations with candidates or a political group.
- Ask candidates to sign a public endorsement of your organization’s agenda.





Important Definitions

1. **Candidate:** any individual who offers himself or herself, or is proposed by others, as a contestant for an elective public office.
2. **Public office:** any position filled by a vote of the people at the federal, state or local level—ranging from the president of the United States to the local school board—and elective party offices, such as local area committee persons and party nominations.



Frequently Asked Questions:

***Can an organization state its position on public policy issues that candidates for public office are divided on?*¹**

An organization may take positions on public policy issues, including issues that divide candidates in an election for public office, as long as the message does not in any way favor or oppose a candidate. Be aware that the message does not need to identify the candidate by name to be prohibited political activity. A message that shows a picture of a candidate, refers to a candidate's political party affiliations, refers to an election, or includes other distinctive features of a candidate's platform or biography may be prohibited political activity.

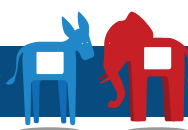
***Can an organization post information on its website (or link to other websites) about a candidate for public office?*²**

A website is a form of communication. If an organization posts something on its website that favors or opposes a candidate for public office, it is prohibited political activity. It is the same as if the organization distributed printed material, or made oral statements or broadcasts, that favored or opposed a candidate.

If an organization establishes a link to another website, it is responsible for the consequences of establishing and maintaining that link even if the organization does not have control over the content on the linked site. Because the linked content may change, the organization should monitor the linked content and adjust or remove any links that could result in prohibited political activity.



^{1, 2} <https://www.irs.gov/uac/Election-Year-Activities-and-the-Prohibition-on-Political-Campaign-Intervention-for-Section-501%28c%29%283%29-Organizations>





Making the Case: Educate & Be Prepared to Persuade



For more information on State Specific Data resources
[afterschoolalliance.org/
policyStateCaseResources.cfm](https://afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateCaseResources.cfm)



We want candidates to know that supporting afterschool is important to voters. Afterschool keeps kids safe, inspires them to learn and helps America's working families. These three key points below resonate with voters of every kind. In addition, it's important for candidates to know:

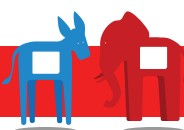
- The parents of 19.4 million children would send their child to an afterschool program if one were available.
- For every one child in an afterschool program, there are two more waiting to get in.
- Close to 3 out of 4 parents agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.

The *Candidate's Guide to Afterschool* provides a primer on the afterschool issues for candidates, including additional data on public support for afterschool, program supply and demand, and research on afterschool outcomes for youth, families and communities. Mail or email the *Candidate's Guide to Afterschool* to all candidates for a particular office and their advisors with a personal letter discussing how the issue affects your area. If you are able, tailor the guide to include data specific to your locality.



Addressing Possible Misconceptions

During your campaign, you will not only be tasked with educating and prompting your community, but also with defending afterschool against criticism, excuses or apathy. These talking points provide responses to commonly held misconceptions about afterschool programs.





For more information on voter attitudes, look at the Public Opinion section of the Afterschool Alliance website: bit.ly/1RUL8xo

Also refer to infographics here: bit.ly/1RJp1rt

For information specific to your state, jump to your state's page on *America After 3PM* bit.ly/1rBJjF2



Misconception #1: “We can’t afford to pay for afterschool programs.”

Reply: We can’t afford to not support afterschool. If a youth falls into a life of crime, society will pay a tab of roughly \$1.5 million over his or her lifetime.

Quality afterschool has been proven to deter youth from risky behaviors and offer an alternative to gang life. Also, afterschool programs save at least three tax dollars for every one spent by reducing the need for remedial education and grade repetition, as well as keeping kids safe and out of trouble.

You will not only be tasked with educating and prompting your community, but also with defending afterschool against criticism, excuses or apathy.

- Parents of 19.4 million children (41 percent) not currently participating in afterschool programs say they would enroll their children if a program were available to them. That is a significant increase from 15.3 million (30 percent) in 2004.
- Among parents with a child in an afterschool program, more than 8 in 10 agree that afterschool programs excite children about learning, keep kids active, develop social skills and reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors.

Misconception #2: “People aren’t willing to spend public funds on afterschool programs.”

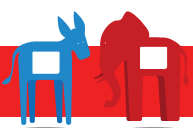
Reply: Recent polling tells us the opposite. First, the public believes that afterschool programs provide a multitude of benefits for children in a variety of areas—from academics to social skills to health and wellness. Second, they want government at every level to invest in afterschool.

Voters say they are willing to use taxpayer money—and even pay more in taxes—to support afterschool.

Talking Points

Highlights from *America After 3PM* and other polling data:

- Eight in 10 parents (84 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs.





- Voters show a commitment to afterschool during both good and bad economic times. Voters say they are willing to use taxpayer money—and even pay more in taxes—to support afterschool programs.
- Voters want to see all levels of government make a commitment to afterschool programs. They would like the federal, state and local governments to set aside specific funds to be used for afterschool programs.

Misconception #3: “Afterschool programs don’t work.”

