

Language Samples

Sample Letter to the Editor

The recent expansion of state funding for after-school programs is a tremendous victory for California and a giant step toward achieving after-school for all in the state. From elementary school to high school, after-school programs provide a safe, enriching environment that provides young people with extra time to master essential skills, discover new passions and get on the path to productive adulthood. After-school programs are also proven to improve students' academic achievement and lower their risk of repeating a grade, dropping out and engaging in other risky behaviors such as drug use and crime. For example, a recent evaluation of the LA's BEST program in Los Angeles showed that participants were 20 percent less likely to drop out of school than their peers. A 2001 evaluation of the existing statewide after-school program revealed that the California was likely to save \$11 million that year because fewer students would be held back in school. Schools, districts and community organizations should work together to bring after-school programs to their students of all ages.

Sample Op-Ed

The recent expansion of state funding for after-school programs is a tremendous opportunity for schools and communities to provide extra learning support to California's kids from elementary school to high school.

The most important benefits after-school programs provide are the ones that directly affect the children and youth they serve. After all, it's about the kids. After-school programs make the most of the free time students naturally have after the bell rings and before their parents get home from work. With that gap having grown to as much as 25 hours a week, we have a great opportunity to help youth of all ages make the most of those hours by providing them with a safe, enriching environment where they can master basic skills, explore new interests and spend time with friends and caring adults. Left unsupervised, they might spend that time just watching TV or even getting involved with risky behaviors such as drug use and criminal activity.

One example of what after-school programs can do is LA's BEST, one of the state's larger and better-known providers. Evaluations show that LA's BEST participants feel safer in their program than in their neighborhoods, are learning better social skills and classroom behavior, and have good relationships with program staff. Participants also have better school attendance, which has led to higher test scores and better grades. They are also 20 percent less likely to drop out of school than their peers, and 66 percent say they definitely want to go to college. Now imagine if students at every elementary and middle school in the state had the chance to experience a quality program like that.

For starters, the state would save a lot of money. When students have extra time to learn and master skills in after-school programs, they are less likely to need remedial education or be held back a grade. In fact, a recent evaluation of the state after-school program upon which ASES is built revealed that the state would likely save \$11 million that year because fewer students would be held back in school. When students have extra time to find lifelong passions and get excited about learning, they feel more positive about the future and are less likely to drop out of school. High school dropouts earn about 24 percent less money during their lifetimes than high school

graduates. They're also more likely to be poor and unemployed, and they're more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison. When a child drops out of high school, we pay for it in lost tax revenues, public assistance and incarceration. It just makes good business sense to save a lot on the back end by investing a little up front.

And speaking of business, California has always been a leader in attracting the most cutting-edge industries. A key part of that is having a top-notch workforce. Businesses today are looking for people with 21st century skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, self-direction and technology know-how. However, if future workers come out the end of the "education pipeline" unable to meet these standards, businesses bear the cost of retraining them. That's why companies throughout the state are already investing their own time and money in after-school programs. Providing youth with extra time for skills development and internships that will prepare them for college and careers not only helps businesses develop the kind of employees they'd like to have in the future, but it also supports the working parents they employ today.

After-school programs capitalize on kids' free time to support working parents, keep kids safe and help to put them on the path to productive adulthood and lifelong learning. The benefits of one child spending a few extra hours a day in a safe, enriching environment ripple through every part of the state. After-school programs are one of the better investments we can make in our kids.

Sample meeting request letter

[Your Letterhead]

[Date]

Name
Address
Address

Dear _____:

I would like to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss forming a partnership to provide after-school programs for the students in our community. **[Suggest two or three dates/times for a meeting]**

The recent expansion of state funding for after-school programs offers a tremendous opportunity for schools and community organizations to work together to provide youth in our community with an enriching environment that keeps kids safe, helps working families and improves participants' academic achievement. By working together, we can combine our strengths and resources to provide quality programs and staff that meet students' needs and reach the students who need these programs the most.

I look forward to sharing with you more information on after-school programs and the public funding streams that are now open. **[If you plan to bring another advocate with you, include that information here.]** I can be reached at **[phone & e-mail]**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Title]
[Organization]