



Issue Brief No. 59

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## The Importance of Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs in African-American and Latino Communities

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In classrooms across the country, when students hear the bell ring at 3 p.m., it signals the end of the school day and, for many, the start of an afternoon without supervision, without productive activities and without direction. Afterschool and summer learning programs are filling the invaluable role of providing essential services—such as a safe and supervised environment, academically enriching activities, healthy snacks and meals, and caring and supportive mentors—to children and families most in need of support. The need for these afterschool and summer learning programs is especially vital in African-American and Latino communities, communities that are experiencing higher levels of poverty, homelessness and food insecurity, and are facing disparities in education and access to extracurricular activities.

While afterschool and summer learning programs serve as an important source of support for African-American and Latino families (African-American and Latino children are much more likely to be enrolled in afterschool programs compared to the overall general population) the demand for more afterschool and summer learning programs is considerable. More than 4.1 million, or 61 percent, of African-American parents and 4.2 million, or almost half, of Latino parents of children who are not enrolled in an afterschool program say that they would enroll their children in quality afterschool programs if one were available—significantly higher than the national average of 38 percent.<sup>i</sup> The demand for summer learning programs is even greater. More than 3 in 4 African-American kids and 7 in 10 Latino kids would likely enroll in a summer learning program, based on parent interest.<sup>ii</sup>

*"I have been involved with education issues for almost 30 years. This experience has strongly reinforced for me that all children, regardless of income level or race have the same potential for high achievement when provided appropriate opportunities. Thus, our goal must be to support the development of quality afterschool programs for all children, but especially those in low-income communities."*

*-Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, D-TX*

Funding for afterschool and summer learning programs is a sound investment that will help meet the demands of, and bring much needed services to, African-American and Latino communities by:

- Ensuring children have access to academically enriching activities, helping close the opportunity gap between higher-income and lower-income families;
- Tackling the achievement gap between white students and African-American and Latino students by increasing attendance, homework completion and engagement in school, and ultimately raising graduation rates and test scores;
- Combating food insecurity among children by providing nutritious snacks and meals, which are especially important during the summer months when schools are out of session; and
- Providing working parents with peace of mind knowing that their child is in a safe and supervised space during the out-of-school hours.

At a time when afterschool programs serving communities that are in most need of help are struggling to keep pace with demand, greater investments at the federal, state and local levels are essential to make certain that all children have access to the range of benefits afterschool and summer learning programs provide and are better equipped to succeed in school and life.

## INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that the impact of the Great Recession was and continues to be particularly hard hitting in African-American and Latino communities throughout the nation.<sup>iii</sup> This is true not just for individuals, but for families, neighborhoods and support structures, like afterschool and summer learning programs.

While it is encouraging that the overall unemployment rates have decreased slightly in the past few years,<sup>1</sup> families and communities nationwide continue to feel a squeeze financially.<sup>iv</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that while the number of families with at least one member unemployed decreased in 2012,<sup>2</sup> there were still 8.4 million families with an unemployed member.<sup>v</sup> Additionally, the National Center for Children in Poverty found the number of children living in low-income families increased by approximately 10 percent from 2006 to 2011.<sup>3vi</sup>

*"In order to make real progress in the struggle for educational equity, we can and should strive to provide disadvantaged youth with greater access to high quality after-school programs..."*

*-The Campaign for Educational Equity*

A deeper examination of the economy's effect on African-American and Latino households reveals that these communities are currently faced with higher rates of unemployment, poverty, homelessness and food insecurity. This issue brief looks closely at the impact of the recession on African-American and Latino communities and highlights the important role that afterschool and summer programs play in

<sup>1</sup> The unemployment rate decreased from 9.6 percent in 2010 to 7.6 percent in June 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The number of families with at least one member unemployed decreased from 11.5 percent in 2011 to 10.5 percent in 2012.