Reply: In addition to many compelling personal stories about the benefits of afterschool, dozens of formal studies clearly demonstrate the value of afterschool initiatives. These studies prove that afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement.

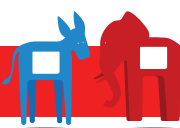


Find more information
on afterschool programs’
outcomes on our website:
<http://bit.ly/1RQklpk>



Highlights from research and evaluation studies

- Elementary school students attending [LA’s BEST](#) afterschool program improved their regular school day attendance and reported higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college. Additionally, LA’s BEST participants are 20 percent less likely to drop out of school compared to matched nonparticipants. (*UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, June 2000, December 2005 and September 2007*)
- High school students participating in Chicago’s [After School Matters](#) program—which offers paid internships in the arts, technology, sports and communications to teenagers in some of the city’s most underserved schools—have higher class attendance, lower course failures and higher graduation rates than similar students who do not participate in the program. (*University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2007*)
- A meta-analysis of 68 afterschool program evaluations found that students participating in high-quality afterschool programs made positive academic gains—such as improved school grades and test scores, as well as a significant improvement in their perceptions of themselves, improved positive social behavior and a decrease in problem behaviors. (*Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2010*)





- Afterschool programs also have a positive impact on students most at-risk of failing academically. An evaluation synthesizing more than 30 studies of afterschool programs found that students participating in programs who were at risk of failure in reading or math saw gains in both subjects. (*Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2006*)
- An analysis on the academic impact of participation in afterschool programs found that consistent program participation led to greater gains in math and improved behavior and school day attendance. Additionally, the higher the levels of participation by students in low-income families, the smaller the math achievement gap between them and their peers from higher-income families. (*Pierce, K.M., Auger, A. and Vandell, D.L., 2013*)

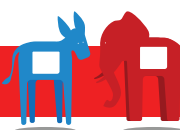


Misconception #4: “It’s parents’ responsibility to see that their kids have adequate care.”

Reply: Unfortunately, adequate care is something not always available in every community. Today, only one-fourth of American families fit the “traditional” image of one parent at home caring for children full time, while the other parent provides financial support. In fact, 75 percent of mothers with school-age children are employed. In all, there are more than 30 million children in a household where both parents are in the workforce.

*Families with earnings below the federal poverty level spend an average of **30 percent** of their monthly earnings on child care.*

Additionally, the impact of a lack of adequate care is much broader in scope, not only affecting the children and parents who are in need of afterschool resources. Research has found that parents miss an average of five days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool care, and that decreased worker productivity related to parent’s concerns about their child’s afterschool care costs businesses up to \$300 billion per year.





With parents reporting spending close to an average of 9 hours during the weekdays working, the gap between work and school schedules amounts to as much as 25 hours per week. This presents working parents with the challenge of finding someone to care for their children while they are at work. Nationwide, more than 3 million children in grades K-8 regularly care for themselves, and 20 percent of all children go home alone after school each day. Further, child care can be prohibitively expensive for many working families. For instance, more than half of American families with an employed mother and a child younger than 15 years old have child care expenses that consume, on average, roughly 8 percent of their monthly earnings. The situation is even tougher for families with earnings below the federal poverty level—they spend an average of 30 percent of their monthly earnings on child care. The average annual cost of care for school-aged children can total more than \$11,000.

The realities of today's working world make afterschool programs an absolute necessity. More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work (85 percent) and that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs (84 percent).

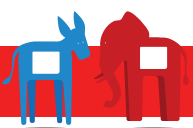
Familiarize Yourself with the Impact of Afterschool Policy

Afterschool funding and policy affects millions of families, as well as stakeholders, such as employers concerned about productivity and the future workforce. Be sure you have an understanding of key policies that affect afterschool in your area. A number of federal policy initiatives have major impact on afterschool in local communities:

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers: a \$1.2 billion funding stream that supports afterschool programs in thousands of communities across America. Be familiar with the impact of these grants in the areas candidates want to represent. bit.ly/23b3rDw
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) bit.ly/1UQsiM7
- Expanded Learning bit.ly/1UDyWET
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) bit.ly/1RIKP6N



For brief updates on the latest federal afterschool policy developments, visit our Policy & Action Center bit.ly/1RAevpV





Build a Strong Case for Afterschool and Economic Development with Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)

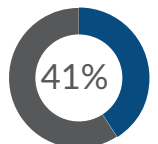
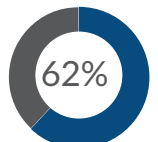
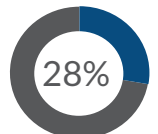


When asked about the most important problem facing America today, Americans are most likely to point to the economy.³ STEM education is critical to the success of our future workforce—and therefore our economy. This makes STEM even more central in the minds of voters, and places it near the forefront in many candidates' and policymakers' speeches.

Our future economy will be primarily driven by innovation that arises from advances in STEM. By giving all children opportunities to develop strong STEM skills, we can ensure the next generation's ability to build and maintain a strong national economy. Adding to the sector that develops new products and tackles pressing problems also adds to the pool of people creating jobs for our economy, which, in turn, helps us all. In fact, one job in the high-tech sector leads to four new jobs in local goods and service industries.⁴ Over the next five years, employers will need to hire nearly 1 million employees with basic STEM literacy and more than 600,000 employees with advanced STEM knowledge.

