
Beyond School Bells Newsletter-November 2024

From Beyond School Bells <bsbinfo@nebraskachildren.org>

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November 2024

News and Events

Afterschool Programs Shine Brightly

Throughout October, Lights On Afterschool events lit up the late afternoon and evening in communities across our state. From Omaha to Scottsbluff, and all points in between, schools and communities across Nebraska came together to celebrate the critical role that Afterschool and summer programs play in the lives of children and families in their communities.

Coordinated by the national organization the Afterschool Alliance, this was the 25th Lights on Afterschool celebration, a nationwide series of events held at schools in support of after-school programs. BSB champions this event in Nebraska and we provide mini-grants to support activities in many of our partner communities.

Crete was one of those Nebraska communities we support, and is one of about 8,000 schools across the nation involved in this celebration. More than a million students and families are expected to participate in events like Crete's taking place around the country this month.



As reporting in the Lincoln Journal Star, “By welcoming families into the school after hours, Joel Bramhall, director of federal programs at CPS, hopes to shine a light on how exactly the district’s after-school programs have played a positive role in students’ lives and the many opportunities available to them.

“I hope that families walk away realizing that this Lights on Afterschool event is just a glimpse of the many wonderful things that are happening after school and during the summer at Crete Public Schools,” Bramhall said. “Being able to amplify the voices of youth and showcase all of the wonderful student success that happens throughout the year just in this one event, I think, is of great value, not only to the students and the families, but to the partners who are involved.”

See the full article in the Lincoln Journal Star - [Lights on in Crete Public Schools](#)

ELO Innovation Invitational 2025



NEBRASKA'S
**EXPANDED LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES**

Innovation
INVITATIONAL

MARCH 10-12, 2025

UNL Innovation Campus
Lincoln, NE

With the GetConnected 2024 conference and Lights on Afterschool now in our collective rear-view mirrors, what lies ahead for Nebraska’s Afterschool and Summer programs? While there certainly will be lots of daily activities in ELO program across the state between now and then, at the state level the next thing on our agenda will be the third ELO Innovation Invitational.

This year's event, which will be held March 10th – 12th at the University of Nebraska Lincoln Innovation Campus conference facility, will allow us to extend conversations that we have had over the past several years about the important role afterschool and summer programs play in the lives of children, families and communities across Nebraska. This free event will also provide an important early Spring opportunity for afterschool advocates, leaders and front line staff to come together to plan for exciting, engaging and inspiring summer experiences for youth in communities across the state, and lay the groundwork for the year ahead.

As has been the case the last three years, the conference will have a strong youth voice / engagement component including an evening event and a track to help high school youth learn the skills they need to provide quality afterschool and summer programming to younger youth.

Other topics include the role of AS and Summer in helping to meet diverse needs of today's youth, helping youth cultivate purpose and introducing youth to career opportunities powering the future growth of their hometowns – and Nebraska. The conference will engage programs from across the state, and will hold up examples of the great work taking place in Expanded Learning Programs across the state.

As of now – save the date, March 10 – 12th. We will begin providing monthly updates as we get closer to March via this newsletter. In the meantime, visit our website to keep abreast of conference plans as they evolve.

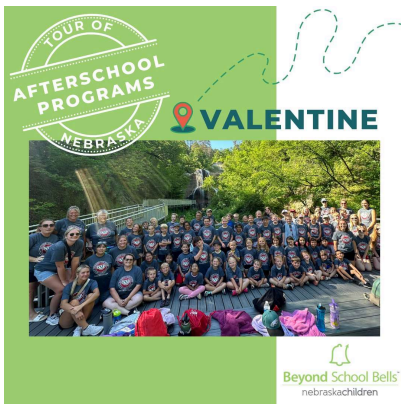
NEW: Tour of Nebraska Afterschool Programs

A celebration of high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs across Nebraska



We're hitting the road to highlight innovations happening in afterschool programs all across our state!

