



NEWS RELEASE
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New Report: Arkansas Making Some Progress, But Has Considerable Work Still to Do to Make Afterschool Programs Available to All Children Who Need Them

Afterschool Alliance Considers Each State's Performance in Meeting the Need For Afterschool Programs; Reports Produced with Support from jcpenny

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new assessment of states' progress toward offering afterschool programs to all children who need them finds that Arkansas is making some progress, but has a great deal of work ahead to meet the need for afterschool programs. Arkansas earned a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5 in the new report, and is one of 20 states to receive that score. No state received a 5; only nine states received a 4; 19 states received a 2; and Delaware and Idaho received the lowest rating, a 1 in the **2011 State-by-State Afterschool Progress Reports and Consumer Guides**, which are being released in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool* this year by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). Sponsored by jcpenny, the new progress reports examine how each state is helping keep the lights on for kids and families after school by reviewing state policies, funding and other activities that affect afterschool programs, assessing the need in each state for programs, offering tips to parents seeking afterschool programs for their children, and suggesting ways state residents can support afterschool.

Specifically, each state progress report considers: the availability of and participation in afterschool programs, based on data from the landmark 2009 *America After 3PM* household survey; recent state policy activity and funding for afterschool programs; and state-level leadership on afterschool from policy makers. It also includes information for parents on how to find and support afterschool programs in each state. Links to state and national resources for finding programs are available, and parents and non-parents alike are directed to specific action steps that they can take to support afterschool. The assessment finds:

- According to *America After 3PM*, 12 percent of schoolchildren in Arkansas are in afterschool programs; 26 percent are on their own in the afternoons; and 44 percent would participate in an afterschool program if it were available.
- In terms of policy activity and funding, Arkansas met three of five criteria, including current law that directly supports afterschool programs and a state initiative promoting quality afterschool programming. It failed to meet criteria such as current state funding for afterschool programming.

- In terms of afterschool leadership, Arkansas met five of five criteria, including an active statewide afterschool network and a governor's or state agency taskforce.

“Too many children in Arkansas are unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends, although this progress report offers reason for hope. Arkansas has put some of the pieces in place to get to afterschool for all children, but lawmakers need to do more to make afterschool programs available,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Even in tough economic times like these, we need to ensure that our children get the education and support they need to succeed in school and in life. Afterschool programs are a good investment, providing opportunities for engaging, hands-on learning that often aren't available during the regular school day. We urge lawmakers in Arkansas to remember that afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families – and make afterschool funding a priority.”

In conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool* events across the nation, jcpenny will invite its customers to support the afterschool cause through the “pennies from heaven” campaign Oct. 12-25. During that period, customers can round up purchases to the nearest whole dollar and donate the difference to a local afterschool program that provides life-enriching opportunities for children in need.

“As a leading corporate advocate for the afterschool cause, jcpenny is committed to building the resources needed to offer quality afterschool services in every community,” said Jodi Gibson, divisional vice president for jcpenny and president of jcpenny afterschool. “By partnering with the Afterschool Alliance to determine the unique needs of every state, families, educators and policy makers can make informed decisions that will make afterschool programs available and accessible to those who need it most.”

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend afterschool programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, tests scores and overall academic behavior. Nationwide, more than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

Methodology

Scores for the progress reports were devised using a range of factors falling under three major categories: growth in afterschool participation; developments in state afterschool policy and funding; and advancements in state afterschool leadership. Data from the *America After 3PM* survey were used to assess afterschool participation. A total of 29,754 parents/guardians were surveyed between March and May 2009 for *America After 3PM*. The progress reports also used up-to-date policy and leadership developments obtained from afterschool leaders in the states, most notably the 40 statewide afterschool networks. The **2011 State-by-State Afterschool Progress Reports and Consumer Guides** reflect the data and resources available at the time of their release in October 2011.

The **2011 State-by-State Progress Reports and Consumer Guides**, as well as links to the *America After 3PM* study, accompanying data, and information on *Lights On Afterschool* events, are available online at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Progress-Reports-Main.cfm>.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.