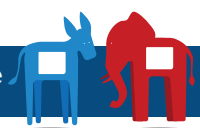
Yet, A survey of CEOs of major US corporations conducted by the Business Round Table and Change the Equation revealed that approximately 60 percent of job openings require basic STEM literacy, and 42 percent require advanced STEM skills. However:

- Twenty-eight percent say that at least half of their new entry-level hires lack basic STEM literacy.
- Sixty-two percent of CEOs report problems finding qualified applicants for jobs requiring advanced computer/IT knowledge.
- Forty-one percent report problems finding qualified applicants for jobs requiring advanced quantitative knowledge.



³ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx>

⁴ (Source: <http://documents.bayareacouncil.org/TechReport.pdf> via Change the Equation)





STEM is the future. Afterschool STEM opportunities spark STEM learning and prepare our nation's children.

Preparing students' futures for STEM careers is an exciting and solvable problem, but our schools can't do it alone. Students spend less than 20 percent of their waking hours in a classroom, and they need more exposure to STEM subjects than that time allows. That's why out-of-school time programs such as afterschool programs are crucial partners in STEM education improvement efforts.

When children get the opportunity to be immersed in STEM they become more fluent in it. Our goal is to give them as many opportunities as possible to gain hands-on experience with hypothesizing, experimentation and problem solving. The kinds of projects that kids tackle in afterschool STEM programs help them build relevant, real-life observation and analysis skills. Additionally, students gain and hone teamwork and communication skills—the critical 21st-century skills they will need to contribute as citizens and members of the workforce.

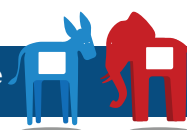


When we look out across the current system of afterschool opportunities, we can see that it's patchy, like a map of charging stations with gaps in some areas—built in a way that provides fewer charging opportunities for some of our nation's children than for others. Some students are in places with lots of opportunities to power up their STEM learning through access to great libraries, museums, science centers and afterschool programs. But other students are in charging dead zones—places where there just aren't many high-quality learning opportunities to plug into.

Afterschool STEM learning opportunities play a proven role in helping kids gain STEM interests and skills. Talking about afterschool in the context of STEM is a great way to link afterschool to a number of important issues that voters, candidates and policy makers care about.

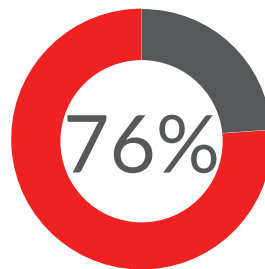
Below are suggested talking points to share with candidates to help them make the connection between afterschool and STEM.

- Seventy-five percent of Nobel Prize winners in the sciences report that their passion for science was first sparked in non-school environments (*Friedman & Quinn, 2006*).

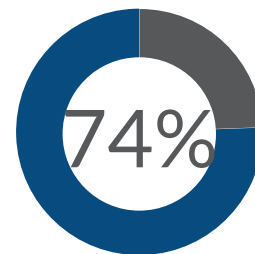




- Participating in afterschool STEM programs can keep the spark of interest in STEM alive during the middle school years, when otherwise the interest students showed earlier tends to fade out (*Bevan et al., 2012; Staus, 2015*).
- There is now a significant body of research and evaluation studies that show high-quality afterschool STEM programs not only successfully engage children in STEM but build skills and help them view themselves as someone who can participate.⁵
- At Girlstart, an afterschool program in Texas, a majority of the participating girls express interest in entering a STEM career—68 percent express a strong interest and 93 percent express a moderate interest. In a population where 55 percent of participants will be first generation college goers, 97 percent of them expressed intent to attend college after high school.
- A majority of parents (69 percent) with children in afterschool programs report that the children receive some form of STEM activities in their programs, and 70 percent of parents say afterschool programs should offer STEM.



Hispanic
Parents

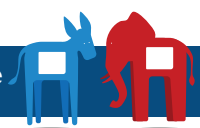


African-American
Parents

- **The demand for afterschool STEM learning is very high in African American, Hispanic, and low-income populations.⁶**
- There is especially strong support among groups under-represented in STEM fields:
- Seventy-three percent of low-income parents agree that afterschool programs should provide opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning.

⁵ Source: <http://afterschoolalliance.org/ExaminingtheImpactofAfterschoolSTEMPrograms.pdf>

⁶ Source: <http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/STEM.pdf>



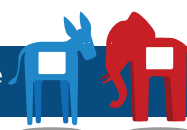


STEM in the Field

In a program in New Mexico, middle schoolers from all kinds of backgrounds, including children from rural areas, actively experiment with a computer programming language to create and test models of complex systems, such as the environment, or outbreaks of diseases. These models are then used to run simulations of “what if” scenarios to answer questions about real-world concerns, with local examples to make the learning come to life.



