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I-35W Mississippi River Bridge Goes Gold for After-School Programs

Lights on the I-35W Bridge will glow gold as Governor Dayton declares October 17, "Lights On Afterschool" Day

ROSEVILLE – A student's learning does not end at the school bell. With the majority of a child's time spent outside of the classroom, ensuring access to high-quality after-school programs allows educators to keep students engaged and extend the learning day.

In honor of this work, Governor Mark Dayton has proclaimed today *Lights On Afterschool Day*, connecting Minnesota to a national celebration of after-school programming. After-school programs throughout the state will host events today, and in recognition of Minnesota's after-school activities, the lights on the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge will glow gold this evening, beginning 30 minutes before sunset. Tonight the iconic Empire State Building in New York City will [shine with the same color](#), connecting the Midwest to celebrations across the country.

"After-school programs keep kids engaged and help them develop both socially and academically," said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. "Educators across the nation are dedicated to supporting our youth and ensuring every child has access to incredible learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom."

This will be the 14th annual *Lights On Afterschool* celebration, which is organized by The Afterschool Alliance, an organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of after-school programs and advocating for more afterschool investments. Last year, more than a million people participated in more than 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the U.S.

In Minnesota, after-school programming is supported by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers awards, grants that are awarded to help establish or expand community learning centers that provide students with enrichment opportunities during those times when school is not in session. Last year \$11.8 million in federal funding was used to support after-school programming in communities with high concentrations of poverty.

"Students who participate in after-school programs are proven to perform better in their academics, avoid risky behavior and make healthier life choices," Cassellius said. "If your child is not involved in one of the many excellent school or community based programs happening across the state, let this year's celebration serve as the catalyst for finding a program that will help them grow and thrive."

Currently, these grants provide support for 113 programs throughout the state. Last year, these programs served 22,500 students.

To find an after-school program that will be hosting an event on Thursday in your area, visit the [Afterschool Alliance website](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm) (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm>). Visit the [Office of the Governor website](http://mn.gov/governor/resources/proclamations/) (<http://mn.gov/governor/resources/proclamations/>) to view the proclamation.