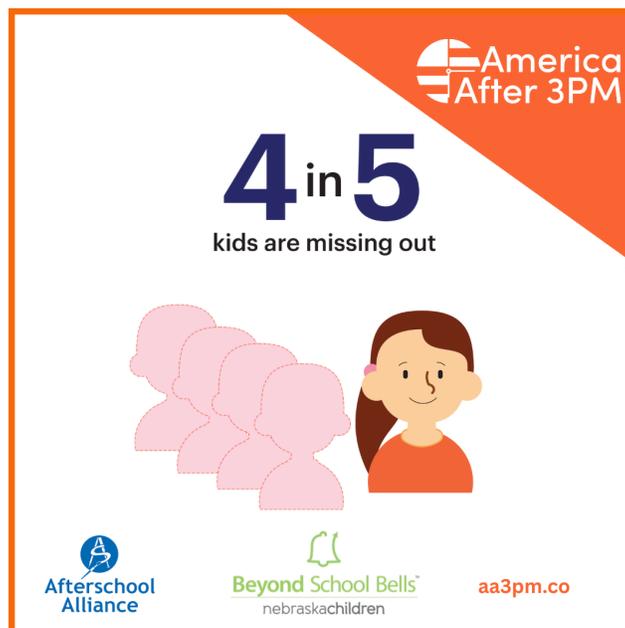




November 2025

News and Events



NEW: America After 3PM Report Released

The 2025 America After 3PM Report is in, and it reflects what we know to be true – Nebraska parents see the value in afterschool programming for their families, but too many children are missing out.

Here are some of the findings:

Cost is the greatest challenge for families whose child is not in an afterschool program.

- 56% cite cost as an important factor preventing them from enrolling their child.
- These parents cite accessibility as another primary barrier, with 49% saying their child does not have a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and 48% saying program locations are inconvenient.
- Four in ten of these parents (42%) report a lack of programs in their communities.

Parents say afterschool programs support working families.

- 85% say programs provide working parents with peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised, and 84% agree these programs allow them to keep their jobs or work more hours.
- 88% of parents with a child in an afterschool program say that it boosts their productivity and 92% say they are less stressed knowing their child is safe.

Parents want more public funding for afterschool programs.

- 89% of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. This is a steady increase from 83% in 2009, 84% in 2014, and 87% in 2020.

“Parents recognize that programs in Nebraska are doing outstanding work,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “In Nebraska and across the country, afterschool programs are giving students a safe place to go after the school day ends, boosting their academic achievement, helping address the youth mental health and chronic absenteeism crises, providing alternatives to screen time, giving working parents peace of mind, and much more. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program but sadly, this study shows we’re far from reaching that goal. We need greater support from federal, state, and local governments, businesses, and philanthropy to change that.”



“This study is an urgent call to action for Nebraska and federal leaders to increase funding and capacity so all families can access afterschool programs,” said Alison O’Toole, Vice President and Network lead, Beyond School Bells, Nebraska’s statewide afterschool network. “Today, 115,778 Nebraska children whose parents want them to be in afterschool are without it—this must change. Last month, on October 23rd, we joined programs across Nebraska for Lights On Afterschool, the national rally for afterschool programs. We won’t stop working to remove the barriers until every student in our state has access to these essential programs.”

To learn more and read the full report findings, click the button below!

[Read the Report](#)

Lights On Afterschool Proclamation

Lights On Afterschool!



Celebrating 26 Years!

The Afterschool Alliance organizes Lights On Afterschool to draw attention to the many ways afterschool programs support students by offering them opportunities to learn new things—such as science, community service, robotics, Tae Kwon Do, and poetry—and discover new skills. The events send a powerful message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

On October 21st, Governor Jim Pillen signed a proclamation celebrating the 26th anniversary of [Lights On Afterschool](#), with our Beyond School Bells team and representatives from Collective for Youth and the Nebraska Department of Education. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help them develop life skills, and inspire a love of learning!

Nebraska Youth Step Up Through the Contribution Project

The first cohort of Nebraska student-designed projects through **The Contribution Project** is officially underway - and these young changemakers are already making their mark in communities across the state.

Over the next month, 21 student groups from Lincoln, Omaha, Clearwater, Fremont, and beyond will put their ideas into action with support from this BSB-sponsored national initiative. Each project was uniquely designed by the youth participants, but they all share one thing in common: a deep commitment to making life a little better for others.

