ENGAGING YOUTH IN AFTERSCHOOL STEM

Building a Bright Future Together

Inspiring children to engage in learning science, technology, engineering, and math is an essential part of every young person’s education and key to building a prosperous economy for us all.

THE CHALLENGE

Our global economy increasingly depends on a workforce fluent in science, technology, engineering, and math—the subjects known as STEM. Not only are STEM jobs growing faster than jobs in other areas, but every community also needs STEM-literate citizens who can engage with and help solve critical issues that impact our society.

Some cities and towns are filled with opportunities for kids to engage in STEM learning—from science centers and tech companies to vibrant community gardens—but many areas lack these resources. And many families can’t afford or access learning programs that do exist where they live. This means millions of kids are missing out, even as many businesses are struggling to hire qualified workers.

AFTERSCHOOL STEM IS A SOLUTION

Learning STEM is like becoming fluent in another language: It’s best accomplished by immersing young people in STEM experiences both in and outside of the classroom. Afterschool and summer programs provide these opportunities and are proven to spark children’s interest in STEM.

UNIQUE BENEFITS OF HIGH-QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL STEM

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<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Extra exposure</td>
<td>Programs can almost double the amount of time some students have to question, tinker, learn, and explore STEM topics outside of school. ¹</td>
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<td>Freedom to explore</td>
<td>Youth needs are prioritized. Students engage in hands-on, exploratory experiences designed to help them discover new passions and make STEM more accessible.</td>
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<td>A chance to follow their spark</td>
<td>Programs cultivate interest, help students build real STEM skills, and connect STEM to their lives and communities. ²</td>
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<td>Opportunity for all</td>
<td>Families in the highest income bracket spend more than five times as much on out-of-school time activities per year than families in the lowest income bracket. Afterschool STEM helps to close this gap by serving a diverse range of learners. ³</td>
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LEARNING DOESN’T JUST HAPPEN IN SCHOOL

Students spend more than 80% of their waking hours learning outside of school—in afterschool and summer programs, libraries, museums, the community, and more. ⁴
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPOWER FUTURE GENERATIONS
Everyone benefits when we empower young people to become engaged citizens who understand how STEM can be used for public good and critical thinkers who are prepared to tackle the challenges of the future.

Building proficiency in STEM helps young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to solve problems systematically, including the abilities to:

→ sift through information
→ make decisions based on evidence
→ draw reasonable conclusions
→ develop creative solutions

By expanding STEM learning opportunities to all students, we can broaden the pool of STEM talent to meet increasing demand.

TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MISSING OUT

45% of high school seniors aspire to a STEM career: of those, only 28% are female and 65% are male.7

40% of Black and Latinx high schoolers say they enjoy STEM courses and aspire to go to college, but less than 3% enroll in advanced placement STEM courses.8

AFTERSCHOOL CAN HELP CLOSE THESE GAPS

Nearly 6 million students are benefiting from afterschool STEM programs where they have opportunities to solve real-world problems, work on project-based activities, and explore careers.9 These experiences help youth build confidence, teamwork, communication, and other important life skills. But millions of kids are missing out.

GET INVOLVED!

By investing in and partnering with afterschool programs, we can build a robust STEM learning environment in every community that will expand access for all young people.

Learn more: AfterschoolSTEMHub.org

Sources
4 The LIFE Center’s Lifelong and Lifewide Diagram. Find it [here].
8 The Education Trust. (2022). Shut out: Why Black and Latino students are under-enrolled in AP STEM courses. Find it [here].