A study of one state’s afterschool programming found that when a site had a STEM partner, such as a science museum, an engineering firm, or a university, the experiences that students had tended to be much better in a variety of ways. The partnerships often weren’t very large—but a little bit of effort went a long way. Supporting the infrastructure that afterschool and summer learning providers need to connect with science professionals and experts in their region is an important, feasible step we can take.





Reaching Out: Listening and Getting Heard



One way to think about your outreach is to look at three key audiences: the media, the candidates and the field of afterschool supporters you can mobilize. The more that afterschool is raised at events and debates, in news articles, and through direct contact with campaigns, the more likely candidates are to take a stand on it. Organize a list of supportive journalists and media outlets you can inform about events or candidate forums and articles about afterschool.

The following chart illustrates the kinds of activities you might undertake to reach each group. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list and is only meant to serve as a foundation on which to build.



- Plan newsworthy launch
- Write letter to the editor
- Outreach to community papers and editorial boards
- Op-eds from grassroots or community leaders



- Develop and build database
- Identify afterschool campaign leaders
- Hold *Lights On Afterschool* event
- "get out the vote"



- Background research
- Outreach to all candidate campaigns
- Surveys
- Forums
- Ensure post-election accountability



See **Appendix 1** for a sample letter to the editor

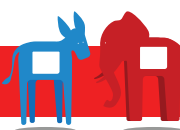
Media Outreach

Letters to the Editor

Sending a letter to the editor is a great way to disseminate your message to a wide audience and one of the easiest ways to get published. In many cases, letters are your best shot at getting published, if only because newspapers print more letters than editorials each day.

Letters to the editor are widely read and well worth submitting. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Letters to the editor pages differ from newspaper to newspaper. You will need to take a look at your own newspaper to get a feel for what they do and do not publish.





- If the paper writes reports on anything related to afterschool or education, use that article as a starting point for your own editorial; the paper is more likely to print a letter to the editor if it responds to its own coverage.
- Though most letters to the editor are opinionated, you can also write them just to raise the issue of afterschool, especially as it relates to the community.
- Send a copy of your letter to as many publications as you can in your area; you never know who will pick it up, and you can never have too much publicity. Make sure to use your database to reach out to high-profile members in the community who are sympathetic to your cause. Encourage and work with these individuals to place letters to the editor or op-eds in the local and regional news outlets.

Sending a letter to the editor is one of the easiest ways to widely disseminate your message and get published.

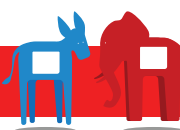
Editorial Board Meetings

Most newspaper editorials are written by editorial writers, not reporters. These writers are part of the newspaper's "editorial board," usually made up of the editorial page editor, editorial writers with responsibility for specific issue areas and other ranking members of the newspaper staff.

Find out how to engage these writers at meetings with members of the public. Editorial boards frequently meet with representatives of local organizations, elected officials, candidates and anyone else they think might be able to inform them on issues that matter to their readers. The meetings generally last about an hour, and they are usually the occasion for a vigorous give-and-take between the editorial writers and their guests (and sometimes among the editorial writers themselves).

Newspapers rely on advocates to propose meetings. It is important to reach out to editorial boards to put ideas about afterschool-related articles on their radar. Here's how to proceed:

1. **Put together a group** of three or four local afterschool advocates, including a representative of an afterschool program and perhaps a community-based organization leader, parent and business leader who has partnered with an afterschool program.



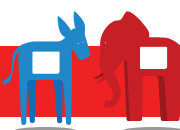


2. **Write a brief letter or email** to the editorial page editor of your local newspaper requesting a meeting, laying out what you'd like to discuss and why it is important and timely.
3. **Follow up your letter** a day or two after it arrives with a telephone call to the editorial page editor. Be prepared to offer suggested dates and times; steer clear of afternoons, if possible, and Fridays altogether.
4. **Have a preparatory meeting with your group** before meeting with the editorial board at the newspaper, should they agree to meet with you. Practice answering questions and decide who will take the lead in answering questions about specific topics.
5. **Each member of your group should be ready to offer a three-minute opening summary** of important points. Be sure each group member addresses a different aspect of the benefits of afterschool programs.
6. **Know your material** and be ready to answer questions.
7. **Do some research** to find out which editorial writer covers this issue. You may want to get back in touch with this writer in the future.
8. **Leave materials** (fact sheets, information on your program, etc.) with the editorial board writers when you leave.
9. **Send a thank-you note** after the meeting, highlighting key points you want to be sure editorial board members remember and addressing any questions you left unanswered.

Outreach to the Field

Website

As soon as you start talking publicly about the campaign and creating new resources for the field, you are going to need a website to post information. The website also serves as a means of gathering additional contacts for your database. Your website should be live as soon as you are organized and should provide background information about the campaign, a place for visitors to show their support and sign up to receive more information, and links to your social media pages.





Using Social Media

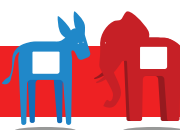
Because social media is relatively new, the rules governing its use are not always clear. Therefore, we recommend being careful with your online communications to avoid electioneering. **As an organization, it is not recommended to like, friend or follow candidates on social media, as this can be perceived as an endorsement.** Your organization can, however, follow the official government accounts of sitting elected officials.