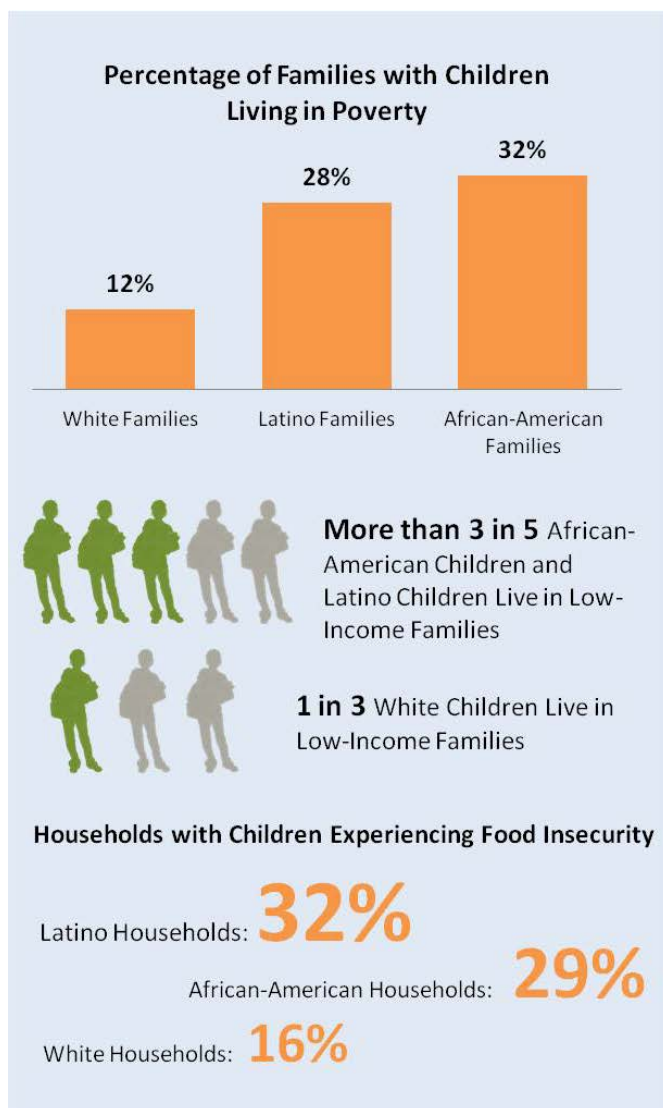
<sup>3</sup> The number of children living in low-income families increased from 40 percent in 2006 to 45 percent in 2011.

supporting youth and families in these communities. For many struggling communities, afterschool and summer programs provide much needed assistance in the form of a safe and supervised space, healthy snacks and meals, and an enriching learning environment. Yet these programs that provide essential supports also face their own challenges to keep up with the demand and keep their doors open.

### The Economy’s Effect on African-American and Latino Families and Communities

Financial difficulties continue to plague families across the country. Children and families, especially African-American and Latino households, are struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

- Although there are a larger number of white families with at least one unemployed family member, African-American and Latino families are much more likely to have a family member who is unemployed. Just less than 10 percent of white families had an unemployed family member (9.5 percent), compared to 16.8 percent of African-American families and 14.5 percent of Latino families.<sup>vii</sup>
- The Institute of Children, Poverty & Homelessness reported in “The American Almanac of Family Homelessness 2013” that African-American and Latino families are both overrepresented in homelessness statistics, where African-American families are highly overrepresented and Latino families are moderately overrepresented.<sup>viii</sup>
- African-American and Latino children are at least twice as likely as white children to live in low-income families, live in poverty and experience food insecurity.
  - While there are more white children in low-income families, African-American and Latino children disproportionately live in low-income families. Sixty-five percent of African-American and Latino youth live in low-income families, compared to 31 percent of white children.<sup>ix</sup>
  - Based on 2010 Census numbers, nearly 1 in 3 African-American families with children lived in poverty and more than 1 in 4 Latino families with children lived in poverty, compared to 12 percent of white families.<sup>x</sup>