First stop: Valentine, NE's Badger Club



Since its launch in 2022, The Badger Club has seen tremendous growth thanks to their innovative, high-quality approach to afterschool.

By leveraging Beyond School Bells (BSB) funding and local support, the program has grown to serve over 100 students in this rural community with clubs like Engineering Club, Reading Club, and Coding Club! Additionally, they have engaged in Youth Brainstorming Sessions to lift youth voice, utilized high school students as staff in their program, and have a BSB TMC trailer to run summer programming!



THE BADGER CLUB

We sat down with Program Director, Rachelle O'Kief, to learn more about her approach to afterschool programming. One thing was clear - Rachelle's passion for afterschool. When we asked what she was most proud of about her program, Rachelle said:

*"I'm most proud of the relationships the staff had developed with the students and have built with each other. Especially our older students with the younger students. **Relationships are such an important part of the program.**"*



Further, Rachelle stressed the importance of students having access to high quality afterschool programs in rural communities like Valentine.

"Rural communities need these afterschool programs. These programs give students a safe place, a place to build relationships, and a place to get help with academics outside of school."

We are proud of our partners throughout the state and look forward to continuing our tour of Nebraska programs. Follow along to see our next stop ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#))!

Resources and Opportunities

Afterschool Alliance Sustainability and Funding Resources

Looking for funding? [Join us](#) on November 20 at 2 p.m. ET for the "Securing Funding and Long-Term Sustainability" webinar. Discover top funding sources and strategies to keep afterschool in local, state, and federal budgets. Hear from local programs about how they've kept the lights on afterschool for kids in their communities.

As part of our ongoing "After\$chool Funding" campaign, we'll be sharing information on top funding streams and how to access them every Friday. [Sign up for our weekly newsletter](#) to stay updated!

Regional Connections Fall Recap

Winter Connections: January 21-24

Regional Connections



PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



In October 2024, Afterschool Professionals from across the state gathered at four regional hubs (Kearney, Scottsbluff, Norfolk, and Lincoln) for [Regional Connections](#), professional development and networking sessions hosted by Beyond School Bells in partnership with Nebraska Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Nebraska Extension. Regional Connections focus on key three areas:

1. *The essentials of running an afterschool and/or summer program.*
2. *Afterschool and the Whole Child.*
3. *Program partnerships and sustainability.*

Discussions during October Regional Connections focused in on relevant resources, as well as successes and challenges in multiple areas: creative staffing recruitment and retention solutions, program advocacy through Lights On Afterschool, and practical professional development. Thanks to the 43 Afterschool Program Directors, Coordinators, Staff, and partners who attended for contributing positively to the rich discussion, idea sharing, and network building!



Winter Regional Connections will be on Zoom.

- Kearney Area: Tuesday January 21, **1-2 pm Central Time**
- Scottsbluff: Wednesday January 22, **1-2 pm Mountain Time**
- Norfolk Area: Thursday January 23, **1-2 pm Central Time**
- Lincoln Area: Friday January 24, **1-2 pm Central Time**

Contact Stephanie Vadnais (svadnais@nebraskachildren.org) for a calendar invite.

STEM Workforce Development Opportunity

Interested in multi-year funding opportunities from Beyond School Bells? We are on a mission to build STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) workforce exploration and development systems in rural communities that provide students who may not otherwise have access to STEM opportunities what they need to join the fastest growing job sector in the U.S. These projects utilize afterschool programs as cornerstones for personalized STEM

learning and career exploration through near-peer teaching models that provide younger students with fun, hands-on, engaging programming led by paid older students who in turn receive mentoring and have opportunities to participate in internships and land jobs within rural communities. Eligible counties include but are not necessarily limited to Cheyenne, Lincoln, Madison, Ogallala, Scottsbluff, Saline, Thurston, and Douglas. If you'd like to know more about these multi-year funded projects, reach out to Alison O'Toole at aotoole@nebraskachildren.org.



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