These days, having a Facebook page is almost as important as having an official website. While your official site should list information about your afterschool campaign, Facebook should be used mostly for publicity, awareness and outreach. Set up a fan page so that people can “like” your campaign or organization. Include information about your campaign and a link to your official site in case people want more information.

Update your status a few times a week with recent developments or compelling information; the more people who “like” and “share” your status, the more publicity that status—and your campaign—will get. In general, photo and video updates tend to reach more people than text-only posts or links. Facebook is particularly useful for event publicity, as you can create a page specifically for your event and use it as an electronic invitation, complete with details like a map to the event location as well as the ability to easily update guests with last-minute changes. Event pages should mirror the actual events you plan and are a great way to spread the word. Share the event with all of your Facebook fans and encourage them to invite all of their friends.

Twitter is another useful social network to employ when running a campaign. Tweet short blurbs as often as you want, updating your followers about any progress you make, meetings you attend, links to articles to which you want to draw attention—so long as it’s not perceived as an endorsement, etc. Really, you can relay anything related to your campaign to your supporters in a short, digestible post. Be sure to follow other organizations, public figures, people, etc. that affect your campaign. Check to see if the candidates have Twitter profiles; if they do, you can monitor their posts for afterschool-related posts and other general updates without choosing to follow them.

Social media can be a great resource for research, getting your message on the radar and capitalizing on multi-candidate events. Below we offer specific tips on how to use social media to help advance your afterschool campaign.





For Research

During election season, social media is a great tool for research. You can use it to answer these basic questions:

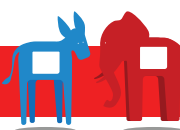
- Who are the candidates?
- Are they active on social media? Where? What are their handles?
- Who are their advisors? What are their handles? (Campaign advisors often move on to become the staff of elected officials.)
- What are the candidates' platforms?
- What hashtags do they—or their supporters—use to promote the candidate?
- What are the key dates during the election season? For example: debates, policy speeches or announcements, town halls, or other speaking events.

Understand the candidates' core issues and challenges by setting up private lists on Twitter (this allows you to follow what the candidate says, without actually following them), using social media listening tools like Tweetdeck to follow multiple conversations at once, and setting up Google news alerts for your issue and the candidates. Use this information to inform any in-person conversations you have with candidates and plan to your calendar and approach for larger multi-candidate events.

Get your messages on the radar

The increased attention to news and social media during election season is a great benefit and opportunity. Given this, your focus should be on getting your messages out to the widest audience possible. To do this you can:

- Step up your general participation in social media and tie your posts into issues that are gaining attention in the news or on the campaign trail.
- Write blog posts, stories on [Medium](#) (Twitter's long-form blogging companion and social network) and op-eds on your issue.
- Share graphics and facts on your issue on social media.
- Share results of any candidate questionnaires—without judgment! When





The Afterschool Alliance social media page is filled with tips and resources to help you make the most of your social media presence: bit.ly/1XcMs0d



the field is narrowed to just a couple of candidates you can do individual graphics for each question, showing how the two candidates responded—thus resulting in a series of graphics representing the entire questionnaire (and representing the individual candidates equally and in an unbiased way). Keep in mind that with any candidate questionnaire, your organization should publish the complete, unedited response of each candidate.

Capitalize on Multi-candidate events

While using social media during single candidate events can either look like endorsing—or opposing—a specific candidate, multi-candidate events can be a great opportunity to get visibility for your issue. During these events you can:

- **Organize to get your question asked** and then share the responses on social media. If your issue is not discussed, point that out and highlight how many people think this issue is important by using the event hashtag(s).
- **Cover the events online** by live-tweeting, sharing photos and images with text-overlay, or sharing simple charts that show the data behind the problem you are trying to solve.
- **Organize attendance** of the live event or “watch parties”—wear matching shirts or something identifying, check-in on social media at the event, post photos from the event, and provide individual supporters with suggestions for what content to share on social media (and what isn’t appropriate.)

While we recommend focusing your social media efforts on Facebook and Twitter, it’s also worth investigating Instagram, Periscope, and other platforms if you have the capacity. Instagram is useful for reaching a younger audience with compelling visuals, while Periscope allows you to share events in real time by live-streaming to audiences near and far using your smartphone.

“Get Out the Vote” (GOTV)

In addition to hosting events and using the Internet to rally support around afterschool, it is important to make a push to turn out voters through non-partisan materials designed to inform people about election day. Items such as palm cards, fliers, mock ballots and other election-related materials can be distributed to your supporters in the community and at *Lights On Afterschool* events. This material should also be easily accessible on your website. These materials should note the day and date of the election. Implementing this GOTV





A Word on Mobilizing Afterschool Supporters

A crucial aspect of your work is mobilizing afterschool supporters—they are one of your greatest assets. Optimize their effectiveness by encouraging them to take action and by prompting them to ask candidates where they stand on afterschool.

