



*Recognizing and Celebrating the Importance of
New Jersey After 3 Afterschool Programming
in Communities throughout New Jersey.*

Welcome to the Kids Take Action Guide

Welcome! We are thrilled that your afterschool program will be participating in our Kids Take Action initiative that celebrates and recognizes the importance of New Jersey After 3 afterschool programs in communities throughout the state.

How the Activities are Designed

There is one 45 minute session for each of the three grade levels (Kindergarten - 2nd Grade, 3rd - 5th Grades, 6th - 8th Grades). Each session entails an opening teambuilder, two activities and a closing reflection. The materials you will need for each activity, and any steps needed prior to the activity, are noted in the margins of the activity guide.

How to Use this Guide.....

Site Coordinator's Role

- ◆ Distribute an activity plan to each youth development worker (YDW) in your program based on the grade level they work with and ask them to do the activity with their students by April 13th.

Note: If you have any classrooms with 6th-8th graders provide the YDW with the contact information for your local legislator - this can be found on the Legislative Contact Sheet in your packet.

- ◆ Instruct each youth development worker to make sure they collect the student's work at the end of the session and return it to you by April 15th.
- ◆ Review the student's work and remove any work that does not have positive or appropriate messages.
- ◆ Using the Legislative Contact Sheet, customize the Cover Letter to an Elected Official for each of your legislators (see enclosed sample on next page)
- ◆ Send your modified Cover Letter to an Elected Official and the student's work to each of your legislators by April 30th to make them aware of the amazing work that you and your staff are doing to help keep kids safe, support working families, promote positive youth development and improve academic achievement.
- ◆ **Congratulations!** You, your students and staff have just helped to bring attention to the need for high-quality afterschool programming throughout New Jersey.

(Program Name)
(Program Address)

(Date)

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)
(District Office Address)
(Town), NJ (Zip Code)

Dear (Legislator Name, for instance, Senator Smith),

The students of **(Name of School)** who attend the New Jersey After 3 afterschool program recently came together to learn more about their community and discuss the things that are important to them. Through thoughtful discussion and meaningful action, the students of **(School City)** became active citizens!

At this important time, when programs such as New Jersey After 3 are at risk of losing State funding, I wanted to share with you their thoughts on their New Jersey After 3 afterschool program. This program serves **(number of students your site serves)** student and provides them with a diverse array of activities including **(list some of your program offerings)**. Today, more than ever, young people are helping to make a difference in their communities. As you will see in enclosed **(Item being sent, for instance illustrations, letters, etc.)**, the students of today are well on their way to becoming our thoughtful citizens of tomorrow.

Afterschool programs are critical to our community because they keep kids safe, expand student learning time, promote positive youth development and support working families. In fact a recent study of New Jersey After 3 documents that NJ After 3 students improved their literacy skills, math skills, computer skills, work completion values and achievement of better grades in the classroom.

From all of us at **(Name of Afterschool Program)**, we would like to extend an open invitation to you to join us at our afterschool program one afternoon. Our students would benefit greatly from the opportunity to hear the words of someone who is truly making a difference in their community each and every day.

Your continued support for New Jersey After 3 programs is greatly appreciated!

Thank you for your public service.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Phone Number]
[E-mail Address]
[Street Address]

Grade Level: Kindergarten– 2nd Grade

Page One of Two

Overview: During this session, students will learn more about their community, and then complete activities that allow them to promote the important role that their afterschool program plays in the state.

Teambuilding Activity - Take Action, Stand Still!

This game is a variation of Red Light, Green Light.

- ◆ Have all the students stand at one end of the classroom and clear a path so that the students can walk from one end of the room to the other.
- ◆ Instruct the students that you will be saying two phrases out loud, 'Take Action' or 'Stand Still.' When you say 'Take Action' the students should begin walking. When you say 'Stand Still' the students must stop moving. The goal is to be the first student to make it to the other end of the room and touch the wall. Remind students that they are only allowed to walk, no running is permitted.
- ◆ Continue alternating between the two phrases, 'Take Action' and "Stand Still" until one student has crossed to the other side of the room. Allow that student to then give the "Take Action" and "Stand Still" commands. Continue for a few rounds.



