ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

BECOME AN AFTERSCHOOL CHAMPION TODAY

NORTH CAROLINA
NCCAP
CENTER for AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS
Public School Forum of North Carolina
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Established in 2002, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) is a comprehensive statewide afterschool and expanded learning network, with key partners including afterschool providers, state agencies, state and local policymakers, law enforcement, universities, and community colleges, business, and the philanthropic community, working together to increase access to high quality afterschool and expanded learning programs for all children and youth in North Carolina, especially for those at-risk of educational failure.

ABOUT US

"Every child deserves a champion." - Rita Pierson

Afterschool programs are valuable assets to every community that they serve. Program providers are in a unique position to become champions for the youth, families, schools, and communities that they serve in. There are several ways to engage in advocacy including letters, emails, site visits, and more. This toolkit will serve as a guide and resource for afterschool leaders and staff to take action, communicate the value of their program, engage elected officials, and empower youth to advocate for themselves and their community.

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

Established in 2002, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) is a comprehensive statewide afterschool and expanded learning network, with key partners including afterschool providers, state agencies, state and local policymakers, law enforcement, universities, and community colleges, business, and the philanthropic community, working together to increase access to high quality afterschool and expanded learning programs for all children and youth in North Carolina, especially for those at-risk of educational failure.
WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is utilizing your voice and actions to create positive social change on behalf of yourself or others.

WHO CAN ADVOCATE?

ANYONE CAN ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY. Some ground rules for advocacy include:

- Do your homework. Learn key background information about your elected official(s).
- Be Specific. Have a clear understanding of what you are requesting of your elected official(s).
- You are the expert. Provide your elected official(s) with a breadth of information to argue your case. Bring materials to leave behind for your elected official(s) to review.
- Follow-up with your elected official(s) with a personalized thank-you note.

WHAT DOES ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

Advocacy looks different for everyone. Some examples of advocacy include:

- Speaking out on issues of concern to the public or special audiences;
- Testifying at a hearing, writing a letter, communicating with elected officials;
- Expressing to elected officials how federal funds (i.e. 21st CCLC) have helped your community;
- and Inviting your elected official(s) to visit your program.
**WHAT IS LOBBYING?**

Lobbying is an attempt to influence specific legislative action (i.e. bills, acts, ballot measures).

**WHO CAN LOBBY?**

ANYONE CAN ENGAGE IN LOBBYING. Most non-profit organizations are allowed to lobby but there are limits on how much a non-profit can spend on lobbying. For additional information on lobbying visit: https://bit.ly/3rp3Pmp

**WHAT DOES LOBBYING LOOK LIKE?**

Examples of Lobbying include:

- Communicating with any legislator or administrative official for the purpose of influencing legislative or administrative action;
- Inviting elected officials to an event in support of a specific piece of legislation;
- or Asking your community members to call their legislators in support or opposition of a specific piece of legislation.

Any person or organization has the right to advocate on behalf of policies they believe in. Additionally, any person has the right to talk to legislators or other policy makers and to try to influence policy on his/her own time.
Advocacy requires research and data points to support your stance on the value of afterschool. In 2020, the Afterschool Alliance conducted a national survey of parents or guardians of school-aged children. The America After 3 PM report is the largest survey on afterschool that spans 16 years. Some of the core findings include:

- **Unmet demand for afterschool programs is soaring.** Demand has grown 60% since 2004, from 15.3 million children (30% of non-participants) waiting to get into a program in 2004 to 18.4 million children (38%) in 2009 to 19.4 million children (41%) in 2014 to 24.6 million children (50%) in 2020. All but six states saw an increase in unmet demand for afterschool programs from 2014 to 2020.

- **Cost and access are barriers to participation, and inequities persist.** Sixty-one percent of low-income parents report that cost is a barrier to enrolling their child in an afterschool program. Access (lack of a safe way for their child to get to and come back from a program) is a barrier for 58%. Both are significant increases from 2014.

- **Support for afterschool programs is strong.** Parents give high marks to afterschool programs, with 83% agreeing that programs give working parents peace of mind, 81% agreeing that programs help parents keep their jobs and 76% agreeing that programs help children gain interest and skills in STEM – all increases from 2014.

