



NEWS RELEASE

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21st Annual *Lights On Afterschool* Set for Thursday, October 22nd. Virtual Events to Amplify Youth Voices, Focus on STEM, Wellness, and More

A chance for youth to share their views on schooling in the pandemic, racial justice, and other issues. A computer coding activity. An opportunity to engage with young entrepreneurs. Those will be among the national virtual activities that will complement local events taking place across the country to turn the lights on for afterschool on Thursday, October 22nd and throughout that week.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the 21st annual [Lights On Afterschool](#) will be unlike previous national rallies for afterschool, with events held virtually this year that focus on science, music and dance, sports and fitness, academics, community service, social and emotional wellness, and more. Organized by schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and others, events will be mostly virtual in communities around the country.

For the 14th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool one night during *Lights On Afterschool* week when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate. Afterschool supporters also are working with local officials to light up local landmarks and buildings around the country to show their support for afterschool programs.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which in normal times provide help with homework; skilled mentors; art, dance and music; healthy snacks and meals; computer programming; opportunities to think critically, collaborate and communicate with peers and adults; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; robotics; and opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning. During the pandemic, programs have stepped up to provide virtual educational activities, deliver meals and enrichment kits, help families bridge the digital divide, check in with children to ensure their social and emotional needs are being met, connect families to social services, care for the children of essential workers and first responders, and much more.

“Afterschool programs have stepped in during the COVID-19 emergency in vitally important ways,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But the challenges they face, and the implications for the next generation, are concerning. The Afterschool Alliance’s [latest surveys](#) find that programs and parents are challenged by virtual learning and evolving school schedules, programs are limited by budgets inadequate to address new safety protocols and students’ emerging needs, and students from low-income families are losing access to the out-of-school-time programs they need.”

“Quality afterschool programs continue to prepare children and youth to succeed in school and in life,” Grant added. “We need them now more than ever because they keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and support working parents. For *Lights On Afterschool* this year, programs are finding innovative ways to showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop in their afterschool programs. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide – but the unmet demand is great. For every child in an afterschool program today, two more are waiting to get in. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States is unsupervised after the school day ends.

Governments, parents, philanthropies, businesses, and others support afterschool and summer learning programs, but investments are under threat. Again this year, the Trump administration recommended eliminating dedicated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs in its budget proposal, although bipartisan majorities in Congress have made clear they will not do so. The Afterschool Alliance is asking Congress to provide a onetime \$6.2 billion boost in funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers – the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs – to ensure out-of-school-time programs can do more to help students and families during this difficult time.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in grades, school attendance, behavior and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school and excited about learning and develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

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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.