

# Partnering with Schools to Reopen and Meet Students' Needs



## This is Afterschool in Alaska



### Afterschool Programs: We're Here to Support Your Students

Local afterschool programs are an essential part of your school's response to the coronavirus pandemic and will continue to play a critical role through recovery. As we look ahead to the next school year, afterschool leaders and educators stand ready to help children catch up and keep up, which includes ensuring all kids have access to learning opportunities and the supports they need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient and hopeful.



No matter what your school's reopening strategy is, afterschool programs are eager to serve and innovatively adapt their programming to keep students safe and ensure their needs are met. Here are four ways afterschool programs can support student success:



**More time for engaged learning.** Afterschool programs can engage students with additional learning time to make up for learning loss and support distance learning.



**Help students feel and heal.** At afterschool programs, youth have the opportunities to develop positive relationships with caring adults and mentors and receive social-emotional learning supports that allow students to be ready to learn. Afterschool is also a safe space for kids to be exposed to new experiences and spark new interests in fun and engaging ways.



**Sustain connections to families.** Not only do afterschool programs allow families to return to work, but they can also support schools' efforts to engage families by connecting families to food, health, economic and other types of resources.



**Address inequities that are likely worsening.** Afterschool programs reach and serve a significant number of young people from families who have low income and diverse backgrounds. Programs also can serve the students who might not have the same level of family support at home to help them with distance learning.



Alaska Afterschool Network's mission is to support, strengthen, and advocate for quality afterschool programs and activities for children, youth, and families throughout Alaska.

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## What Afterschool Can Offer for Various Reopening Strategies

No matter which strategy your school uses to reopen, afterschool can help! By inviting your afterschool partners to your planning discussions and collaborating to align resources and facilities, afterschool providers can help be creative in collectively meeting the needs of your school.



### Staggered Times, Including Shorter Days

Some districts may have A and B groups that attend on alternating days or in AM and PM rotations, and school days may be shorter. In any case, afterschool staff could be:

- working with the group that is not currently in class.
- doing innovative and engaging activities that build on the lessons taught in class.
- supporting students in completing projects assigned in class.
- doing computer science activities, theater, visual arts or science to enrich students' learning experiences.



### Different Grade Levels

Similarly, if districts choose to have in-school programming for younger students and continue distance learning for older students, afterschool providers could schedule in-person activities for the older students so that they have opportunities to be with peers, practice social and emotional skills, get support with their school work and have enriching activities to keep them engaged and active.



### Episodic Distance Learning

Should the pandemic re-emerge and require periodic distance learning, afterschool providers can partner in ensuring that all students have remote access to learning and school meals, and are also maintaining connections with adults from their school communities to ensure they are safe and their families are connected to resources.



### All In-Person Instruction

Afterschool providers will still be essential partners in helping students readjust to the school environment and re-engage with learning.

**To make your school's reopening as successful as possible, we hope you will consider the following:**

- Invite afterschool programs to your planning discussions, involving them early so they can identify the best ways to share resources and facilities and meet the needs of all students.
- Consider the places within your building that you have available for afterschool programs. If you do not have adequate space for the number of students enrolled in afterschool programs, consider alternative places and transportation options to ensure students can get there safely.
- Establish a thoughtful distribution of resources between schools and afterschool programs to help alleviate budget constraints and ensure students' academic, social and emotional needs are met.
- Communicate the days and times of the week that schools will not meet in-person so afterschool partners can provide students additional enrichment opportunities and care. This will support working parents, including your educators.

Students are ready to be fully engaged in academic, social and physical spaces again and parents (including teachers) need to return to work to keep our economy strong. It's more important than ever for school time and out-of-school time to work together as true partners. Together we can build a more coordinated, streamlined, cost-effective model of service across the full school and work day. The best part is, our students will benefit the most.