



BRIDGING TALENT AND NEED: HOW PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS CAN BENEFIT STUDENTS

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PARTNERSHIP FOR
Student Success

Afterschool programs enjoy broad support by the American public,¹ have high national satisfaction rates from parents,^{2,3} and have strong impacts on students' social skills,^{3,4} and access to college or in-demand career paths.³ There are thousands of afterschool programs operating in all 50 states and in every major city in the United States.⁵ But, there are still millions more children who would benefit from programs if they could access them.⁶

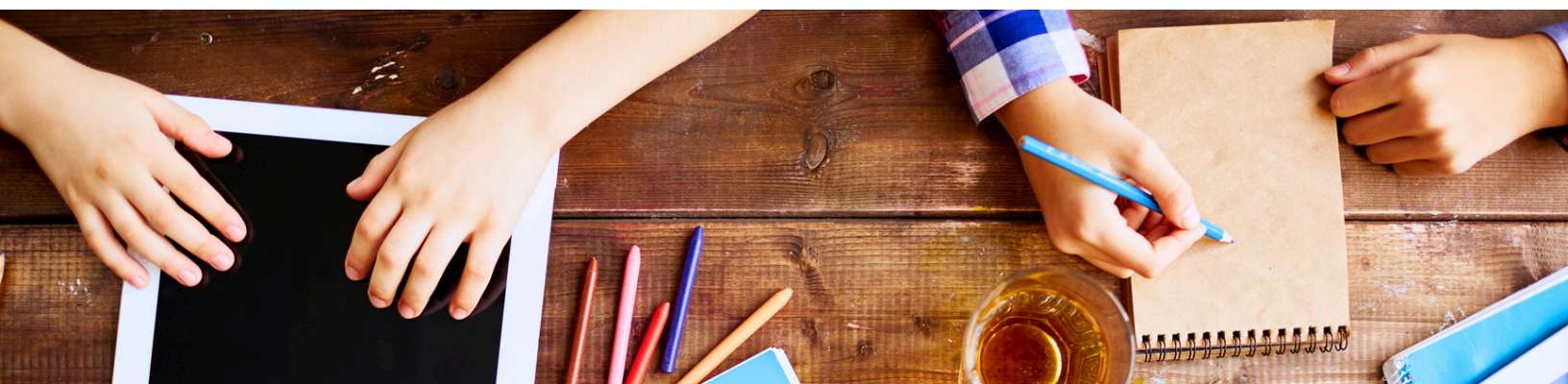
What makes an afterschool program?

Afterschool programs vary widely in their purpose and format. They might happen at school buildings or in community-based settings. They can involve academic supports, mentoring, sports, arts, and other youth development activities—often providing a mixture of these.

Afterschool programs run on people power – they need mentors, coaches, and people to provide career and college guidance. College students are a natural fit for these roles, and partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHEs), local nonprofits, and school districts can help make more matches.

The Win/Win of Partnerships Between Higher Education and Afterschool Programs

A dedicated connection between an IHE and a nonprofit or school providing afterschool programming goes a long way. Some afterschool programs already directly hire college students, but may not have official relationships with the local IHEs the students attend. In coordinating internally about opportunities for partnership institution-wide and conducting strategic outreach to schools, districts, and community-based organizations IHEs not only make the recruitment process easier, but also strengthen their connection and reputation with local communities by meeting an unmet need with high demand.



Serving in afterschool programs can have meaningful outcomes for college students, as well. College students report their involvement making them more successful in their academic careers. Tutoring on subjects related to their field of study can improve their understanding of the fundamentals⁷ of their major, and being a mentor or coach can spark an interest in careers in education and youth development.⁸ For students interested in other career pathways, work in roles supporting K-12 students can help build skills and competencies desired by employers in a range of fields, such as teamwork, relationship building, problem solving, compromise, and navigating conflict.⁹

Many afterschool program positions are paid, offering often crucial employment opportunities for college students seeking to offset the cost of college or cover living expenses.

Similarly, college student schedules are often conducive to afterschool program employment, which is often part time and/or seasonal. College students often have consistent availability that lines up with afterschool program operation hours, and studying at a collegiate level requires a high degree of competence with many of the subjects and skills that afterschool programs are looking to develop in their elementary, middle, and high school participants. College students can also be devoted and passionate role models, especially those who are alumni of afterschool programs themselves and want to give back through service in similar programs.¹⁰

Don't just look at education and teaching programs!

It is natural to seek to engage students already interested in education and teaching when recruiting for afterschool program staff, and they are often a great fit! But don't discount the power of having college students from a variety of fields engaged in these programs. A range of areas of study in college student staff can increase the likelihood that a child can be matched with someone who aligns with their own career aspirations and the number of subjects that the staff are already familiar with, and can expand talent pipelines.

