

PTA's After-School Initiative

A "Needs Assessment" for PTAs

There are countless reasons why after-school programs are popular with children, teens, and adults. Quality programs keep children safe while their parents work, deter children and teens from becoming involved in dangerous behaviors, encourage teens' positive behaviors, foster teens' social development and their exploration of new skills, and connect the school with the community.

Because of these reasons, National PTA has made after-school programs a priority, and we encourage local units to ensure that every child has access to a quality after-school program.

The role of your school's PTA should be confined to research and investigation. National PTA does not provide insurance to cover PTAs' running of after-school programs. Instead, we encourage you to partner with a community provider, and work with the school administration to bring the provider into your school.

If you are interested in advocating for an after-school program in your school, here is a step-by-step process to help you organize your efforts at all levels of education.

1. At your next PTA meeting, form an ad hoc committee to look at the issue of after-school programs in your school.
 2. Ask how many parents in the school want an after-school program. Develop a survey and with your principal's cooperation and permission send the survey home with the children. On the survey, ask parents to indicate what services they want provided in an after-school program—academic help, recreation, opportunities to learn new skills such as art and music, and community service opportunities, to name a few. Make sure your survey reaches beyond the parents who attend PTA meetings. Set a date for responses.
 3. Evaluate the surveys. Is there significant support for the concept of an after-school program? Are certain areas of interest stronger than others?
 4. Research potential after-school providers in your community. YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Junior Achievement, and 4-H are all national groups that run after-school programs. Your local parks and recreation center, along with other community groups, may also have staff willing to go to schools to run programs.
 5. Once you know your options for after-school providers, ask to meet with them. Use your survey to learn about the needs of the parents at your school. Find out about costs, whether or not the provider is prepared to operate in the school, what programs the provider offers, and what hours it operates.
- *In some cases, the best option may not be a school-based provider. If you are considering a provider in a different location, ask about transportation and the associated costs.
6. Invite a Building Successful Partnerships presenter to speak to the after-school provider on parent involvement. This is a great opportunity to spread PTA's message.
 7. Do after-school program providers in your state need to be licensed? Do a little research to ensure the program you choose is in compliance with state laws. The license will guide you on health and safety regulations as well as staff quality.
 8. Be aware that researching, finding, and implementing an after-school program for your school is a six- to nine-month process.
 9. The expected cost for a year-round after-school program is \$1,500 per student.

For more information regarding PTA's After-School Initiative, visit www.pta.org/afterschoolcare.