

## **The State of Afterschool Quality Focus Briefs Media Toolkit**

As the membership organization representing the afterschool workforce, NAA is excited to re-energize a national conversation about program and practitioner quality through this set of Focus Briefs. Expectations for afterschool programs are high. Mounting evidence and research confirms the power of afterschool and summer programs to close achievement gaps, increase third grade reading proficiency and improve community outcomes. However, the field cannot achieve these outcomes without quality programs staffed by highly qualified professionals.

Likewise, NAA cannot effectively communicate critical messages about what quality is and how to achieve it without the active involvement of its state affiliates, members and partners across the country. We are excited to engage practitioners, partners and families in a sustained conversation about afterschool quality and have developed the following toolkit to help you lead the conversation in your communities.

This social and new media toolkit not only provides guidance and tools to help you raise awareness on the importance of improving afterschool quality and provider professionalism, but also includes social and new media best practices that can be used for any event or issue. The toolkit additionally provides pre-formulated, customizable content you can use to engage key partners in your community.

We are excited to have you join the discussion of such an important topic and look forward to engaging you in the Twittersphere, blogosphere, and digital streams of Facebook and Instagram.

## Purpose

The purpose of utilizing social and new media in conjunction with *The Quality of Afterschool* is threefold:

- To convey the benefits of quality afterschool and summer programs to children, families, funders and policymakers.
- To help afterschool providers and consumers understand the components of a quality system.
- To engage the afterschool, child care, education and policy communities in deeper conversations regarding how collaboration can improve outcomes for all children in a community.

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## Key Messages

- Over 10 million children across the United States participate in some sort of afterschool program.
- High quality afterschool programs can help close the achievement gap and show significant promise for improving long-term outcomes such as high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment rates, as well as college and career readiness.
- To sustain workforce and program quality, a continuous improvement system must be developed along two parallel tracks:
  - There must be foundational documents including quality standards, a quality assessment tool and core knowledge and competencies.
  - There must be an aligned professional development system that provides supportive coursework, a registry to track professional accomplishments and a system of professional recognition such as an afterschool professional credential or a series of certifications.
- NAA advocates collaborative action to build and sustain an afterschool quality system that transcends state borders by leveraging exemplary quality system elements across the country to provide access to professional development and training opportunities to practitioners at all levels.
- Public and private funding are critical to making sustainable improvement to afterschool quality. These investments pay for the development of quality metrics, tools and resources as well as for the human resources that support the implementation, use and understanding of tools and resources.

## **10 Strategies for YOU to Extend this Focus on Quality!**

1. Use the *Call to Action* as a leave behind when visiting policy and decision-makers.
2. Use the individual briefs as content for 15-minute staff meetings.
3. Use the briefs to write talking points for meetings with funders, key champions and potential partners.
4. Write a letter to the editor of your local or regional newspaper to make the case for investing in afterschool quality.
5. Share with families to help them understand how your program's commitment to quality.
6. Share with school district staff/building principals – highlight quotes they will be particularly interested in.
7. Include in state conference materials.
8. Post quotes from the briefs on Facebook and Twitter—be sure to use the hashtag #afterschoolquality.
9. Start a quality study circle—pick a brief to read before an advisory committee meeting and brainstorm policy asks/ next steps as a group.
10. Review your association's strategic plan – incorporate ideas from the briefs into next year's activities.

## Facebook/LinkedIn

Facebook and LinkedIn are great platforms to share content longer than 140 characters with stakeholders. Use the following tips to engage the education community in your area. Use the sample posts below to get started.

- **Diversity of Content** – Share a diversity of content including photos and videos, in addition to text. Show off your thought leadership by sharing recent news articles.
- **Encourage Action** – Use action words in your post. Use words such as “Like,” “Share,” and “Explore” to urge readers to take a specific action and increase the reach of your message.
- **Encourage Comments** – Social media is all about dialogue. Ask questions and solicit the input of others.

### Sample Facebook/LinkedIn posts

#### **Post 1**

High quality afterschool programs can help close the achievement gap and show significant promise for improving long-term outcomes such as high school graduation. Explore what **quality afterschool** looks like in *Identifying and Improving Quality Programs*. <http://naaweb.org/resources/item/258-naa-executive-members-new-resource-material-is-available-for-download>

#### **Post 2**

We expect the OST workforce to excel at the most difficult forms of teaching—such as project-based learning and inquiry-based approaches without anywhere near the resources or training available to K-12 teachers.

Read *Promoting Professionalism*, a new brief by NAA to learn what we think should be done to improve pre-service training and professional development for afterschool professionals.

<http://naaweb.org/resources/item/258-naa-executive-members-new-resource-material-is-available-for-download>

#### **Post 3**

We know what quality afterschool is, how to measure it and how to help programs and practitioners achieve it. Public and private funding is critical to making sustainable improvements in afterschool progress. Share NAA’s six

recommendations for achieving measurable and lasting impact.  
<http://naaweb.org/resources/item/258-naa-executive-members-new-resource-material-is-available-for-download>

## Email Promo Language

Many organizations send regular email newsletters and updates to families, members and supporters. We encourage you to send share links to the quality focus briefs via email promotion or newsletters. We've developed draft messages you can use to share the focus briefs with your email lists.