- **Low-income parents say programs help to address a range of family needs.** Three-quarters of low-income parents say the availability of snacks and meals was important in their selection of their child’s afterschool program. A similar number (76%) report that their child’s program offers classes or workshops that help their child build skills. Sixty-four percent say the program connects them to community resources that help address food insecurity, provide skill-building opportunities for parents, and more.
In addition to the national data, the America After 3 PM report also includes state-specific data. Some of the core findings include:

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- **Just 7.8 million children are enrolled in an afterschool program today, down from a high of 10.2 million children in 2014.** The inequities in terms of which students are accessing programs are stark. The number of children from low-income households participating in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020, while the number of higher-income children in afterschool fell by just under 450,000 over the same period.

- **Eighty-seven percent of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth.** Support crosses demographic and political divides, with 91% of parents who identify as Democratic, 87% of those who identify as Independent, and 85% of parents who identify as Republican in favor of public funding.
OUTREACH STRATEGIES

SITE VISITS

Inviting elected officials to visit your afterschool or summer program is a powerful way to help them understand your program’s value. Below are some steps to organize a site visit.

1. Find the home district address and phone number for your elected official(s). You can find contact information at www.house.gov/writerep or www.senate.gov.

2. Identify a few dates during the next Congressional recess when you could host a tour of your program and write a letter of invitation. This will be helpful to have on hand when you call the district office.

3. Call the district office. Tell the person who answers that you would like to schedule a tour of your afterschool or summer program for your policymaker. You may be connected with a legislative aide or a scheduler.

4. Before the visit, identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials, and other stakeholders for your program. Ask them if they could be available for the visit and give them background material on the policymaker. Share the basic schedule for the visit and clarify their roles.

5. On the day of the visit, be sure that someone waits outside the building to greet and direct the visitors to the right location. Have program brochures or copies of a program profile on hand. Be sure the policymaker gets to hear from youth program participants.
OUTREACH STRATEGIES

CALL OR WRITE

To identify your Senators and Representatives, visit https://www.ncleg.gov/.
To contact the President, visit http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/.

WRITE: Use one of the Sample Letters below to write to your U.S. Senators, Representatives, and the President about the value of afterschool in your community.

- Letter from Parents:
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySmplPrntLtr.cfm
- Letter from Programs:
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySmplLtrPrograms.cfm
- Letter to the President:
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySmplLtrPres.cfm

CALL: Ask school leaders, parents, community members, mayors, and police chiefs to message the importance of afterschool programs.

- Sample Script to Call Congress:
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySmplScrptCong.cfm
- Sample Script to Call the White House:
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySmplScrptWH.cfm
OUTREACH STRATEGIES
LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN

Organize friends, colleagues, and community members to write Congress or local elected officials. Afterschool benefits the entire community, from parents to youth to community members, so all of their voices need to be heard. Parents, grandparents, caretakers, teachers, and community partners can all help you set up letter-writing parties to help your community’s voice be heard by policymakers. Here are some tips to get started:

- **Create a flyer** letting parents and community partners know how important it is to send letters to their elected officials.
- **Provide refreshments** if possible (maybe there's a local grocery store, deli, or café willing to donate).
- **Have a sign-up sheet**, so that you can contact those that attend in the future. Consider using the Afterschool for All petition as your sign-in sheet. ([http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerPetition.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerPetition.cfm))
- **Print Sample Letters** for everyone who will attend prior to the meeting so that advocates can use them to structure their letters. It is essential that they include their name, address, and phone number in the letters. ([http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyCallWrite.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicyCallWrite.cfm))
- **Provide pens, paper, envelopes, and, if possible, stamps.** After attendees address and stamp the envelopes, collect them and put them in the mail. Encourage attendees to complete the letters before they leave the meeting.
ADVOCACY 101

LESSON DESCRIPTION: Students will learn the basics of advocacy and begin brainstorming some issues within their communities that they would like to change. Students will also begin researching their issues.

MATERIALS:
- Large Post-It Easel [https://amzn.to/3op5hmQ]
- Markers, Pens, and Pencils
- Paper
- Access to a computer or cellphone with internet

WARM-UP (10 minutes):
- Ask students: What are some issues in our community? Students should list issues that they see. Examples include child obesity, teenage pregnancy, police brutality, racial injustice, homelessness, affordable housing, jobs, funding for schools, drugs and alcohol abuse, or violence. Document the answers for students.
- Ask students to think about some potential solutions to the identified issues.

