

MESSAGES THAT WORK

The Afterschool Alliance recommends using the following messages with the media:

- Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.
- Research commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, released in 2014, finds that the number of children in the United States participating in afterschool programs are on the rise. The study found that 10.2 million children (18 percent) participate in an afterschool program – an increase from 2009 (8.4 million; 15 percent) and 2004 (6.5 million; 11 percent). Nearly 1 in 4 families (23 percent) currently has a child enrolled in an afterschool program.
- But economic difficulties have taken a toll on afterschool programs. Many are cutting back hours and some have been forced to close. That same study, released in 2014, found that unmet demand for afterschool — parents who would enroll their child in a program, if one were available — increased to 19.4 million children in 2014. Demand is especially high among low-income, African American and Hispanic families.
- In rural communities, the unmet demand for afterschool programs is also high. The same study found that for every one rural child in an afterschool program, there are three more—or 3.1 million children living in rural America—who are waiting to get in.
- Years of research have demonstrated that afterschool programs work, and support a wide range of positive outcomes for kids, families and communities.
- Afterschool programs help young people prepare for the future. Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs offered after school and during the summer are getting young people excited about these critical fields by engaging them in hands-on explorations. Just like acquiring fluency in a language requires immersion in that language, becoming fluent in STEM requires engaging with it in lots of settings. 2 out of 3 parents agree that STEM skills can be gained in afterschool programs and 70% of all parents agree that afterschool programs should offer STEM. Afterschool programs are a great way to engage all children in STEM regardless of where they live and offer an exciting way to ensure we prepare tomorrow's workforce to create a prosperous future for our nation.
- Afterschool programs are an effective tool in the ongoing battle against childhood obesity. Most parents (72 percent) report that their child's afterschool program provides children with beverages, snacks and/or meals, and 81 percent of these parents are satisfied that the food served is healthy. Four in five parents agree that afterschool programs should offer opportunities for physical activity and 80 percent of parents with a child in an afterschool program report that the program does just that.
- America needs more quality 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.
- With last year's passage of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, now is the time to make sure that states and local communities have the federal support they need to help every student succeed by making sure that afterschool programs, including opportunities for STEM learning and healthy meals and snacks are adequately funded and supported.