Start with your own list of supporters and contacts. Convene and brief members of the afterschool community and the broader children's community, including local elected officials, practitioners, parents, PTAs, etc. As you organize meetings and gauge interest from like-minded organizations in your area, it may be useful to think about the size of their databases and strength of their existing grassroots networks. This can and should be a factor when deciding on partners.

effort separately from any information you provide on your issues may be the easiest way to avoid concerns of electioneering; if you would like to combine the two, you may want to seek further advice.

Reaching Candidates

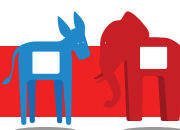
Get Candidates on the Record

It is important to ask candidates about their positions on afterschool. This is both your opportunity to

get the candidates' positions on the record and the candidates' opportunity to express their views. Asking questions about afterschool in public settings will help ensure that these issues are included in the political conversation, while prompting candidates to take a formal stand on afterschool. This is especially important when considering that most candidates do not include afterschool policy in their formal campaign platforms. Be sure to phrase your questions in an unbiased manner, to avoid indicating that there is a "correct" answer—otherwise, your question (combined with the candidates' responses) may be construed as an endorsement of the candidate who provided the "right" answer.

Asking questions about afterschool in public settings will help ensure that these issues are included in the political conversation, while prompting candidates to take a formal stand on afterschool.

If a candidate goes on record as being supportive of afterschool, it will help you hold him or her accountable after the election. Candidate surveys and questionnaires are another way to get candidate views on the record. You can also use candidates' survey responses to share an objective view of the candidates with afterschool supporters. For example, re-printing candidates' complete responses—and noting who did not respond—can provide advocates with information about where the candidates stand on these important issues. Make sure you have given each candidate for that particular office the same opportunity to answer.

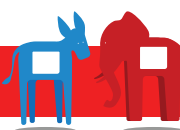




Check out our *Lights On Afterschool* [online event planning kit](#) for event ideas, sample materials and more.

Lights On Afterschool / Site Visits

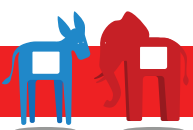
- [Lights On Afterschool](#) is a great way to introduce candidates and elected officials to the world of afterschool. Elected officials can always speak in their official capacity. If you invite elected officials to speak in support of your issue in their role as public officials, ask them to not discuss the campaign or mention the election. Other candidates also want to be visible in the community, and *Lights On Afterschool* is all about building and demonstrating community support for afterschool programs. However, when a person speaks as a candidate—and not in their official capacity as a public officeholder—your organization must exercise more caution. You may invite candidates to speak at your *Lights On Afterschool* event, but only if you follow these rules:
 - The organization invites all candidates for a particular elective office;
 - All invitations are sent at the same time, and all non-responding candidates receive the same follow-up requests from the organization;
 - Any mention of candidates in publicity materials either A) provides all candidates with equal billing, or B) simply states that candidates will appear, without naming the candidates;
 - All candidates address the audience in the same portion of the speaking program (i.e., not giving one candidate a prominent spot, while the other is relegated to the end of the program);
 - Introductions of candidates are neutral and roughly equal (within what's possible, given the candidates' differing biographies);
 - All candidates are provided the same amount of time to speak;
 - Candidates either are free to speak on any topic they choose, or are asked to address the same general topic (i.e., asking them to discuss their views on afterschool care, but not asking them to agree or disagree with any particular platform or position of the organization); and





- If any candidate is not able to make it to the event, or declines the invitation, an official of the organization should note that invitations were sent to all candidates, and that certain candidates were unable to attend.
- All aspects of these requirements should be carefully documented by the host organization.

To summarize, when working with candidates use equal access and reach out to every candidate for that particular office with equal intention and no sign of organizational support for any one candidate over any other. But don't fear: it's easier than it may sound.





Candidate Forums

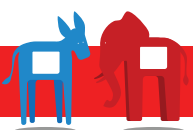
Candidate forums present an excellent opportunity to raise awareness among candidates and the community about the need for and importance of afterschool programs. If there isn't already a candidate event happening in your community, you can organize one! As always, all candidates must be treated equally and neutrally. In no case should an organization consult with one candidate about his or her availability before setting the date of its event, unless all candidates are consulted and a mutually convenient date is chosen.

Give yourself ample time to plan, make sure that you have adequate staffing and/or partnerships to pull together all of the pieces, and give the candidates plenty of notice as to the date and location of the forum. It is very important to invite all viable candidates for a particular office in the district where the forum or meeting is held and do everything that you can to generate a large audience. Afterschool will likely be one of several issues discussed; in fact, the IRS rules require that a forum be on a variety of topics, and not on a single, narrow topic. Collaborate with other organizations as much as possible.

Forum Formats

Panel and Moderator: Questions for candidates can be asked by a moderator, a panel of stakeholders (afterschool providers, school officials, parents or youth) or from the audience. Be aware that the IRS says that having questions from a neutral moderator (e.g., a journalist), helps to demonstrate that the event is unbiased, but any moderator, as long as they show no bias, is legal. You can also combine these elements. For example, have a moderator or panel lead off the questioning and then open it up to the audience. Be sure to give all candidates equal amounts of time to respond. Asking the same set of questions to each candidate is also a safe bet. But questioners should not indicate their approval or disapproval of any candidates' answers.

