

# Say This, Not That

Many of the common arguments that STEM education advocates are currently using don't help advance people's thinking about STEM learning and why it matters.

Framing is a strategic process of making choices about what to emphasize – and what to leave unsaid. While these recommendations might seem counter-intuitive, there is extensive communications research that supports them. To learn WHY, head over to [afterschoolSTEMhub.org](http://afterschoolSTEMhub.org).

INSTEAD OF THIS...	WE'RE TRYING THIS...
STEM	Spell it out and say "science, technology, engineering, and math". STEM is a meaningless acronym to most—let people know what subjects make up STEM skills and learning.
Out-of-school time	"Programs that meet afterschool, on the weekends, or during the summer". Disrupt the assumption that kids can only learn "real" skills during traditional school hours, and provide rich examples of the learning that happens.
To remain competitive in a global economy...	"To build our shared prosperity..." Global competition cues up unproductive narratives about America's best days being behind her. Point them towards the future and frame STEM learning as a shared good and societal responsibility.
U.S. can't fill STEM jobs, so they go overseas.	"The sector is growing – let's grow with it". Don't alarm the audience with a skills crisis. Combat the sense of fatalism and focus on the opportunities ahead.
STEM degrees lead to high-paying careers.	"Innovation drives the economy". This orients the audience towards the collective benefits, rather than individual gain.
Afterschool STEM works to end race and gender inequities in education and the workforce.	Talk about making access to STEM learning opportunities available to all kids no matter what zip code they grow up in. When asked, the public often explains inequity through the lens of individual drive, cultural differences, and "types" of kids suited to success in STEM.
Afterschool keeps the academic clock ticking.	"Exploratory, supportive, flexible settings let kids learn in a different way". Focus on the unique contributions of afterschool, and show how they complement formal education within a broader learning ecosystem.
Let me tell you this inspiring story about Jamal...	Instead of a narrow focus on individuals who "beat the odds", talk about the community, contexts, or collective actions that help students succeed. Don't feed the public's dominant belief that willpower and personal choices are the main determinants of children's success. Give rich examples of programs that are improving outcomes for all children.