

NJDOE News

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May Events Celebrate Afterschool Programs in NJ

The New Jersey Department of Education is supporting two events this month to celebrate afterschool programs.

The first, known as *Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State* will take place during the week of May 11, to highlight the importance of afterschool programs and engaging youth outdoors. The second event, a one-day workshop on May 19 called *Soaring Beyond Expectations: A Statewide Afterschool Showcase*, will feature local best practices and panel discussions on the theme of providing academic and interactive activities to enhance and enrich a child's educational experience.

"Afterschool programs offer unlimited opportunities for adults to stimulate our children's curiosity, creativity and desire to simply have fun through hands-on activities," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "Children who are able to attend high-quality afterschool programs are more likely to stay out of trouble, achieve more in class, and live safer and healthier lives."

Commissioner Davy encouraged the state's education community and the general public to learn more about afterschool programs and to support such programs wherever they exist.

Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State is an initiative of the New Jersey SchoolAge Care Coalition, the Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities. The initiative emphasizes to parents and educators the importance of providing educational and fun opportunities for children to connect with nature. To find a local event near you, please visit: www.njsacc.org/celebrateafterschool

All afterschool programs are welcome to participate in the initiative. Activities and a resource guide containing suggestions on how to teach children about the environment, as well as a list of environmental resources, Web-sites, and books, are on the NJSACC Web-site.

In addition to this week-long observance, the Department of Education is sponsoring its first annual 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) spring conference.

Soaring Beyond Expectations: A Statewide Afterschool Showcase is open to anyone interested in afterschool, before school or summer programming as a way to engage youth in meaningful learning opportunities when school is not in session, while developing their creativity. It will be held on the campus of Georgian Court College in Lakewood.

Assistant Commissioner Barbara Gantwerk of the Division of Student Services will deliver the opening remarks. Topics include: "What It Means to be an Environmental Hero: Barnegat Bay Mosaic Mural Project," "High School and College Partnerships," "Building Skills and Character through Sportsmanship" and "Enhancing Environmental Stewardship through Partnerships."

The event is designed for school personnel, afterschool directors, teachers, youth workers and others interested in starting or enhancing an existing afterschool, before school or summer program.

Please see the [attached showcase schedule](#) for additional details.