Debate: For a more debate-style format, send the candidates questions prior to the event that elicit specific responses. Candidates can answer these questions and then move on to those that arise from the audience and moderator during the debate.





Forum Participants

Candidates: Send out personal letters inviting candidates three months prior to holding the forum. Emphasize that this is a nonpartisan event put on by the afterschool community in the candidate's district/city/town. Include information about the impact of afterschool programs in the district. Follow up with candidates each month after sending the invitation using different methods of contact (phone, face-to-face, email). If you can only get one candidate, the event has a higher chance of looking like an endorsement, so you should probably cancel if only one candidate agrees to participate. Also, ask all candidates not to bring their campaign materials, otherwise the IRS might mistake it for a campaign rally!

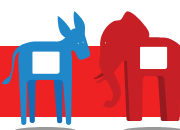
Moderator: Select a moderator who can serve in a nonpartisan role. Ideally, this would be someone who is well respected within your community, such as a local journalist. Get a commitment from this person early-on and prepare them in advance (review with them, do practice runs). Have a back-up in mind.

Timekeeper: This should be a staff person with the main objective to keep the forum on schedule and enforce any predetermined time limits on candidate responses if applicable. This person should be able to interrupt people in order to keep time.

Planning Ahead: Forum Timeline

The earlier you make contact with the candidates, the better. Communicate with a representative from each campaign and request meetings to brief the candidates. Be sure to:

- Document all attempts at communication, successful or otherwise.
- Attempt to contact all the candidates, regardless of party affiliation.





Forum Planning Timeline at a Glance



Public Opinion Polling

Polls can help you identify and refine messages and themes that resonate with the public to make for a stronger campaign and more focused messaging. If you have the resources, conduct polls or surveys to register voter opinions on a variety of subjects, including afterschool. Using the surveys and opinion research can help you make the case that public concern for afterschool is among the top issues on voters' minds. This can serve as the "meat" of your campaign. Consider having the youth in your program conduct their own poll with questions for their fellow students as well as parents and community members.

If you do not have the resources to conduct polls or voter surveys, you may be able to use existing data to make your point or work with an organization already conducting a poll for this election. Do not reinvent the wheel! Review existing research and polls on afterschool and collate the data to release "new" results from which to base your talking points. If an organization is conducting a poll, discuss adding afterschool-related questions.

Finally, it may be helpful to get feedback from high-level supporters outside your community. Surveying out-of-state advocates and colleagues may give you a better sense of how to present the campaign and what issues might work. Use these people and organizations as resources to help you frame the debate in your community. They may have suggestions of what has worked in their respective areas.





Post-Election Transition



See **Appendices 3 & 4** for sample follow-up letters to the field and candidates.



For more ideas on how to educate officials once they're in office, check out: bit.ly/22oKktV



While the election may be over, your campaign work is not. Hopefully some aspects of your work will continue for some time into the new term. In order to make the most of all your time and hard work leading up to Election Day, you need to continue your efforts with post-election follow-up to candidates, newly elected officials, media and the public.

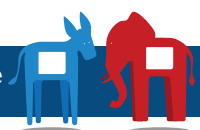
Follow-Up With Elected Officials

Once Election Day has passed, be sure to review public pronouncements, candidate surveys and other materials from the winning and losing campaigns. Understand the winning candidate's position and hold them to what they said during their campaign. Having made public statements on the issue, the candidates will most likely be responsive. Remind the newly elected official about your expertise and offer to provide them with information and research to help better understand your issue.

Follow-Up With the Field

There are a number of things you can do to follow up with the field. Ideally, the end of the campaign is just the beginning of your outreach to the database that you've built.

- Be sure to send acknowledgements to the field, thanking them for their effort and hard work.
- Organize a post-election meeting with your partners and area campaign leaders, and share best practices: what worked, what didn't.
- Encourage the field to "keep the pressure on."
- Give the field sample letters so they can follow up with the winning candidates.



Appendix Materials



Appendix 1:

Sample Letter to the Editor

[Date]

Letters-to-the-Editor

(Organization contact information)

Anytown, USA 12345

To the Editor:

Just in time for the new school year, **[your school/organization name]** has answered the pleas of local families by providing an affordable, quality afterschool program for students in grades six to eight. The demand for supervised afterschool programs is great. More than 30 million school-age children have both parents working outside the home. Furthermore, 11.3 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 .

The juvenile crime rate triples between the hours of 3 and 8 p.m., with violent crimes by juveniles peaking between 3 and 4 p.m.—the hour at the end of the school day. Why? In part because an increasing number of our children are on their own during these late afternoon hours while parents are at work. What these children need are engaging activities that will keep them safe and out of trouble.

