



2014 Campaign Toolkit

Making Afterschool an Election Issue



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I. Introduction

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? It is the voices of people like you, in local communities, that 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.



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

www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElections.cfm



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.





I. Introduction

- **What election do you want to target?** A statewide campaign requires a significant amount of resources, time and effort. We recommend you start locally and, if successful, move to a larger jurisdiction next time. Work with your partners and consider targeting municipal, county or district elections, which will likely be a more effective use of resources. Or, if you determine that state or national offices are most important, target specific aspects of the election, such as securing questions on afterschool in a candidate debate or orchestrating site visits for candidates.
- **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?** Downloading the Candidate's Guide to Afterschool is a good start. The guide can be sent to all candidates as a primer on the importance of afterschool programs as a campaign issue. 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.



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

- Download the 2012 Candidate's Guide to Afterschool:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElectionsCandidate.cfm>
- Visit the **Facts & Research** section of our website:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm>
- Read the **“Making the Case”** section of this kit on page 10.





I. Introduction



- **What are the “rules of engagement” for nonprofits?** There is no fear of—and no danger to—nonprofits participating in a nonpartisan voter and candidate education campaign; the goal is to elevate the issue of afterschool, not a particular candidate or political party.

This toolkit is filled with an abundance of information on campaigning; however, you should not feel like you have to complete every step and participate in every recommended activity in order for your efforts to be successful. Rather, you should pick and choose—based on the time you are able to spend and the resources available—the strategies most effective to help you reach your campaign goals.

The diagram below offers suggestions for how you should focus your efforts depending upon the level of involvement you choose. Participation at any of these levels is a meaningful accomplishment that will help to advance the cause of afterschool for all.





I. Introduction

Campaign Timeline

1. Conduct polls/ surveys to register voter opinions on afterschool.
2. Organize events and meetings for parents, afterschool staff and other concerned citizens.
3. Distribute candidate surveys.
4. Continue to disseminate your information throughout the community, register voters concerned with afterschool issues, and add contacts and advocates to the database.

1. Email/mail the Candidate's Guide to Afterschool to candidates and advisors.
2. Propose idea of debates, issue forums, and town hall meetings with all candidates' campaigns.
3. Invite candidates to *Lights On Afterschool* or other Back to School events – identify opportunities to “piggyback” on local school district events.
4. Continue to disseminate information throughout the community, register voters concerned with afterschool issues, and add contacts and advocates to the database.

1. GOTV effort should be in full swing – connect and communicate with supporters
2. Continue to make the case to the media and general public that afterschool is a critical issue.
3. Continue media outreach.
4. Mobilize advocates and precinct captains to increase awareness and outreach activities in their community.

Immediately following the election, organize meetings with your partners and precinct captains to discuss what worked and what did not. Document and compile this analysis into a document for use by other advocates around the country. The goal is to make afterschool an issue, not just in your neighborhood, but in communities around the country. By learning from each other, every subsequent campaign may be able to build on the successes while avoiding the mistakes of prior campaigns.

May - June

June - July

August

September

October

Early November

Election Day

Late November/ December

1. Identify the Precinct Captains.
2. Continue disseminating information about the campaign.
3. Start to plant the idea of candidate forums addressing issues related to afterschool programs.
4. Research dates for future candidate forums/debates.
5. Organize afterschool volunteers and advocates to attend forums and ask candidates about their position on afterschool – make it a part of the political conversation.

1. Encourage editorial boards, community newspapers, and local media outlets to focus on afterschool as a key issue in this campaign.
2. Organize a *Lights On Afterschool* event planning committee.
3. Continue to disseminate your information throughout the community, register voters concerned with afterschool issues, and add contacts and advocates to the database.

1. Host *Lights On Afterschool* event
2. Collect signatures for *Afterschool for All* petitions.
3. Mobilize supporters through “Get Out The Vote” (GOTV) materials/events.
4. Request meetings with Editorial Boards of local print media outlets to brief them on the importance of afterschool.
5. Work with high-profile supporters to place Op-Eds and Letters to the Editors
6. Continue to reach out to staff/candidates/ community on afterschool issues, register voters, and add contacts and advocates to the database.