Variation: If you are working in a classroom where it is difficult to have all the students walk from one end of the room to the other, you can have students march in place when you say 'Take Action' and stop and raise their hands in the air when you say 'Stand Still.'

Activity One - Taking Action for Afterschool

- ◆ Tell students that during this session, they will be taking action by sharing the things they do at the afterschool program, why they enjoy coming, and what they have learned.
- ◆ Going around the circle, ask each student to name one thing they do at the afterschool program. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage students to share something different. Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.
- ◆ Then go around the circle and ask each student to share their favorite thing about the afterschool program. They could name activities (basketball) or things about the program (teachers). Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.
- ◆ Finally, ask students to think about something they have learned while at the program. Tell them it could be something they learned while doing homework (how to do a math problem), something they learned during one of the activities (like how to play chess, how to do a certain dance, etc), or something they learned while being with other kids (how to work as a team, etc). Ask for volunteers to share what they have learned.



Materials Needed:

- ◆ Blackboard/Lg. Pad
- ◆ Chalk or Marker
- ◆ Blank Paper (at least one sheet per student) or copies of the sample letter template
- ◆ Crayons, markers, etc.

Prior to the Session:

- ◆ Read through session instructions
- ◆ Collect materials needed
- ◆ If using, make copies of the sample letter template (at least one sheet per student)



45 minutes



Grade Level: Kindergarten– 2nd Grade

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Activity Two - 3 Things about NJA3!

- After the Session:**
- ◆ By April 15th give the student's illustrations to your site coordinator to send on to your state legislators and/or the governor.
 - ◆ Tell students that during this activity, they are going to share with others, '3 Things about NJA3!'
 - ◆ Give each student a sheet of blank paper or a copy of the sample letter template and drawing materials such as crayons, markers etc.
 - ◆ Instruct the students that they are going to draw pictures that illustrate one of the items they just listed in their group discussion: What I Do at the afterschool program, What I Enjoy about the afterschool program, and What I've Learned at the afterschool program.
 - ◆ Once students have completed their drawing, have each student write their first name and grade at the bottom of the paper.
 - ◆ Assist students in writing one of the following phrases on the top or bottom of their picture.
 - I (fill in the activity the student drew - example *do homework*) in my NJA3 afterschool program at (fill in school name).
 - I enjoy (fill in the activity the student drew - example *doing art projects*) in my NJA3 afterschool program at (fill in school name).
 - I learned how to (fill in the activity the student drew - example *volunteer*) in my NJA3 afterschool program at (fill in school name).



Tip: If students are comfortable with writing, encourage them to write the phrase, you could write the phrases on the board if they need help. Or write the phrase on the paper for the students.

Reflection & Spreading the Word

- ◆ Have students come back into a circle and ask for volunteers to share their pictures.
- ◆ Discuss with students if they realized something new about their afterschool program? Did they learn anything new about one of their classmates?
- ◆ Remind students that one part of being a citizen is sharing with others what you think is important and what you have learned from your experience. In creating their "3 Things about NJA3," they've illustrated how afterschool is important (they've learned things, its fun, etc.).
- ◆ Collect the students drawings and tell them that their illustrations say a lot of great things about the afterschool program. To help spread that news to others in the community, the afterschool program is going to share their illustrations with others like the Governor and New Jersey state legislators.
- ◆ Thank the students for their role in being active citizens in the community.

Grade Level: 3rd—5th Grades

Page One of Two

Overview: During this session, students will learn more about their community, and then complete activities that allow them to promote the important role that their afterschool program plays in the state.

Teambuilding Activity - Let's Define It!

