



NEWS RELEASE
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Fairbanks Rising 7th Grader Returns to Alaska After Sharing Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – Randy Smith Middle School rising 7th grader Eva Austermuhl, who attends the Fairbanks’ 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool program, spent part of this week meeting with the Alaska federal delegation and their aides to discuss the importance of investing in afterschool and summer learning programs for youth. Eva came to Washington, DC for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#).

On Wednesday, Eva shared her experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with members of Congress, emphasizing the ways afterschool programs engage students in new ways of learning and broaden their horizons. Eva’s father, Dale Austermuhl also traveled to D.C. and spoke at an Afterschool Showcase on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. Eva’s trip was in collaboration with the [Alaska Afterschool Network](#) and the Afterschool Alliance.

“Afterschool helps me focus,” Eva said. “Before my program, I got distracted easily and couldn’t complete my homework which brought down my grades. In my afterschool program I was able to talk through my issues when I was struggling and get the help and support I needed. This year I got straight As and started writing stories. It was exciting to visit the offices of Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan and Representative Don Young and tell them about my improved grades and writing skills and that I’m on the path to following my dreams and being a lawyer.”

The Afterschool for All Challenge is an annual event that brings together afterschool program providers and experts, along with students, to showcase some of the innovative activities their afterschool programs provide.

“Students like Eva speak so eloquently about the kinds of innovative, hands-on learning activities that quality afterschool programs offer students,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They help young people discover their passions and have fun while they learn. We need to increase public and private funding so all students can take advantage of the opportunities afterschool and summer learning programs provide.”

Afterschool providers, educators, community leaders, parents and youth from 46 states visited Washington, D.C. this week as part of the Afterschool for All Challenge. Congress will soon begin working on the federal budget for the next fiscal year; President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2018.

Participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004, according to [the America After 3PM household survey](#) of 30,000 U.S. families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs has increased as well. Today, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two more whose parents say they would participate, if a program were available. One in five students in the country today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.