In Clearwater, one student is helping to stock the school's new food pantry and creating new ways to ensure classmates have what they need to succeed. In Lincoln, a high school environmental club is expanding its school garden to provide more produce for families in need. And in Omaha, a student is growing an afterschool program that helps younger students explore technology in fun and creative ways.

These and other projects focused on everything from basic needs and wellbeing to education, creative arts, and sustainability, will wrap up their initial phase in mid-December, when students submit their final reports. But we know the work (and the ripple effects) will continue long after the paperwork is done.

And this is just the beginning. A Spring competition will launch in February, giving even more Nebraska youth the opportunity to bring their community-building ideas to life through The Contribution Project.

Keep an eye on this newsletter and our website for updates about this exciting youth development effort - and get ready to be inspired by what these students do next!

Funding Opportunities

National Geographic Slingshot Challenge

Don't forget to sign up for the [National Geographic Slingshot Challenge](#)! Projects are underway across the state, country, and world where youth ages 13-18 are designing solutions to local environmental challenges. From teaching about the importance of local foods to designing sustainable cities, Nebraska youth can and are leading the way. "It's been said, if you have a big problem to solve, give it to a young person." We are well-familiar with Nebraska student leadership at BSB. National Geographic will host "[Solution Design Labs](#)" over the coming weeks. Video submissions are due February 6, 2026. If your afterschool program is interested in supporting youth to lead the way with a Slingshot Challenge submission, please [reach out today](#)!



Learning Opportunities

Nebraska Farm to School

Our friends at the Nebraska Department of Education Farm to School team have exciting news to share: Meet the NEWEST Harvest of the Month item! **BASIL** has officially joined the resource suite! So fun to have this great herb in the lineup!

Let's celebrate the fresh, fragrant flavor of Nebraska-grown basil! Known for its bold aroma and bright green leaves, basil adds something special to everything from pasta to lemonade. Basil grows well in warm Nebraska summers and can even be grown at home in a pot or garden (or at school in a hydroponic tower!). Whether you prefer sweet Genovese, spicy purple, or lemon-scented varieties, basil is more than just a garnish—it's an herb full of flavor and history.

Check out the Harvest of the Month website to access all of the new resources for basil - recipes, newsletters, trivia cards, videos, stickers, posters, presentations, and more!

<https://www.education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school/harvest-of-the-month/>

Same Website, New Look!

Beyond School Bells has updated our website with a new look! Still at beyondschoolbells.org, we have given our site a redesign to build on the energy of this year's Lights On Afterschool celebrations and the new America After 3pm report. While we still have all the same great information and resources, some pages have been rearranged. If you have any trouble finding resources, please reach out to any of our BSB team members!

Check Out Our New Look!

STEM Opportunities from [STEM NEXT!](#)

Lights on Afterschool was October 23! We are celebrating Lights On by sharing [free STEM resources](#) that programs can use throughout October and beyond to engage youth and connect learning to real-world careers.

Community in Nature Prize Challenge – Encourage programs in your network to join this exciting opportunity from STEM Next! Youth will work together to design projects that make a difference in their community and compete for prize funding to support their program. Program leaders guide and mentor youth teams, helping them turn ideas into action while building career-connected STEM skills.

Engaging Families & Communities in STEM, Part I – On Nov. 12, discover practical ways to involve families and community partners in career-connected STEM learning. [Register here](#)

Engaging Families & Communities in STEM, Part II – Continue the journey on Nov. 19 with strategies for building partnerships that bring STEM careers to life. [Register here](#)

Supporting AI Education in OST Spaces – Join the National Girls Collaborative Project on Nov. 25 to explore how afterschool programs can introduce youth to artificial intelligence through fun, hands-on learning. [Register here.](#)

Virtual Field Trip – Illumina’s Virtual Field Trip, [Nature’s Blueprint](#), has launched in partnership with Discovery Education. This free, on-demand program is designed for middle and high school students and explores the real-world applications of genomics in conservation, human health, and even space!

Learn How to Draw Artemis! – Get creative with NASA’s Artemis mission—youth can color rockets and spacecraft while learning about lunar exploration.

Landing Humans on the Moon – Celebrate the legacy of the first Moon landing with hands-on STEM challenges and videos that bring this historic moment to life.

All of this and more is in STEM Next’s [Asset Package](#), updated monthly!



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