



Creating “After-School Buzz”: Activities to Spread the Word

These activities will generate awareness among the public and the media of the importance of after-school programs and After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) funding. Using the tools in this kit, you can do these activities yourself and ask other advocates and their networks to participate.

- **Create a leave-behind kit.**

Use materials from this kit and other local information you feel would be persuasive to create a personalized packet to leave with the decision-makers and advocates you’re meeting. For example, principals might appreciate data on which other schools have ASES or 21st CCLC programs and issue briefs such as “Afterschool and School Improvement” and “Older Youth Need Afterschool Programs.”

- **Write op-eds or letters to the editor.**

The opinion page is one of the most-read sections of any newspaper. It’s also the most direct route to getting your words in front of thousands of readers, and you have two options for doing so: letter to the editor or op-ed. A letter is a short piece, typically 200 words or less, in direct response to another item in the paper, be it a news article, a feature or even another opinion piece. Op-eds tend to be longer, 500-700 words, and do not necessarily have to respond to an item in the paper, but it is a good idea to “hook” the op-ed to something topical. Coverage of youth issues that apply to after-school programs is common, so opportunities probably won’t be hard to come by!

- **Urge local media outlets to run public service announcements (PSAs).**

The Afterschool Alliance joined with The Advertising Council and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to launch a media campaign aimed at youth. The PSAs use humor to encourage kids to find out more about after-school programs at www.afterschoolscene.com, a new website that showcases the kinds of activities after-school offers, and features articles and projects created by after-school students. Getting local media to run these PSAs is a simple way to help promote after-school programs and let kids know they have more options after school. For more information on the “Something Way Better to Do” campaign, go to www.afterschoolalliance.org/psa_p2.cfm.

- **Participate in *Lights On Afterschool!***

Lights On Afterschool is celebrated nationwide every October to call attention to the importance of after-school programs for America's children, families and communities. If your school or district receives ASES funding, create a big event for the program and the community. Be sure to invite everyone who participated in helping the school or district secure the funding. (For more information on *Lights On Afterschool*, go to www.afterschoolalliance.org. There you can find ideas and tips for creating a successful event, including sample invitations, press releases and decorative artwork.)