

## Template letter to local education leaders

Dear [Name/Title of District/School Leader],

Thank you for all that you have been doing to support the well-being of young people throughout the pandemic. As a local community afterschool [and/or summer learning] program with years of experience in positive youth development, [name of program] shares your concerns about the well-being of students and their academic growth and we stand ready to work with you to provide our community's children with exceptional programs and support this spring, summer, and next fall. We want to help you achieve your goals for students' recovery, and would love to meet to hear about your priorities so that we can help.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been providing key supports to students and families here in our community. [Insert blurb about your program's role during the pandemic – delivery of learning kits, virtual and in-person programming, access to healthy meals, virtual check-ins to support overall wellbeing, etc.]

As we move into recovery, we know you are faced with important decisions about how to support students and educators. An important asset in that recovery are the federal COVID-19 relief dollars, available through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund III (ESSER), which flow directly to school districts with the provision that at least 20% of these sub-grants are dedicated “to promote learning recovery including comprehensive afterschool programs and summer learning or enrichment programs.”

Research demonstrates that afterschool and summer learning programs are effective at increasing student's attendance, course credits, and on-time graduation, as well as improving performance in subjects like math and English. A 2019 RAND study identified 60 afterschool program studies that met the tiers of evidence under ESSA.[1] Perhaps most importantly, students in afterschool and summer learning programs build the social and emotional skills, and connections to both peers and to caring adults, that the pandemic has forced many to forgo for over a year and that are among the top priorities of students themselves.

We are ready and able to support students' recovery, especially as we look toward this summer and fall. We can offer:

- Support for student academic progress
- Opportunities for social, emotional and interpersonal connections
- Access to supports like physical activity, meals, and mental health
- Strong communications and connections with families
- The additional value of our community partners including libraries, parks, museums, business, and philanthropy

We ask that you let us help in supporting our students together. Please include us in your planning so that we can design efforts that best support your goals and the community's needs. ESSER and other available funds are available to support students via afterschool and summer

learning programs. [If the district has a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant, consider supplementing that program with ESSER funds to reach additional students this summer and fall]

Thank you for your consideration. We believe we have much to offer in helping not just extend students' learning to make up for what was lost, but provide opportunities to make social, emotional and academic learning gains that will help our young people recover from the pandemic.

Please learn more about our afterschool [and/or summer learning] programs here: [URL](#)

You may reach me at [email or phone](#). I will also follow up with your office by phone next week.

Sincerely,

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[1] <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/afterschool-programs-a-review-of-evidence-under-the-every-student-succeeds-act.aspx>

## Talking points

### Thank you for meeting

- We want to help you achieve your goals for students' recovery, and would love to hear about your priorities so we can best support you.
- As youth development experts and members of this community, we are as worried as you are about students' wellbeing and academic growth
- We recognize also that schools have been over burdened and have dealt with a lot of uncertainty.

### We stand ready as a partner to help students' recovery

- We can support you in meeting your goals for students -- we share those goals and have a track record of success
- We've been working to meet students' needs during the pandemic:
  - Talk about your work to provide learning help, engaging learning activities, meals etc.
- *Share data from normal times or pandemic services*
  - We serve xx students from communities with many students who are struggling
  - Mention results - academic or SEL
  - Personal story of a student could be helpful

**What can we do that is different or enhances school-led efforts such as summer school or extended day?**

- (program name) is poised to support a powerful and transformative response to this recovery with our offerings
- Afterschool programs and summer learning programs offer their own unique value to students and schools
  - Personalized support - whether with schoolwork or trained mentor who provides social/emotional support
  - Hands-on activities that build on and reinforce school day lessons - and are proven to get students engaged and excited about learning We can provide diversified types of learning, learning time, and enrichment
  - Our students see us as a haven, a place they belong and feel safe and connected - something our children need right now to be ready to return to studies in a more robust way
  - Strong reach, relationships, and trust in the community and with families, especially low income households and those hit hardest by the pandemic
  - - Established cultural and interpersonal connections to students, families
  - Access to other supports kids and families need today - counseling, meals, etc
  - Strengthen the craft of this and the next generation of educators
- Programs like ours provide academic, social, and emotional development in a comprehensive, holistic experience.

***Address logistics and your ask***

- Here's what we can do
  - Who can you serve/where and how many students?
  - How would your program support students' recovery?
  - How are you operating or planning to operate?
  - What is the cost?
- We are cost effective. And we are prepared to leverage our relationships -- funding, content partners, libraries, parks, cultural institutions - to make this happen.