



Iowa Afterschool Alliance

2023 Policy Agenda

When the school day ends, Iowa kids will head off on different paths. Some will leave school with a parent or caregiver. Some will head home alone to hang out until parents return from work. And some will walk into a new world of learning opportunities in afterschool and summer programs.

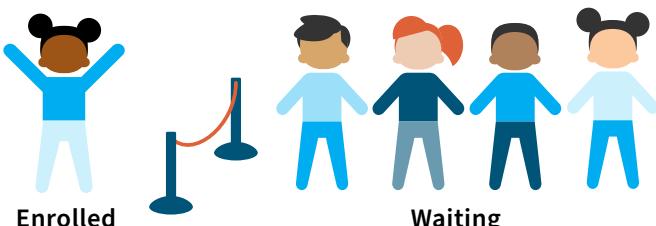
Equipping kids for success in school

Afterschool and summer learning programs in Iowa offer enriching activities—coding and circuitry to producing stage plays and growing gardens—that spark kids’ interest in school and learning. Teachers say students in afterschool programs show more interest in class, behave better, and are more likely to complete their homework assignments. Decades of research show students who regularly participate in quality afterschool:²

- Develop strong work habits, make better decisions, and build social skills
- Attend school more often and improve their behavior at school
- Make gains in reading and math, earn better grades, and are more likely to graduate

Sadly, afterschool opportunities are not the norm in Iowa and the unmet demand is higher than ever.

For every child in an afterschool program in our state, four more are waiting to get in. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, **45,629 students** were enrolled in afterschool programs, while **195,758 were waiting** for an available spot.¹



Preparing young people for college and career

Through hands-on learning, internships, mentoring experiences, community projects, and summer jobs, afterschool and summer learning programs give students new opportunities to explore careers, connect with local businesses, and gain employability skills. Among Iowa parents:¹

- 81% say afterschool helps young people gain life and workforce skills, including the ability to communicate and work in teams
- 75% agree that students can gain STEM skills from afterschool programs

Helping parents work and keeping communities safe

The gap between families’ work and school schedules can be up to 25 hours per week.³ Afterschool is a safe haven that helps kids avoid risky behaviors—online and offline—from 3 to 6 p.m., which is when juvenile crime and victimization peaks.⁴ Afterschool gives parents peace of mind, allows them to work a full schedule, and be more productive on the job. In Iowa:¹

- 87% of parents say afterschool programs provide working parents peace of mind
- 25% of kids (127,592 children and teens) are alone and unsupervised afterschool

"I like after school because it is a place where you can explore more opportunities. I get to learn magic; I have always loved magic because it's fun and mysterious and you get to see amazing tricks. I also picked the chess club because it builds your mind and skill at the same time. It helps you develop more skills when you play it for a couple of years. To sum this detail up, I enjoy chess club because it is fun and educational." - Connor (5th grade)

Policy Priorities:

IAA believes that every child should have access to participate in high-quality afterschool programming and that increasing these opportunities must be a priority for the Iowa Department of Education, school districts, and local communities.

More funding is needed to ensure that we can continue preparing our future leaders for tomorrow and helping our families, businesses, and communities thrive.

Three Things to Consider:

1. When looking at current and potential legislation, look at it with an afterschool lens. How could afterschool support these initiatives?
2. How can afterschool support the connection between education and workforce initiatives?
3. What would school districts need in order to provide afterschool programs to all students, supporting our working families?



Afterschool is a smart investment:

Research spanning several states shows that for every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 by⁵:

- Increasing kids' earning potential as adults
- Improving kids' performance at school
- Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency

Sources

1. www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM
2. <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/The-Evidence-Base-For-Afterschool-And-Summer-2021.pdf>
3. Barnett, Rosalind Chait, Ph.D. "Working Parents Sweat It Out Over Unsupervised Children," Community, Families & Work Program, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, PowerPoint presentation, 2003.
4. Council For a Strong America. "From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe." 2019.
5. Afterschool Alliance estimate based on findings from state-level return on investment studies conducted in states that include California, Georgia, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Vermont.



The Iowa Afterschool Alliance is a network of organizations and individuals who support high-quality out-of-school time programming and seek to improve access to high-quality programs across Iowa. The IAA serves as a convener, connector, and catalyst.

IAA convenes people to learn from one another to share community needs, local solutions, and best practices.

IAA connects local program providers with partners, resources, and the tools necessary to provide high-quality out-of-school time programming to students that supports community needs.

IAA serves as a catalyst to ensure equitable access to out-of-school time opportunities across the state of Iowa.

Contact us!

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