IHE partners may also be able to provide transportation to work sites, incentivize participation through class credit or the ability to meet service requirements, or even dedicate Federal Work-Study funding to students working in an afterschool program, lowering the cost of operation and allowing for expansion of services. (See Implementation Avenues)

Implementation Avenues:

Some of the forms partnerships between IHEs and afterschool programs include:

- **Direct-hire support:** IHEs can intentionally seek out nonprofits hiring for afterschool program roles and help them get their openings on Handshake or similar career-focused or employment platforms, invite afterschool programs to career fairs, and make career services professionals aware of the opportunities.
- **Federal Work-Study (FWS) Funded Roles:** FWS or state work-study funds (if available) can be used to pay students who qualify for off-campus work. Some roles, such as preschool and elementary tutoring in math or literacy, are eligible for increased coverage with FWS funds - up to 100% in some cases. Placements with afterschool programs may also contribute to the 7% of FWS required to be dedicated to community service roles.¹¹
- **Meeting academic requirements:** IHEs can approve work with afterschool programs to count for existing service-hour requirements, both generally and for specific credentials in teaching and education programs.¹² Some IHEs have additionally created service-learning courses dedicated to afterschool programs¹³ and established official markers for service¹⁴ to reward involvement.

Learn More:

- Partnership for Student Success (PSS): [Federal Work Study Toolkit for Districts & Nonprofits](#)
- PSS: [Resource for College Students: Supporting Students In Your Community](#)
- PSS: [Engaging College Students in Evidence-Based roles with local nonprofits](#) (Webinar)
- [Free online training modules from PSS and MENTOR](#) including: Advising College Mentors, Best Practices for University and Community-Based Organization Collaboration, and How College Students Can Be Better Mentors
- Afterschool Alliance: [Afterschool in Your State](#)
- Afterschool Alliance: [America After 3pm](#)
- Afterschool Alliance: [Program Toolbox](#)

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Citations:

- ¹ Afterschool Alliance. (2025, February). *Voters Say Afterschool Programs are a Necessity*. <https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Voters-Say-Afterschool-Programs-Are-A-Necessity-2025.pdf>
- ² Afterschool Alliance. (2025, October). *Behind the demand: Afterschool programs address parents' top-of-mind concerns*. <https://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/data/national/benefits>
- ³ On the Road Collaborative. (2025,). *Program Impact Report*. https://www.canva.com/design/DAGzJhBez_Y/oyVFvw9qaGTtbEYyLWaQ5w/edit
- ⁴ Afterschool Alliance. (2024, May). *This is Afterschool*. <https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/National-Afterschool-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf>
- ⁵ Afterschool Alliance. (n.d.) *Network Contacts*. <https://toolkit.afterschoolalliance.org/getting-help/network-contact/>
- ⁶ Afterschool Alliance. (2025, October). *Unmet demand for afterschool programs is enormous*. <https://afterschoolalliance.org/national/demand>
- ⁷ Center for Educational Outreach. (2025, October 3). *2024–2025 School Year Charm City STEM League Recap*. Johns Hopkins University Whiting School of Engineering <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nCOQDkzqhJz3GHOgsmPukRVB048wRGG99/view>
- ⁸ Peer Power. (2025, January 26). *Mapping 20 Years of Impact* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ICpcY5HhykU?si=Konp-XBkw37itx6X>
- ⁹ National Partnership for Student Success. (n.d.) *Answer the Call to Service by Supporting Students in Your Community*. Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center. <https://www.partnershipstudentsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Answer-the-Call-to-Service-by-Supporting-Students-in-Your-Community.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Murray, B. (2020, April 12). *How a Charm City Science League mentee became a mentor*. *The Johns Hopkins News-Letter*. <https://www.jhunewsletter.com/article/2020/04/how-a-charm-city-science-league-mentee-became-a-mentor>
- ¹¹ Federal Student Aid. (2024, June 20). *2024–2025 Federal Student Aid Handbook*. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved October 17, 2025 from <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/2024-2025/vol6/ch2-federal-work-study-program>
- ¹² *Afterschool as a teacher pathway*. (2022, January 20). Afterschool Alliance. https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolsnack/Afterschool-as-a-teacher-pathway_01-20-2022.cfm
- ¹³ Binghamton University. (2025). *CDCI 496 - Johnson City Mentor Program*. https://catalog.binghamton.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=5&coid=40146
- ¹⁴ Center for Civic Engagement. (n.d.) *Skills Badge Program*. Binghamton University. Retrieved October 17, 2025 from <https://www.binghamton.edu/cce/impactbing/badge-program/>

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*This toolkit was developed and published by the Partnership for Student Success,
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