

## Spotlight on the Standards

Afterschool Quality Standards



### The Rock Star You're Ignoring: How Afterschool Staff Can Take Your Class to the Next Level

by Eva Jo Meyers

In this article, Meyers offers insight on how her perspective changed when she transitioned from a career as a classroom teacher to a career as an afterschool professional.

"I began to see that there were endless opportunities for teachers to work with afterschool staff; these partnerships and collaborations had the power to vastly improve the support available to students—and our school community as a whole. As part of the growing village around our children, I could see teachers' potential to create a mutually beneficial relationship that dissolves the line between who is an "educator" and who is not.

When we break down the barriers between "school day" and "afterschool," we are taking a giant step towards being in full service to our students and families."

[Read the full article](#)



### BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS BETWEEN "SCHOOL DAY" AND "AFTERSCHOOL"

1. Exchange **observations**. Invite afterschool staff to observe a school-day classroom and vice-versa.
2. Include afterschool staff in teacher **events**, grade-level meetings, and celebrations.
3. Invite afterschool staff to contribute **feedback** for, and participate in, parent-teacher conferences.
4. Leave the teachers' manual or **answer key** for homework, or provide tips on how best to help students with assignments.
5. Allow the afterschool program to **store materials** in a corner of your classroom or closet.
6. Recognize the **value** of afterschool staff. These instructors often have deep roots in the communities they work in. This is an invaluable asset.
7. Advocate for **more funding** for your school's afterschool programs so staff can be paid better wages.



## Social and Emotional Learning



### What SEL Teaches Us About Safety

by Reva McPollom, Founder and CEO, Lessonbee

"With SEL, we can foster emotional safety and mental wellness, and help reduce violence and risky behaviors among students."

[Read the article](#)



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The Heartbeat  
of  
Afterschool

Deadline to register: January 15!

## Health and Wellness



### 50 Educational Brain Breaks

Quick, easy activities to help kids re-energize, refocus, and give their brains a boost  
by Elizabeth Mulvahill

"Research shows that giving kids frequent brain breaks to reset their energy level improves their ability to focus, retain more, and stay on task. Here are 50 of our favorite educational brain breaks that are sure to increase productivity and give your kids a much-needed break."

[Read the article](#)

## STEM ACTIVITIES



"Tinkering is the playful relative of the more serious activity of engineering. Engineering starts with a problem to be solved: 'We need a bridge' or 'We need a house to live in.' Tinkering starts with much simpler questions: 'What can I do with this?' or 'How does this work?'"

"Encouraging children to tinker gives them the skills to be creative problem solvers out in the world. Tinkerers make great discoveries, small and large. Tinkerers are inspired by a problem they identify and want to solve. These problems range from everyday and personal dilemmas ('I'm hungry but only have a few ingredients. What can I make?') to complex and global challenges ('Oil spills are difficult to clean up. I want to design a new way to fix them.'). Children who are encouraged from an early age to tinker and solve their own problems develop a different way of thinking about the world. They understand experimentation, testing and failing."

"A child who tinkers

- Does not give up easily when a challenge gets difficult
- Thinks creatively
- Is self-sufficient
- Can fix things that have broken
- Is a creative problem solver across a range of issues"



[Access the full guide here!](#)

[Ideas for Building Your Own Tinker Space](#)

## Staff Support

### The Practice of Being On Purpose

by Kristin Stayer, VP of Engagement and Educator Experiences at Mizzen by Mott

"January is National Be On Purpose Month. Sticking to our New Year resolutions is often challenging, but, having a month dedicated to staying on purpose can help remind us of the commitments we've made."

"National Be On Purpose Month can serve as a time for educators to reflect on our role in mentoring young people. It's a time to think about what it means to be purposeful in our work and how to infuse that sense of purpose into every aspect of the learning experience."



[Read the full article](#)

### Grant Opportunities



Focus areas include:

- supporting education
- encouraging youth

Requests may be submitted throughout the year. Allow about eight weeks for review and processing.

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