Depending on resources, many campaigns use volunteers and staff as poll workers on election day. This would constitute passing out afterschool material and being a very visible proponent of afterschool programs at various poll locations throughout the district. Be sure to plan ahead and factor the resources into your planning in April and May.



II. 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 information to all four candidates. If a candidate contacts you for more information, document that contact and if other candidates reach out to you, you must offer them the same information.
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 equal 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, as long as you do not attempt to intervene surreptitiously in a political campaign;
- Sponsor appearances by a candidate or public official:
 - If you invite them as a candidate, make sure you indicate no support for or opposition to them at the event and that all other candidates are given equal opportunity to appear at the event as well;
 - If you invite them in a capacity other than as a candidate, you don't need to invite opposition, but make sure the event doesn't turn into a campaign appearance or fundraiser.
- 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 take a public stand—but that is as far as you can go.





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

What can 501(c)(3) organizations do? (cont.)

- 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.



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.



What can 501(c)(3) organizations NOT do?



- Support specific candidates or parties in races for elected office, including:
 - Supporting or opposing a declared candidate or third party movement;
 - Conduct efforts to "draft" someone to run;
 - 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.
- 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;
- Directly approach candidates and ask them to endorse your organization's agenda.



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

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, or 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.



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 precinct committee persons and party nominations.



**This document is intended to provide guidance on federal lobbying laws but is not legal advice and we would advise you to consult an attorney if you have specific concerns. This information was adapted from the Alliance for Justice's series on non-profit and foundation lobbying and advocacy. Visit www.afj.org for more information.*

An overview of [General Lobbying Rules for Non Profit Organizations](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElectionsRules.cfm) can be found at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElectionsRules.cfm>

¹ <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=179462,00.html>, accessed on June 25, 2008

² <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=179464,00.html>, accessed on June 25, 2008



III. Making the Case: Educate & Be Prepared to Persuade

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 resonate with voters of every kind.

- The parents of **18.5 million children** would send their child to an afterschool program—if one were available.
- Nearly **9 out of 10 voters** are concerned that children are unsupervised after school with too much unstructured time. Half are very concerned. They are equally concerned about children and teens.

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 candidates 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.



Download the Candidate's Guide to Afterschool at:

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyElectionsCandidate.cfm>.



Talking Points

During your campaign, you will be tasked not only with educating and prompting your community, but also with defending afterschool against criticism, excuses or apathy. These talking points outline responses to common statements made by those who either doubt or are unaware of the overwhelmingly beneficial aspects of afterschool programs.

"We can't afford to pay for afterschool programs."

Reply: We can't afford not to. 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.

"People aren't willing to spend public funds on afterschool programs."

Reply: Recent polling tells us the opposite. First, voters are very concerned that not enough afterschool programs are available. Second, they want government at every level to invest in afterschool.

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



III. Making the Case: Educate & Be Prepared to Persuade

Talking Points

“People aren’t willing to spend public funds on afterschool programs.” (cont.)

Highlights from America After 3PM and other polling data:

- Nine in 10 Americans think afterschool programs are important.
- Eight in 10 parents (83 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs.
- Parents of 18.5 million children (38 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.
- 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.
- Voters worry that if no new funds come to the programs, as a result of reduced federal funding or because of budget problems in the states, programs will have to reduce their services or close their doors.



For more information on voter attitudes, look at the Polling Data section of the Afterschool Alliance website:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/researchPolling.cfm>



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

“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. Some examples:

- 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)



Find more information on our website:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm>





III. Making the Case: Educate & Be Prepared to Persuade

“Afterschool programs don’t work.” (cont.)

- A five-phase evaluation of the **Citizen Schools** program found that former **Citizen Schools** participants were more likely to pass the tenth-grade Mathematics and English/Language Arts MCAS tests than were students district-wide. This is particularly noteworthy considering that participants as a group were more academically at-risk than the general Boston Public School population at baseline. (Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2010)

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

Reply: Unfortunately, adequate care is something not always available in every community. It has been estimated that parents of more than 28 million children work outside the home. Today, less than 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, 77 percent of mothers with school-age children are employed. Plus, both men and women are working more hours. Average work hours per adult increased 7.9 percent between 1960 and 1998, and nearly three-fourths of working adults say they have little or no control over their work schedule.