GUIDED PRACTICE (20 - 30 minutes):
- Explain to students that they can make positive changes in their communities. To do this, it's called Advocacy.
- Put students in small groups (3 to 4) and give them markers and sheets of the Large Post-It Easel.
- Ask students to select one of the community issues and create a bubble map. In the middle, they will write their issue, and in the surrounding bubbles, they will answer the question: What would it look like if this issue was solved? Who would benefit from this issue being solved? What can the community do to solve this issue?

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE (30-60 minutes):
- Inform students that they will need to research their issue further and solution(s). Give each student a Research Template to document their sources.
ADVOCACY 101

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE (30-60 minutes):

- Ask students to research the issue and begin thinking about how they would convince someone to support this issue, as well. Potential questions include:
  - What do they need to know about the issue?
  - What data or statistics would support your stance?
  - What does the solution(s) to this issue look like?
- Once students have compiled their research, ask them to communicate their issue to their local policymaker. They will do this by writing a letter.
- Provide students with the sample letter (see Outreach Strategies).
- Walk students through each part of the letter. Reinforce that they need to express themselves but always have evidence to support their perspective.
- If students have a personal story that relates to their issue, inform them to express their story briefly in their letter.
- If you would rather your students work on something simpler than a letter. They can complete a postcard (https://bit.ly/3sg8d6f).

CLOSING (10-15 minutes):

- Collect students' letters (or postcards).
- Inform students that they will be mailing the letters to their local elected official.
- Ask students: What does it mean to advocate for something you believe in? How can you get others to rally around your issue? Thinking about your classmates, what can you do to engage them in advocacy?
When engaging elected officials, it is effective to leave materials behind for their review. One of the things you can leave behind is a brief one-pager so that elected officials can learn more about your organization. Below is a template for a basic one-pager.

**Program Name**

**Program Logo**

**Program's Vision & Mission**
Include vision statement, specific program goals and/or sites at which the program operates.

**Program Highlights**
- Number of children and youth served age & grade level served
- Number of low income children served
- Types of programs offered
- Program examples of engaged learning, school/community partnerships, and family engagement
- Positive outcomes demonstrated within the program
- Community partnerships supporting program

**Funding Sources**
Statement around funding sources currently supporting the program. Include information pertaining to unmet needs within the community (i.e. children on a waiting list); if applicable

Program Name
Street Address
Phone Number
Website
Contact Email
We believe every young person deserves the opportunity to build a great future for themselves by, 1) achieving success in school, 2) developing a strong character, and 3) living a healthy lifestyle.

THE NEED

Approximately 90% of all students with low test scores in Newark come from economically disadvantaged families. In Newark, 18% of all children live in extreme poverty, and 69% live in low-income families. Poverty is also a known contributing factor of risky behavior among children and adolescents, as well as a cause for unhealthy food choices and lifestyle habits. Additionally, tooth decay, an issue BGCN addresses, is the leading cause of school absences.

THE NUMBERS

- BGCN has been building great futures in Newark for **109** years since **1908**
- **888** children served: **548** children served across 5 sites in our After School Program, **282** children attended our Summer Enrichment Camp, 58 teens through our Teen Center
- **488** children received preventative dental care at our in-house dental center
- An additional **226** children participated in community outreach events like pop-up playstreets and Minecraft tournaments
- **250** children completed an asthma awareness and preventative program
- **37** families were provided with counseling and referral services, and parent-education workshops

www.bgcn.org  I  @BoysGirlsNewark  I  973.242.1200
REGULAR PROGRAMS

Power Hour: An hour of homework help everyday

STEM: Practical, fun lessons in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

Fitness: Sports, dance, and gym activities

Healthy Habits: Workshops in nutrition and hygiene

SmartMoves: Training to resist negative influences and make good decisions

Brain Gain: A summer program that combats learning loss through creative projects

Keystone Club: A teen leadership program that lets young adults explore their potential as leaders of their community

Wellness: Access to mental health and wellness resources, free dental and vision care

SPECIAL AND NEW PROGRAMS

Community Outreach Events: This year, BGCN initiated a number of community outreach events. We held three summer pop-up playstreets, community initiatives to bring the Clubhouse experience to Newark neighborhoods, and partnered with GetFocused and the City of Newark. We held a Minecraft Tournament, a competition where community Minecraft enthusiasts and our own Club Members engaged their creative thinking skills, and plan to host more. In September, we hosted GirlSport, a fitness, self-care, and nutrition workshop designed to strengthen the athletic and nutritional development of girls ages 6-18.

