



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

### **News Release**

February 23, 2026

Contact: Kim Hayes, [kim@prsolutionsdc.com](mailto:kim@prsolutionsdc.com)

Contact: Angelica Portillo, [aportillo@dallasafterschool.org](mailto:aportillo@dallasafterschool.org)

### **Angelica Portillo of Dallas Named One of 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year**

*Portillo Will Work to Make Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Available to More Students and Families, Locally and Nationwide*

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance has selected Angelica Portillo, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships at Dallas Afterschool, to serve as a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador – one of just 16 leaders in the entire nation chosen for the honor this year. Afterschool Ambassadors continue supporting local afterschool programs while serving the one-year Afterschool Ambassador term during which they engage with policy makers and community leaders to organize events and in other ways grow support for the afterschool and summer learning programs that students and families rely on.

“The country urgently needs strong afterschool advocates, so we are thrilled that Angelica Portillo will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance this year. She will help spread the word that too many children and youth are without the afterschool programs that help them succeed in school and in life,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “This is a pivotal year when we must continue building support for these essential programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised after the school day ends. Portillo is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am pleased and excited to have the opportunity to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Portillo. “Afterschool and summer programs sit at the intersection of education, workforce development, and public safety, and are essential infrastructure for working families. They provide safe, enriching care during the hours parents are still at work, allowing families to maintain employment without sacrificing their children's safety or development. Students gain academic support, explore career pathways, and stay engaged during peak risk hours. For working families, these programs offer both peace of mind and opportunity for their children. I am proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Dallas Afterschool supports 200 afterschool and summer programs across Dallas County, collectively serving approximately 15,000 children each year. For over 15 years, Dallas Afterschool has served as the backbone intermediary for the local Out-of-School Time sector, strengthening providers through education, evaluation, and advocacy.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool. Most of the thousands of local *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around Thursday, October 22, 2026.

The 2026 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama, Tuscaloosa:** Lindsey Blevins, Tuscaloosa City Schools
- **Alaska, Fairbanks:** Lindsay Weaver, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
- **Arkansas, Hot Springs:** Amos Gray, High Impact Movement, Inc.
- **Arkansas, Texarkana:** Tina Jones, Four States Urban Development Project
- **DC, Washington:** Katrina Owens, DC SCORES
- **Florida, Miami:** Sean Prospect, South Florida After-School All-Stars, Inc.
- **Indiana, Indianapolis:** Christine (Chrissy) Balak, Central Indiana Educational Service Center, MSD of Pike Township Schools
- **Mississippi, Cleveland:** Tracy Henshaw Cameron, Delta Area Association for Improvement of Schools
- **Mississippi, Hattiesburg:** Jo Hawkins-Jones, Going Beyond Apprenticeship 21st CCLC Program
- **North Dakota, Grafton:** Lori Zahradka, North Valley Career and Technology Center
- **Oklahoma, Oklahoma City:** Les Thomas, Urban Bridge
- **Pennsylvania, Milton:** Travis Stevens, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, STEAMS Afterschool & Summer Programs
- **Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh:** Ana Kay Yaghoubian, Building for Success in School and Life, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania
- **Texas, Dallas:** Angelica Portillo, Dallas Afterschool
- **Virginia, Arlington:** Paula Fynboh, Aspire Afterschool Learning
- **West Virginia, Shinnston:** Michelle Frase, Buzz Learning Academy

A [2025 household survey](#) found that the parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million kids are currently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend an afterschool program if it were available. That means three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them (77%)—including many in middle- as well as low-income families – are being left behind. Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome. It's no wonder that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends.

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, more excited about learning, and develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

####

*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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

*The mission of Dallas Afterschool, which was established in 2007, is to level the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds by supporting afterschool and summer programs and their staff*

*members, informing community stakeholders on the impact of high-quality OST programming, and coordinating community resources. More information is available at [www.dallasafterschool.org](http://www.dallasafterschool.org)*