Families with earnings below the federal poverty level spend an average of 23 percent of their monthly earnings on child care.

While the work day grows longer for working parents, the school day has not. The gap between work and school schedules amounts to as much as 25 hours per week, which presents working parents with the challenge of finding someone to care for their children while they are at work. Nationwide, nearly 5 million children in grades K-8 regularly care for themselves, and 26 percent of all children go home alone after school each day. Further, commercial child care can be prohibitively expensive for many working families. Nearly half of America’s working families with a child younger than 13 have child care expenses that consume, on average, 9 percent of their monthly earnings, and families with earnings below the federal poverty level spend an average of 23 percent of their monthly earnings on child care. The realities of today’s working world make afterschool programs an absolute necessity.

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 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 \$1.3 billion funding stream that supports afterschool programs in thousands of communities across America. Be familiar with the impact of these grants to the areas candidates want to represent.
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm>
- *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyNCLB.cfm>
- Expanded Learning <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyexpandedlearning.cfm>
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/STEM.cfm>



*For brief updates on the latest federal afterschool policy developments, visit our Policy & Action Center
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy/FedNewsArchive.cfm>*





IV. Reaching Out: Key Audiences

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 reach out to about endorsements, 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.

Media	Field	Candidate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan newsworthy launch • Write Letter to the Editor • Outreach to community papers and editorial boards • Op-eds from Grasstops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and build database • Identify precinct captains • Hold <i>Lights On Afterschool</i> event • Organize <i>Afterschool for All</i> petition • "Get Out The Vote" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background research • Outreach to all candidate campaigns • Surveys • Forums • Ensure post-election accountability

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.





IV. Reaching Out: Key Audiences

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. If the editorial board agrees to meet, **have a preparatory meeting with your group** before the meeting at the newspaper. Practice answering questions and decide who will take the lead in answering questions about specific topics.
5. At the meeting, each member of your group should **be prepared 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.



IV. Reaching Out: Key Audiences

Online Outreach & “Get Out The Vote”

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 on the day of your campaign launch event and should provide background information about the campaign as well as a place for visitors to show their support.

Facebook and Twitter

In today’s world of social networking, having a Facebook site is almost as important as having an official website. While your official site should list information about your 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 the official site in case people want more information. Update your status with recent developments or compelling information; the more people who “like” your status, the more publicity that status—and your campaign—will get. Facebook is perhaps most useful for event publicity, as you can create a page specifically for your event and use it as an electronic invitation. Event pages should mirror the actual events you plan and are a great way to spread the word. Invite all of your Facebook fans and encourage them to invite all of their friends.



Twitter is another useful site to have when you run 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, candidate information, 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 your candidate has a Twitter profile; if they do, monitor their posts for afterschool-related posts and other general updates.

“Get Out The Vote”

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 targeted materials. 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, as well as the issues you are urging voters to support. Again, whenever possible, your materials should advocate an issue, not a particular candidate.





IV. Reaching Out: Key Audiences

A Word On Mobilizing Afterschool Supporters

A crucial aspect of your work is mobilizing afterschool supporters—they are one of your greatest assets. They should be encouraged to vote and 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, PTA's, 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.

Get Candidates on the Record

It is important to ask candidates about their position on afterschool. This is your opportunity to get the candidates on the record and an opportunity for the candidates to express their views. Asking the candidates questions about afterschool in public settings will help to make it part of the political conversation and get candidates to take a formal stand on the issue (when typically they might not have afterschool policy written up as part of their platform).



Asking candidates questions about afterschool in public settings will help to make it part of the political conversation and get them to take a formal stand on the issue.

If a candidate goes on record as being supportive, it will help you hold them accountable after the election. You can also use candidates' survey responses to share an objective view of the candidates with afterschool supporters. For example, re-printing candidate responses—and noting who did not respond—can advocates who the real afterschool champions are without the organizer taking a side.