Asthma Preparedness: In January 2017, BGCN was approved to implement The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey’s Breathe Easier with Asthma Management (BEAM) Phase III program for 250 children. Three BGCN staff members implemented both the Asthma Awareness (AA) Program for Non-Asthmatic Youth and Open Airways for Schools (OAS) Program for Asthmatic Youth with our members. These programs prepare children to guard themselves against environments that could cause them long-term respiratory harm, as well as teach them how to identify if a friend is having an asthma attack, and what to do in such a situation.

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Below is an example of an invitation to elected officials to visit your program.

[insert organization name]
[insert organization address]

[insert date]

The Honorable [insert elected official name]
[insert office address]

Dear [insert elected official name]

I am writing to you on behalf of [insert program name] located in [insert city or county], North Carolina. [insert program name] serves [insert number of youth and age ranges] with safe, educational activities during the out-of-school time hours, between 3 and 6 pm. Youth in our program are not only safe but have demonstrated increased academic performance and interest in various subject areas such as STEM.

We would like to invite you to take a short tour of our program on [insert date] at [insert time]. If that time is not convenient, we would be delighted to work with you to determine a convenient time for you. I have also invited several of [insert program name]’s key stakeholders, such as parents, community leaders, and youth to attend. They are eager to discuss the importance of afterschool programs amid the COVID-19 pandemic and ways to make programs widely available to children in our community and across North Carolina.

I hope that you will join us and see our program and our youth in action. Afterschool programs such as [insert program name] are vital because they inspire youth to learn, keep them safe, and support working families. The [insert city or county] community relies on us. Please see the enclosed [insert document about your program – Fact Sheet, Profile, etc.] for your reference. I hope to hear from you within the next two weeks. We look forward to seeing you on [insert date].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[insert logo/letterhead]

[insert contact name]
[insert organization name]
[insert organization address]

[insert date]

The Honorable [insert elected official name]
[insert office address]

Dear [insert elected official name]

Thank you for taking the time to visit [insert program name]. The youth, families, program staff, and other stakeholders enjoyed meeting you and were delighted to have the chance to share the significance of [insert program name] in the [insert city or county] community.

As we discussed, afterschool programs are instrumental in keeping youth safe, inspiring learning, and supporting families and communities. As you may recall during your visit, we discussed [include several talking points mentioned during the visit].

I look forward to meeting with you again to continue discussing the ways in which we can work together to ensure that afterschool programs remain open and are widely available to more children in our community and our state. Thank you again for taking time to visit [insert program name].

Sincerely,

[print contact name]
[contact signature]
RESOURCES FOR ADVOCACY

Below are some resources to assist you in your advocacy journey.

Afterschool Alliance (www.afterschoolalliance.org)
- The Afterschool Alliance works with agencies, elected officials, businesses, 50 state afterschool networks, community leaders, and program providers across the nation to expand support for quality afterschool programs.

Alliance for Justice (https://www.afj.org/)
- Alliance for Justice is a national association of over 120 organizations, representing a broad array of groups committed to progressive values and the creation of an equitable, just, and free society.

North Carolina General Assembly (https://www.ncleg.gov/)
- The North Carolina General Assembly is the bicameral legislature of the State government of North Carolina. The legislature consists of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Advocates for Youth (https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/issues/)
- Advocates for Youth works alongside thousands of young people here in the U.S. and around the globe as they fight for sexual health, rights, and justice.

National Afterschool Association (www.naaweb.org)
- The National AfterSchool Association is the voice of the afterschool profession. We are the national membership organization for professionals who work with and on behalf of children and youth during out-of-school time.

Public School Forum of North Carolina's Roadmap of Need
- The Roadmap of Need is an annual in-depth needs assessment for youth across North Carolina. The Roadmap of Need uses data on health, youth behavior & safety, education, & economic development to take a whole child needs assessment of what young people living in each of North Carolina’s 100 counties must have in order to thrive.

Lights On Afterschool
- Since 2000, Lights On Afterschool has been celebrated nationwide to call attention to the importance of afterschool programs for America's children, families, and communities.

This is not an exhaustive list of Advocacy Resources.
REFERENCES