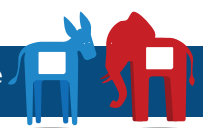
Afterschool programs provide that needed alternative while helping children with their studies and providing a range of enrichment activities. ***[insert examples of how your afterschool program is helping your community. Example: Just For Kids provides three hours of supervised afterschool activities, including homework assistance, arts and crafts, and recreation. Rivertowne Student Success is proud to take a leadership role in the burgeoning afterschool movement and excited about the chance to provide our children with a positive afternoon alternative to the streets.]***

Sincerely,

[your signature]

[title, school/organization name]

[phone]

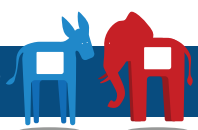




Sample Polling Questions

Questions for parents, teachers, community members and voters:

1. Do you think there needs to be some type of organized activity or place where children can go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn?
2. Which is the most important element for an afterschool program to have (*pick one*):
 - a) Homework and tutoring time
 - b) Physical activity
 - c) Arts activity—music, dance, drama, etc.
 - d) STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
 - e) Healthy snack and/or meals
 - f) Community service
 - g) Social and emotional supports
 - h) Other (specify)
3. Do you have children? How old are they? Do they participate in an afterschool program?
4. Why do your children participate in an afterschool program? Why not?
5. If an afterschool program is not available in your area, would you support the creation of one? Why or why not?
6. Which afterschool program outcome is most important to you (*pick one*):
 - a) Increasing test scores
 - b) Keeping kids safe
 - c) Healthier kids (through fitness and nutrition activities)
 - d) Providing kids with hands-on opportunities to learn science, math, engineering, and computing skills
 - e) Building and developing kids' social and emotional skills
 - f) Development of creative and artistic skills
 - g) Other (specify)
7. Do you think government funding for afterschool programs should come primarily from federal, state or local government?





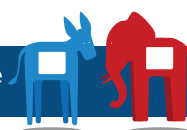
8. If your children are in an afterschool program, do you think it makes you a more productive member of the workforce? Why or why not?

Other suggestions:

Don't limit yourself to the above questions; those are just ideas. You know what the issues are concerning afterschool programs and your community. For example, is your program in danger of closing? Even if it isn't, ask people how they would feel if it did close. What would their biggest concern be?

What to do when you're done:

Once you've polled enough people—and enough depends on the size of your program, school or community—you'll need to decide how you want to present your data. For example, would the data make more sense as a bar graph, or as text? The final report should only be about one page long, maybe two, depending on how big your poll was. You could include your final report in the *Candidate's Guide to Afterschool* or send it to a local newspaper to get them to write a story about it.

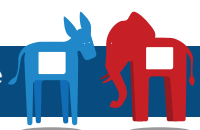




Appendix 3:

Candidate Questionnaire on Afterschool and Related issues

1. What are your views on access to afterschool and summer learning programs? What actions might you consider based on your views?
2. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) learning has become a major focus in efforts to boost international competitiveness and prepare for the 21st century economy. What are your views on this issue and on the role out-of-school time can play?
3. The traditional school day and a variety of supplementary programs are available to support low-income student's access to meals and academic enrichment during the school year. But this access decreases substantially over the summer. How would you approach this from a policy perspective?
4. Given a growing epidemic of opioid abuse, what types of opportunities might help children stay away from negative influences outside the school day? Do you support youth prevention programs, and if so, how?
5. Some research suggests low-income children face an "opportunity gap," i.e., different resources available to children based on income, such as private tutoring, access to sports and arts, social connections etc. Do you see such a gap? If so, what would you do to reduce this gap?
6. If elected, how would you help youth engage in positive behaviors and constructive activities that may help prevent their engaging in more risky behaviors that lead to more negative outcomes? What can our country do to change interactions among youth and law enforcement?





Appendix 4:

Sample Follow-Up Letter to Newly Elected Officials

Dear **[official]**:

Congratulations on your campaign victory. My fellow **[state citizens, i.e. Virginians]** and I have signaled our support for you and your views on what our children need. Ensuring that our children are safe and cared for after school is a top priority for me. I'm not alone; according to *America After 3PM*, 84 percent of parents support public funding for afterschool programs and 72 percent feel that afterschool programs are essential for their communities.

Despite this clear consensus, **[XXXX]** young people in our state are alone after school. These children are not only at unsafe and at risk—they are also losing out on important learning opportunities. For their sake, I urge you to invest in afterschool programs during your term in office. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning.

I hope you will consider the **[state afterschool network]** as a resource to you in your new role. We would be delighted to connect you and your staff with local afterschool and summer learning programs to conduct site visits to see firsthand the critical roles that afterschool programs are playing for our children, youth and families in our state.

As you consider ways in which you can invest in afterschool and summer learning programs in your newly elected position, we can also provide you with any needed research on supply and demand and evidence of effectiveness. **[State afterschool network]** has a strong network of afterschool supporters across the state and we are looking forward to engaging our network to support any proposed policies that would benefit afterschool and summer providers and the children and youth that they support.

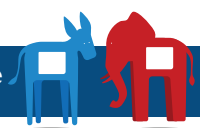
Again, congratulations on your victory! We look forward to working with you to help keep **[state]**'s youth safe and engaged in learning during the hours after school.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your phone number]

[your email address]





Afterschool Alliance

1616 H Street NW
Ste 820
Washington D.C. 20006