For sample questions you can ask to get candidates on the record, see **Section V: Tools & Strategies**

show
survey



V. Tools & Strategies

Ask Candidates About Their Position

The sample questions provided below are suitable for any forum—from a public debate or event to a letter or a face-to-face meeting. Do some research on the candidates and add or tailor questions based on their previous actions or record regarding afterschool, or particular points in their platform that might affect afterschool.

Start with basic questions like: what has the candidate done to support afterschool and how they will support afterschool once they are elected? You might get the candidate thinking about how afterschool affects them personally by asking if their children ever participated in a program or if they attended programs as children themselves, and if they've ever visited a program.



Questions for Candidates

1. More than a decade of research shows that afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. Yet, millions of children are unsupervised each day after school and parent productivity is down during those after school hours as a result. **What role do you see for our federal/state/local government in supporting kids and families during the critical hours between 3 and 6 p.m.?**
2. Studies show that American voters want their kids to have more engaging, hands-on expanded learning opportunities. Among the models of expanded learning, which include before-school, afterschool and summer programs, a longer school day has gained traction as an education reform policy. However, a longer school day is just one model of expanding learning and is still in the pilot phase of development. **How can our federal/state/local government support a variety of expanded learning programs and ensure that all the approaches to expanded learning incorporate the best available evidence of what works for kids and families?**
3. Quality, affordable afterschool programs are available to only a small percentage of schoolchildren, parents and communities that want them. **If elected, will you work for a significant increase in federal/state/ local funding for afterschool programs so that more children and families will have quality afterschool programs available to them?**
4. Many Americans have serious concerns about students being prepared to navigate and compete in the highly technical global workforce. There is strong evidence that afterschool programs help increase STEM knowledge and skills, help kids graduate on time and prepare them for college and careers, yet afterschool programs are in short supply. **If elected, will you support additional funding for afterschool programs, particularly programs that support STEM learning?**
5. Afterschool programs need support not just from governments, but from the business and philanthropic communities as well. **If elected, will you work to engage leaders of these communities in efforts to increase support for afterschool programs?**
6. **Please describe the ways you would work to make afterschool programs available to all children who need them, if you are elected.**



V. Tools & Strategies



Candidate surveys

Candidate surveys are another tool to consider. Distribute candidate surveys to all of the candidates, asking them to respond to various issues that are pertinent to the afterschool movement in your community. Use the questions above as a starting place, tailoring questions to particular issues in your area or topics that are pressing concerns in the community, but keep the survey short to help ensure a response. Publish candidate's responses to the surveys as a way of educating the field and the public about candidates' commitment to afterschool programs.

Afterschool for All

Afterschool for All is a collection of the names of Americans who believe that young people should have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. Governors, mayors, police chiefs, educators, youth advocates, faith-based organizations, corporate leaders, parents and concerned citizens across the nation have already signed on, lending their support to the afterschool movement.

Find out where the candidates stand by asking them to sign their names to ***Afterschool for All***. Ask your state or city leaders to join you in pledging support for universal afterschool by sending them the sign up form. Let them know how much support afterschool has in your community by sending them a list of local supporters.

Remember, you can tailor all of these sample materials to your needs or you can simply use them as reference tools to create your own community statement of support for afterschool.

Events

Lights On Afterschool/Site Visits

Lights On Afterschool is a great way to introduce candidates and elected officials to the world of afterschool. Candidates want to be visible in the community and *Lights On Afterschool* is all about building and demonstrating community support for afterschool programs. Invite the candidates to speak at your *Lights On Afterschool* event or issue a proclamation in support of afterschool programs. Check out our *Lights On Afterschool* online event planning kit for event ideas, sample materials and more.

