

The core afterschool message is:

Afterschool programs inspire students to learn, keep kids safe, and give parents peace of mind. Afterschool works.

This document provides additional messaging guidance related to how afterschool helps kids learn and grow.

Tips for Effective Messaging

- ✓ Connect afterschool to learning. Talk about the new opportunities for learning—and the new experiences—afterschool offers kids of all ages. Use clear descriptive language to paint a picture for people about the fun, creative projects and activities kids are doing in afterschool.
- ✓ Position afterschool as an integral part of the learning process and as a complement to the school day. Illustrate this idea by describing the kind of learning that happens in afterschool, but avoid using the phrase “complement the school day,” or invoking comparisons to school. While people value the different learning afterschool provides, and see it as critical, they see school as more important than afterschool.
- ✓ **Parents** want kids to have time to explore what interests them and get excited about learning. They appreciate the value of completing homework, but place even greater value on new and different learning opportunities, avoiding risky behaviors (online and offline), social time, physical activity, and time spent offline. Parents are less interested in afterschool focusing on test scores and do not want programs focused on academics alone.
- ✓ For **policymakers and educators**, however, connecting to academic achievement and school related benefits is important, such as improved grades, attendance, and schoolwork.
- ✓ **Educators** believe that increased interest in learning is the most important benefit of afterschool. They also value afterschool because it helps young people connect with mentors, get inspired about future careers, and improve their school attendance, classroom behavior, and classroom learning. The benefit to schools is that programs reduce the need for reinforcement during the school day, giving teachers time to cover more topics.
- ✓ **Parents** want to know that teachers say programs have these benefits—teachers are a trusted voice on kids’ learning.
- ✓ Don’t over-rely on STEM. Afterschool gets kids more interested in STEM and STEM programs build key skills, both of which are needed for today’s economy, but discussing a range of diverse topics is important to find the connection to learning for people.
- ✓ Rather than saying afterschool can close gaps, focus on expanding opportunity for all.
- ✓ Briefly reference citations when offering statistics to counter cynicism.

Core Messages (Use these consistently and repeatedly)

- Students learn and grow in afterschool programs.
- Afterschool is a place that sparks passion and fuels imagination. It helps kids discover who they are and what they love to do.
- Students in afterschool programs learn by doing, strengthen their social skills, and prepare for the jobs of tomorrow.
- Programs spark greater interest in school so students attend school more often, get better grades, and are more likely to graduate.
- Teachers report that kids in afterschool programs show more interest in class, behave better, and complete their homework assignments.
- Regular participation in afterschool programs provides new learning opportunities and helps boost students’ reading and math performance and grades.

Language to Emphasize—and Avoid

Messages that resonate best are clear and simple. They use everyday language free of jargon and communicate shared values and emotion. We encourage you to use the words and phrases on the left. The right-hand column includes language that’s harder to understand and may have less of an impact.

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Afterschool helps students learn and grow	✗ Students achieve more with afterschool
✓ Afterschool gives kids time to explore, express themselves, connect with mentors and have fun	✗ Afterschool is an important complement to the school day
✓ Programs spark interest in school so students attend school more often, get better grades, and are more likely to graduate	✗ When students participate in afterschool, they attend school more often, do better in school, and are more likely to graduate
✓ According to teachers, students in afterschool programs show more interest in class, behave better, and are more likely to complete their homework assignments.	✗ Afterschool helps students behave better in class
✓ Afterschool offers exciting new learning opportunities to kids of all ages and backgrounds	✗ Afterschool helps narrow the achievement gap