

Library and afterschool partnerships: Everybody's doing it!

Well, pretty close. In a 2017 survey of more than 350 afterschool programs, almost three-quarters are working with their local public library. Ninety-eight percent of programs recognized the benefits in partnerships with public libraries, such as collaboration with caring and qualified library staff, availability of better reading materials, access to technology for students and families, and opportunities to build community.

We also found that afterschool programs work with their library partners in diverse ways, ranging from summer reading initiatives to curriculum development support, book lending programs, family events, and even science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities!

Why afterschool?

Libraries and afterschool programs share common goals of creating safe and enriching environments for children and families to come together and learn. Across the country, 10.2 million children attend afterschool programs, including high proportions of youth from low-income, African-American, and Hispanic backgrounds¹. With afterschool programs, libraries can leverage a dedicated and enthusiastic set of educators, to work together to cultivate more and better learning opportunities for children and youth in their communities.

Getting a partnership started

Based on the responses from the 26% of afterschool programs in our survey who hadn't worked with a public library before, we've culled some suggestions for how to get a partnership started.

1. **Reach out!** Pretty obvious, right? Well, almost 40% of this group just hadn't considered it before. Nearly 70% did not have a personal contact at their local library, or



Afterschool students check out STAR_Net's *Discovery Tech* exhibit at the Ypsilanti Public Library in Michigan.

“These are the kids who don't make it to the library often... through this partnership, they got access.”

— Ypsilanti District Library

weren't sure if any of their colleagues did. Since not all libraries have a children's librarian or other "obvious" contact, help out your potential afterschool partners by making the first call!



This October, host a Lights On Afterschool event. Library partnerships are an official 2017 theme! Be one of more than 8,000 events celebrating the role of afterschool programs in keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn, and helping working families. www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa.cfm

2. **Come with some ideas in hand.** About a third of afterschool programs who hadn't worked with a library before stated that not having the right project was a barrier to partnership. Nearly everyone in this group said that ideas of what to do together would be helpful in supporting a new partnership (98%).
3. **Change the perception (and do more STEM).** While you know that libraries have many resources for STEM, 63% of those afterschool programs surveyed hadn't considered a STEM partnership and the most common reason was the perception that libraries are primarily resources for literature. Tell potential partners about your LEGO® clubs, makerspaces, or your selection of STEM-themed books and computers.
4. **Think beyond bringing afterschool students to the library.** While many afterschool programs are able to figure out easy and affordable transportation options, not everyone can make a field trip work. And regardless of proximity to the library, sometimes there just isn't enough time between homework help, snack, and other enrichment activities to make the trip. While it's not always possible to send a library staff member out, consider other creative ways to work together!

About the survey: Conducted as a part of the STAR_Net project, a full report of will be released in summer 2017. You can learn more about the perceptions afterschool providers have of public libraries, examples of different partnership types, challenges to starting partnerships, and room for growth.

Stay updated by joining the STAR_Net Community: www.starnetlibraries.org/register.



Science-Technology Activities &
Resources For Libraries



Broaden your family engagement with afterschool programs.

"Ideabook: Libraries for Families" is a fantastic resource from the Global Family Research Project provides a framework for libraries big and small to move beyond random activities and programs to an intentional approach to family engagement. Plus, it features 10 inspiring examples of library-afterschool partnerships!

Download it here: <https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Libraries-for-the-21st-Century-It-s-A-Family-Thing>



Sources

¹ Afterschool Alliance. (2014). America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand. <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.