



# Comprehensive Afterschool Programs

## Partnerships Accelerate Students' Learning and Growth

Comprehensive afterschool programs operate at the nexus of schools, families, and communities to expand learning opportunities for youth.

Working together, schools, afterschool programs, and community partners are better positioned to accelerate students' academic, social, and emotional learning, especially students who have been historically underserved and those with special needs.

## Evidence-Based and Proven Effective

Comprehensive afterschool programs apply evidence-based practices to support the needs of youth, families, and communities. [Decades of data](#) show these programs:

- ▶ Accelerate students' learning gains and improve their reading and math skills
- ▶ Engage youth in learning and boost school attendance
- ▶ Support social and emotional development
- ▶ Prevent youth violence
- ▶ Boost on-time graduation



## Comprehensive afterschool providers follow key principles:



**School-Community Partnerships:** Strong partnerships with schools that include aligning goals and services, effective lines of communication, a shared commitment to equity, and sharing data and resources are at the core of successful expanded learning programs.

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**Active and Engaged Learning:** Strong expanded learning programs engage youth in meaningful, culturally-relevant experiential learning opportunities that help students discover new interests, explore careers, and build connections. Programs provide meaningful opportunities for youth to lead, share perspectives, and help shape program offerings.

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**Family Engagement:** Expanded learning programs are well-positioned to regularly check in with parents, help schools stay connected to families, and help caregivers navigate challenges related to their work schedule or recovery from the pandemic.

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**Intentional Programming:** Setting explicit goals for meeting young people's developmental and academic needs, and intentionally designing activities that align with those goals are critical to the success of expanded learning programs.

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**Diverse, Prepared Staff:** Successful expanded learning programs align their staffing ratios, qualifications, ongoing professional development, and overall diversity of staff with program goals and activities. Programs are often staffed by a mix of in-school teachers and community partners.

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**Participation and Access:** Studies show that frequency and duration of participation in expanded learning programs matter; the more kids participate, the more likely they are to improve academically and behaviorally. Young people across the nation can benefit from sustained access to expanded learning programs and data indicate that there is significant unmet demand for programs.

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**Safety:** Adequate space, supervision, and security are necessary for young people to have the comfort and freedom to learn, engage, and connect. Students' safety is the top priority among the afterschool field, especially as programs continue to adapt in a COVID-19 world.

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**Health and Well-being:** The best programs take a holistic approach to well-being, helping students build social and emotional skills (critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration), providing opportunities for physical activity, supporting mental health, and ensuring access to nutritious foods.

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**Ongoing Assessment and Improvement:** Expanded learning programs that employ sound data collection and management practices focused on continuous improvement have the most success in establishing and maintaining quality services for young people.

### Get Connected

Afterschool providers stand ready to support schools and community partners throughout recovery and renewal.

Details about the evidence base and key principles for expanded learning programs are available at:

[helpkidsrecover.org](https://helpkidsrecover.org)



[afterschoolalliance.org](https://afterschoolalliance.org)