- ◆ Break the students into 4-5 groups and give each group a sheet of poster board or paper
- ◆ Give each group one of the following words, and ask them to draw a picture, together, that illustrates what they believe the word means.
- ◆ Have each group share their word, and explain what their picture shows.
- ◆ After all groups have presented, tell the students that they will now be doing activities that allow them to be active citizens in their community.

Words:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 1. Community | 2. Government | 3. Citizen |
| 4. Advocacy | 5. Afterschool | |

Activity One - Taking Action for Afterschool

- ◆ Tell students that during this session, they will be taking action by sharing the things they do at the afterschool program, why they enjoy coming, and what they have learned.
- ◆ Going around the circle, ask each student to name one thing they do at the afterschool program. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage students to share something different. Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.
- ◆ Then go around the circle and ask each student to share their favorite thing about the afterschool program. They could name activities (basketball) or things about the program (teachers). Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.
- ◆ Finally, ask students to think about something they have learned while at the program. Tell them it could be something they learned while doing homework (how to do a math problem), something they learned during one of the activities (like how to play chess, how to do a certain dance, etc), or something they learned while being with other kids (how to work as a team, etc). Ask for volunteers to share what they have learned.



Materials Needed:

- ◆ Blackboard/Lg. Pad
- ◆ Chalk or Marker
- ◆ Blank Paper (at least one sheet per student) or copies of the sample letter template
- ◆ Crayons, markers, etc.

Prior to the Session:

- ◆ Read through session instructions
- ◆ Collect materials needed



45 minutes



Grade Level: 3rd—5th Grades

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Activity Two - 3 Things about NJA3!

- ◆ Tell students that during this activity, they are going to share with others, '3 Things about NJA3!'
- ◆ Give each student a sheet of blank paper or a copy of the sample letter template and a drawing /writing materials such as crayons, pencils etc,
- ◆ Ask them to fold the paper in half.
- ◆ On the bottom half of the paper, ask students to write a few sentences in which they share What I Do at my NJA3 afterschool program, What I Enjoy about my NJA3 afterschool program, and What I've Learned at my NJA3 afterschool program. (Tip: If students need more direction, you could write the beginnings of the three sentences above on the blackboard.)
- ◆ After students write their sentences, instruct them that on the top half of the paper, they should draw a picture that illustrates one or more of the things they wrote.
- ◆ Once students have completed their drawing, have each student write their first name, grade, school name and school city at the bottom of the paper.

Reflection & Spreading the Word

- ◆ Have students come back into a circle and ask for volunteers to share their pictures and words.
- ◆ Discuss with students if they realized something new about their afterschool program? Did they learn anything new about one of their classmates?
- ◆ Remind students that one part of being an active citizen is sharing with others what you think is important and what you have learned from your experience. In creating their "3 Things about NJA3," they've illustrated how afterschool is important (they've learned things, its fun, etc.).
- ◆ Collect the students' drawings and tell them that their illustrations say a lot of great things about the afterschool program. To help spread that news to others in the community, the afterschool program is going to share their illustrations with others like the Governor and New Jersey state legislators.



Tip: You can review what the state legislature is with students using the information to the left.

- ◆ Thank the students for their role in being active citizens in the community.

After the Session:

- ◆ By April 15th give the students' illustrations to your site coordinator to send on to your state legislators and/or the governor.

The New Jersey Legislature

The NJ Legislature is the branch of government that makes new laws and changes old ones. The legislature is made up of two houses, the Senate and the General Assembly. New Jersey is divided into 40 legislative districts. Each district elects one Senator and two General Assembly members. Each district has the about the same number of people, so each legislator represents about the same number of people.

Grade Level: 6th—8th Grades

Page One of Two

Overview: During this session, students will learn more about their community, and then complete activities that allow them to promote the important role that their afterschool program plays in the state.

Teambuilding Activity - Let's Picture It!