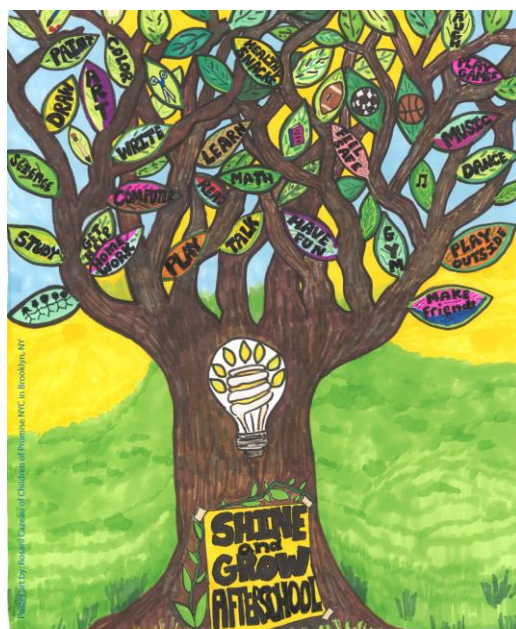


Check out the *Afterschool for All* website

(<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4a.cfm>)

to see more tools and resources, including sample email invitations that you can send to friends and colleagues, examples of how afterschool providers are using *Afterschool for All* to raise awareness in their communities, and much more.

Finally, you can ask your supporters to sign the Afterschool Alliance's national petition (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/petition/>) to ensure that federal funding is not diverted away from afterschool programs.



The 14th annual
LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL
afterschoolalliance.org





V. Tools & Strategies

Candidate Forums

Candidate forums and town hall meetings 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!

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 major candidates in the district where the forum or meeting is held and do everything that you can to generate a large audience. If this means that afterschool will be one of a few issues discussed, that's OK. 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. 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. You need not ask each candidate the same set of questions, but be sure to give them equal amounts of time to respond.

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.

Town Hall Meeting - Organize your event as a town hall meeting if only one candidate has agreed to attend. Members of the audience ask questions and educate the candidate about afterschool and other important issues in the community while also giving the candidate a chance to state their opinions and policy proposals on the issues.

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).

Moderator - Select a moderator, preferably a person who lives outside of the voting district and 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 (provide questions, 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.

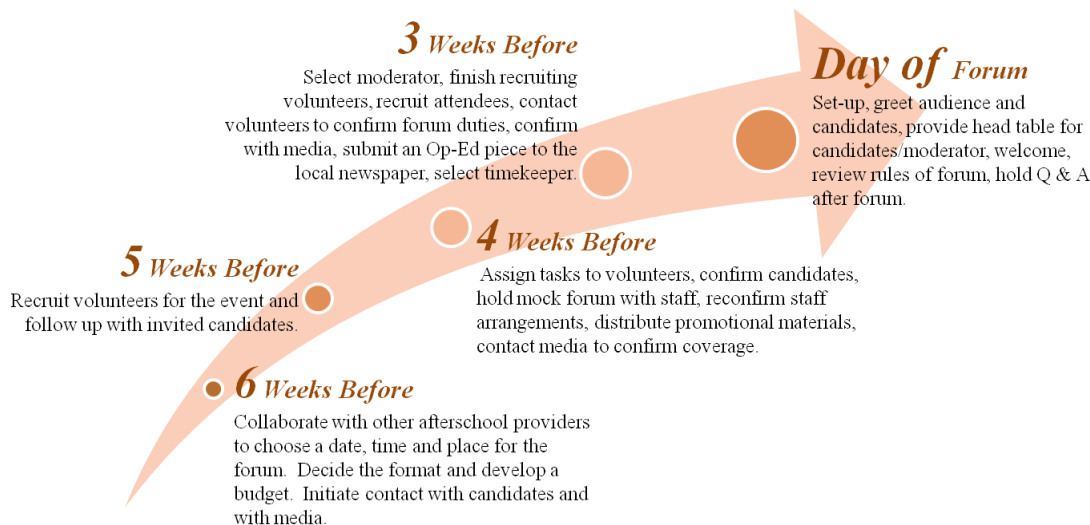


V. Tools & Strategies

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.



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, 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.

Use the sample poll in **Appendix 2** to get started.



VI. Post-Election/Transition

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.

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 precinct captains, and share best practices: what worked, what didn't.
- Encourage the field to "keep the pressure on."
- Give field sample letters so they can follow up with the winning candidate.



