



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Lindsay Weaver of Fairbanks, Alaska Named One of 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Weaver 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 Lindsay Weaver, Director of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Afterschool Programs at the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, 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 Lindsay Weaver 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. Weaver 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 Weaver. “I’ve seen up close the many ways these programs help students succeed and help families overcome challenges. That’s especially important now, as so many families are grappling with high costs, and too many students are without afterschool activities and care. Afterschool and summer programs are uniquely positioned to help students connect with peers and caring mentors, explore their interests, and discover their passions. I am proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador.”

There are seven 21st CCLC funded elementary afterschool programs located in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. During the school year, nearly 600 students are engaged in these afterschool programs between Anne Wien, Arctic Light, Denali, Hunter, Ticasuk Brown, University Park, and Weller Elementary Schools. Immediately following the school day, all programs begin with a 15-minute healthy snack break and 15 minutes of structured physical activities. The next 45 minutes of programs include hands-on academic instruction and support, followed by 45 minutes of student-selected enrichment

activities. Program coordinators, certified teachers, support staff, high school student workers, community volunteers, and a blend of partnerships make up the teams to support these programs. The programs highlight the “student’s voice and choice” by offering enrichment clubs of interest that include activities such as 3D printing, fiber arts (knitting, crocheting, embroidering, sewing), Alaska Native games, the science of cooking, Spanish club, community services, Zentangles, strategy games and the highly requested fencing club.

The program is supported by local partners such as the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District to introduce hydroponics to students, and with Denakkanaaga, a non-profit organization that serves as the voice for Native Elders of Interior Alaska, to bring Elders into the afterschool programs to bead with the youth. The program also incorporates a national partnership with “Sami’s Circuit,” an online platform to integrate physical activity with powerful messages that support student confidence and well-being. Additionally, during the month of June, 170 students attend the Elementary Academy of Science and Technology (EAST) for 15 full days of STEAM- (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) and literacy-focused activities. For over two decades, 21st CCLC programs have funded quality afterschool opportunities for youth in the Interior of Alaska.

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.

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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.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) is the third-largest school district in Alaska, serving nearly 12,000 students in the Interior region of the state. FNSBSD is committed to providing a high-quality education that prepares every student for success through strong academic programs, career and technical education, extracurricular opportunities, and comprehensive student support services. More information is available at www.k12northstar.org