- ◆ Break the students into 4-5 groups.
- ◆ Write the words listed below on a blackboard or large pad.
- ◆ Give each group one of the words listed below, and ask the students to develop a one-minute skit that illustrates what they believe the word means.
- ◆ Have each group stand, and perform their skit. Ask the students who are watching to guess which word the group is acting out.
- ◆ After all groups have presented, tell the students that they will now be doing activities that allow them to be active citizens in their community.

Words:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 1. Community | 2. Government | 3. Citizen |
| 4. Advocacy | 5. Afterschool | 6. School |
| 7. Volunteer | 8. Action | 9. Leader |

Activity One - Taking Action for Afterschool

- ◆ Tell students that during this session, they will be taking action by sharing the things they do at the afterschool program, why they enjoy coming, what they have learned and what their community would be like without afterschool programs.
- ◆ Going around the circle, ask each student to name one thing they enjoy about the afterschool program or something they learned from the afterschool program. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage students to share something different (no repeat answers). Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.
- ◆ Then go around the circle and ask each student to share what they might be doing if there was no afterschool program in their community. Would they have a safe place to learn new things, interact with other students and play sports without the afterschool program. Write all the answers on a poster board or blackboard.



Materials Needed:

- ◆ Blackboard/Lg. Pad
- ◆ Chalk or Marker
- ◆ Paper (at least one sheet per student)
- ◆ Pencils or pens (at least one sheet per student)

Prior to the Session:

- ◆ Read through session instructions
- ◆ Collect materials needed



45 minutes



Grade Level: 6th—8th Grades

Page Two of Two

Activity Two - 3 Things about NJA3!

Prior to the Session: Get the name and address of your local legislator from your site coordinator. Write this information on a blackboard or large pad.

- ◆ Tell the students that regardless of age, each citizen can have an impact on their community and government. If there is something in your community that you care about or want to change, you can spread the word and take action. A great way to get your opinion to be heard is to write your elected leaders (such as the governor or state legislators).

Tip: You can review with students the state legislature using the information to the left.

- ◆ Tell students that during this activity, they are going to share with others, the importance of having afterschool available in their community.
- ◆ Give each student a sheet of lined paper and a pencil.
- ◆ Tell students that they can each choose one of their local legislators to write a letter. Students should address the letter one of the legislators you listed on the board.
- ◆ Instruct the students to write a letter in which they share their thoughts, feelings and experiences about the afterschool program. Encourage them to cover the three areas: What I Do or Enjoy at the afterschool program, What I've Learned at the Afterschool Program, and What would I do afterschool without my afterschool program. (Tip: To help students, write the three phrases above on the black board.)
- ◆ Remind students to include their grade level, name of their school and the name of their town in the letter.

Reflection & Spreading the Word

- ◆ Ask for volunteers to share their letter.
- ◆ Discuss with students if they realized something new about their afterschool program? Did they learn anything new about one of their classmates?
- ◆ Remind students that one part of being a citizen is sharing with others what you think is important and what you have learned from your experience. In creating their letters, they've illustrated how afterschool is important.
- ◆ Collect the student's letters and tell them that their words say a lot of great things about the afterschool program which will be shared with others.
- ◆ Thank the students for their role in being active citizens in the community.

Prior to the Session:

- ◆ Get the name and address of your local legislator from your site coordinator.

After the Session:

- ◆ By April 15th give the student's letters to your site coordinator to send on to your state legislators and/or the governor.

The New Jersey Legislature

The NJ Legislature is the branch of government that makes new laws and changes old ones. The legislature is made up of two houses, the Senate and the General Assembly. New Jersey is divided into 40 legislative districts. Each district elects one Senator and two General Assembly members. Each district has about the same number of people, so each legislator represents about the same number of people.

First Name: _____ Grade: _____ City: _____

Blank writing area with horizontal lines.

Sign first name: _____ Grade: _____ City: _____