For more ideas on how to educate officials once they're in office, check out:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/takeActionTransitionIdeas.cfm>.





VII. Appendix Materials

Appendix 1: Sample Letter to the Editor

[Date]

Letters-to-the-Editor
Rivertowne Enquirer
312 Elm Street
Rivertowne, OH 45202

To the Editor:

Just in time for the new school year, Stevens Middle School 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 28 million school-age children have either their only parent or both parents working outside the home, and 15.1 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 p.m. and 8 p.m., with violent crimes by juveniles peaking between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.—the hour at the end of the school day. Why? In part because an increasing number of our children are unsupervised during these late afternoon hours while parents are at work. What these children need is supervision 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. 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,

Jennifer Greene
Director, Rivertowne Student Success
513/555-4567



VII. Appendix Materials

Appendix 2: 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) Healthy snack
 - e) Community service
 - f) 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 projects to learn science, math, engineering, and computing skills
 - e) Development of creative and artistic skills
 - f) Other (specify)
7. Do you think money 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 efficient 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 with bar graphs 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.



VII. Appendix Materials

Appendix 3: Sample Follow-Up Letter to Newly Elected Officials

Dear [official]:

Congratulations on your campaign victory. My fellow 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; an independent poll found that 80 percent of Virginia voters are concerned about the amount of unstructured time that children have, and 72 percent feel that afterschool programs are essential for their communities.

Despite this clear consensus, more than a third of 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 would like to ask that you open your office term with a show of support for the afterschool programs that we all value and sign on to the *Afterschool for All* campaign. Agreeing to be on the *Afterschool for All* list means simply that you support the goal of all children and youth having access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. With your signature, you will join more than 24,000 individuals and organizations representing more than 30 million Americans who have signed on as *Afterschool for All* partners. Partners include governors, state legislators, mayors, police chiefs and prosecutors, including those from New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Denver and Seattle. National organizations such as AARP; Children's Defense Fund; Citigroup Inc.; IBM; the Mellon Financial Corporation; NAACP; the National Council of La Raza; the National PTA; AFL-CIO; Time Warner; the NBA, NFL, MLB and NHL; The US Conference of Mayors; and YMCA of the USA have all signed on.

If you support afterschool for all, please go to www.afterschool2010.org/join.cfm. There is no requirement for inclusion as an *Afterschool for All* partner—financial or otherwise—and it only takes a minute to sign on. It is our hope that this list will simply serve to convey the broad and diverse support that exists for access to afterschool for all children.

Thank you for your consideration and support. Your participation will add weight to this rapidly growing effort.

Sincerely, [your name]
[your phone number]
[your email address]



VII. Appendix Materials

Appendix 4: Sample Letter/Email to the Field, Post-Election

Dear Afterschool Advocates,

On behalf of the Kids Deserve Better team, congratulations on an incredible campaign. Working together, we made children and afterschool programs an issue in Virginia's elections. From polling data and debates to *Lights On Afterschool* events and media coverage across the state, your voices were heard calling for safe, enriching afterschool programs for our young people. We reached every candidate with our message about the needs of Virginia's children.

We don't want our campaign, or contact with you, to end with the election. We will stay in touch with you via our Afterschool Advocate newsletter. But please stay in touch with us at the Afterschool Alliance, and let us know how we can support your efforts to expand afterschool programs for our children and families. A few ideas:

- Write your newly-elected officials and encourage them to make sure that Virginia's kids are safe and cared for after school (a sample letter is pasted below). You can look up information for your delegate or state senator at: <http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform>. To send a letter to the governor, use this link: <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/AboutTheGovernor/contactGovernor.cfm> and cut and paste the sample letter into your message.
- Send Virginia news and events alerts to info@afterschoolalliance.org –any news and events you share with us will be posted on the Virginia state page at: http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states/states_facts.cfm?state_abbr=VA
- Join us for upcoming events like the *Afterschool for All Challenge* and *Lights On Afterschool*. See our website for details on all of our events at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>.

Again, thank you for all of your hard work. We value your involvement and greatly respect your dedication.

