



NEWS RELEASE
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Lights On Afterschool Set for Thursday, October 20

A Million People Expected Join 23rd Annual Rally for Afterschool

Science fairs. Student performances. Academic contests. Art shows. Community service activities. Fun runs. Sports competitions. Visits from lawmakers, civic, and business leaders. All that and much more will be taking place at afterschool programs in every part of the country when students, educators, and community leaders turn the lights on for afterschool on and around Thursday, October 20th.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, [Lights On Afterschool](#) is the only national rally for afterschool. Thousands of events this year will showcase the many ways afterschool programs support student well-being, build their life skills and workforce readiness, amplify their voices, provide them with opportunities for hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning, and help them forge successful futures as the pandemic continues. The 23rd Annual *Lights On Afterschool* will include events at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. It will kick off with a celebration held in Oakland, California on October 13.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which provide fun, hands-on learning opportunities and offerings that can include homework help; healthy snacks and meals; computer programming; robotics; art, dance and music; opportunities to think critically, collaborate, and communicate with peers and adults; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; mentors; and more.

“*Lights On Afterschool* celebrates the many ways afterschool programs help students succeed in school and in life by showcasing the skills they gain and the talents they develop in these programs. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind, but too many children and families are missing out,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Thanks to lack of investments, exacerbated by the pandemic, there aren’t nearly enough programs and many are facing major challenges. A recent Afterschool Alliance [survey](#) finds that staffing shortages are harming programs’ ability to meet the demand for afterschool. We need sustained investments and increased support, so all students will be able to benefit from the academic and well-being supports afterschool programs provide.”

For the 16th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool on October 20th 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.

This year's official *Lights On Afterschool* [poster](#) was designed by students in the LEAP afterschool program at PS100x in the Bronx, New York. It was chosen from hundreds of submissions in a contest held earlier this year.

The American Rescue Plan provided historic resources to expand access to out-of-school time programs. In July, the U.S. Department of Education launched the [Engage Every Student Initiative](#), a bold, historic call to action to use funds from the American Rescue Plan, as well as state and local funds, to ensure access to high-quality out-of-school time programs for every child. The Afterschool Alliance is one of five coordinating organizations in this historic new public/private partnership.

Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a [survey of 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in May and June of 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enroll, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

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.

BellXcel, Capital One and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

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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.