### **THE STATE OF AFTERSCHOOL QUALITY— FOCUS BRIEFS**

The National AfterSchool Association is thrilled to announce it has published a series of focus briefs describing the *State of Afterschool Quality*. The briefs reveal the afterschool field has made progress in identifying, measuring and implementing quality practices. However, there has been less attention focused on programs to support the development of afterschool professionals.

To learn more about quality programs, advancing professionalism and funding quality initiatives and NAA's recommendations to policymakers and the field, read the focus briefs [here](#).

### **WHY AFTERSCHOOL QUALITY MATTERS**

Did you know children who participate regularly in quality afterschool programs have better grades and attendance in school than peers who do not?

Learn more about how to identify afterschool quality – and the benefits it provides – in NAA's series of focus briefs, [The State of Afterschool Quality](#). In the briefs, NAA raises important issues and describe how the organization and its members are working across the country to ensure kids have access to interesting, lively and enriching summer and afterschool programs.

### **IDENTIFYING AND IMPROVING QUALITY PROGRAMS**

Parents are looking for safe, high quality afterschool programs that provide a diverse and interesting curriculum. A new focus brief from the National

AfterSchool Association, [Identifying and Improving Quality Programs](#), provides a national overview of strategies states and cities are using to ensure families have access to excellent afterschool programs.

Learn more about how using quality standards, assessment tools and improvement systems to ensure kids have access to great programs and great providers at [naaweb.org](http://naaweb.org).

## **PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM**

Afterschool and summer programs have the potential to close achievement gaps, increase third grade reading proficiency and improve community outcomes. The industry will not, however be able to achieve these outcomes without highly qualified, devoted professionals. Learn more about effective strategies for providing relevant and rigorous training opportunities here in [Promoting Professionalism](#).

## **FUNDING QUALITY INITIATIVES**

Educators, policymakers and families are asking afterschool programs to do a lot in a few short hours each day. Achieving these expectations requires funding to support regulations, program and practitioner standards, program and practitioner supports and accountability systems.

In [Funding Quality Initiatives](#) NAA calls for commitment from public and private funders to equitably support efforts to improve program quality and professional preparation for all students, regardless of age or program setting.

## **THE STATE OF AFTERSCHOOL QUALITY — CALL TO ACTION**

The afterschool field is focused on providing programs that engage and inspire students—giving them an opportunity to more deeply explore topics of interest in a time and space that is more hands-on and flexible than the school day.

Ensuring all kids have access to high quality programs requires programs, providers, policymakers and funders to work together to support quality. This [Call to Action](#) from the National AfterSchool Association provides concrete actions for sustaining and growing afterschool quality.

## Twitter

Twitter is an excellent social media platform to reach students, teachers, community partners, and key education influencers in your community. Use the following tips to amplify messages around the middle grades. Tweet and customize the sample tweets below to help us get the word out.

### Tips for Twitter Success

- **Keep Messages Concise** – The best tweets are 120 characters or less. Tweeting concisely increases the likelihood that your messages will be retweeted by followers. It also helps you stay in control of the message by decreasing the likelihood that your original tweet will be significantly altered.
- **Use Your Own Voice** – Be authentic to your organization’s digital voice and format messages to be consistent with your brand. Normally use a lot of exclamation points in your messages? Keep the energy high in your tweets about afterschool.
- **Mention Key Stakeholders** – Have great community partners, bloggers, or education leaders you want to engage around afterschool quality? Don’t forget to mention them if they have Twitter handles.
- **Use the Symposium Hashtag** – Use the hashtag #afterschoolquality to ensure your message is part of the national conversation.

### Sample Tweets

- Explore #afterschoolquality @NatAfterSchool <http://ow.ly/FHBgN>
- Quality #afterschool benefits everyone in a community!  
#afterschoolquality
- Support #afterschool professionals so they can deliver on quality  
#afterschoolquality
- Defined Core Knowledge & Competencies help increase  
#afterschoolquality
- Create clear frameworks of #PD & training to ensure #afterschoolquality
- Electronic portfolios transparently communicate staff quality  
#afterschoolquality
- We need more credential & certificate opps for #afterschool staff  
#afterschoolquality



- .@Vtafterschool ISS-AP is a model of advancing #afterschool professionalism #afterschoolquality
- Funders shld evaluate impact of quality standards on student outcomes #afterschoolquality
- Improving quality requires multi-leveled & sustainable funding #afterschoolquality
- City & state #afterschool networks improve quality #afterschoolquality <http://ow.ly/FHBgN>
- Standards+Supports for programs and staff= #afterschoolquality
- @NatAfterSchool is committed to increasing #afterschoolquality Read more <http://ow.ly/FHBgN>
- Kids in #qualityafterschool more likely to thrive as adults <http://ow.ly/FHBgN>

## Blog

Blogs provide the greatest amount of space to share content with education audiences. Use the following tips to craft the perfect post that will get others' attention. Use key messages, email promo language, sample Facebook posts or tweets as the inspiration for a blog post.

### Tips for Blog Success

- **Avoid Jargon** – Keep your language simple and conversational. The less wonky your post is, the more powerful its message will be.
- **Length** – 3-5 paragraphs is the perfect length for a post, with the first paragraph serving as a summary.
- **Use Key Messages** – Use key messages at the beginning of this document to craft powerful posts on the importance of middle grades work.
- **Incorporate Media** – Use photos to create powerful images that compliment your post.

### Where to Blog

- Your own organization's blog.
- Contribute to the blog of a partner organization.
- Send your blog to NAA to include on the website.