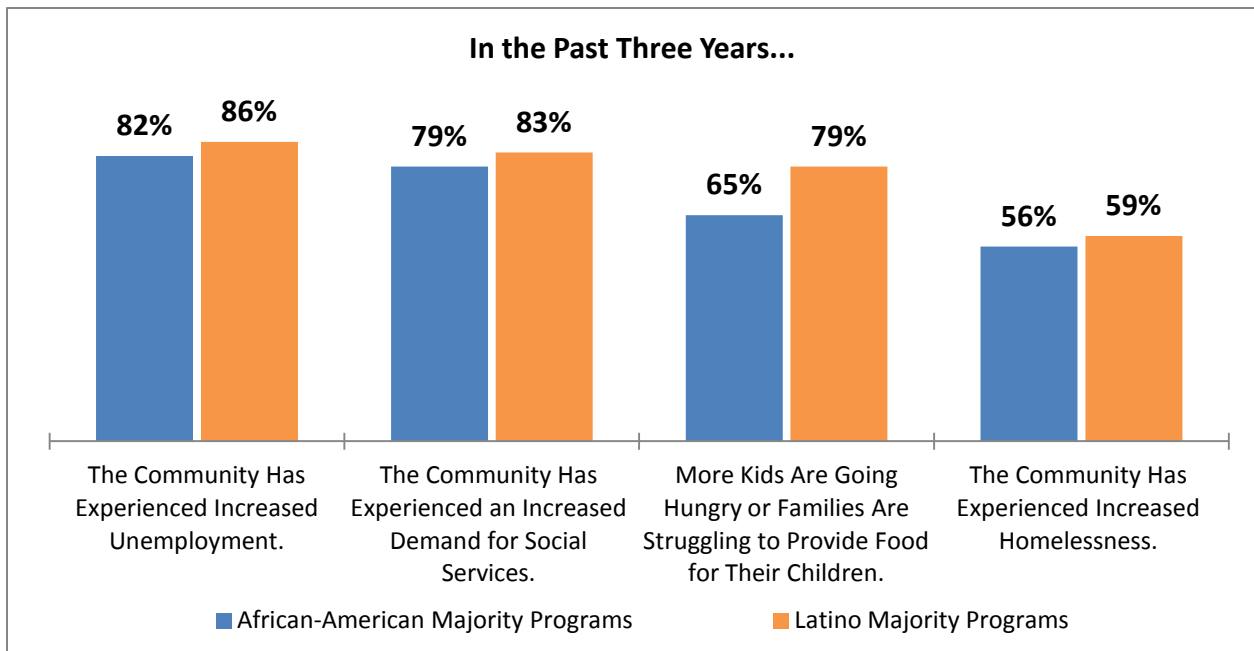


- The percentage of food insecurity among African-American and Latino households with children in 2011 was approximately two times the rate of food insecurity among white households.<sup>xi</sup>

*Data from Afterschool Programs Confirm Families are Struggling*

Economic hardship is also a prevailing theme identified by afterschool program providers serving predominantly African-American and Latino children.<sup>4</sup> In a fall 2012 survey, almost all respondents from both groups stated that the challenging economic environment is affecting their communities (99 percent). Close to 7 in 10 African-American majority programs say that their communities are “very much” affected by the challenging economic environment (68 percent) and 72 percent of Latino majority programs say that their communities are “very much” affected. The survey also found that more than 8 in 10 programs serving predominantly African-American children and 86 percent of programs serving a majority of Latino youth said that in the past three years their community has experienced increased unemployment, and 79 percent of African-American majority programs and 83 percent of Latino majority programs reported that their community has experienced an increased demand for social services.

Mirroring national statistics, afterschool programs also saw families struggling to sustain the basic necessities, such as food and shelter. Two-thirds of programs serving predominantly African-American children and 79 percent of programs serving predominantly Latino children agreed that compared to three years prior there were more kids going hungry or families struggling to provide food for their children. More than half of African-American majority programs (56 percent) and 59 percent of Latino majority programs reported that their community had experienced increased homelessness in the past



<sup>4</sup> Afterschool programs serving predominantly African-American students are defined as programs that have an African-American student population greater than 50 percent. Afterschool programs serving predominantly Latino students are defined as programs that have a Latino student population greater than 50 percent.

three years.

Compounding the struggle to pay for food and shelter, a 2013 report by the Census Bureau found that both African-American and Latino families spent a higher percentage of their income on child care than families overall. In 2011, families with school-age children 5 to 14 years of age spent an average of \$124 a week.<sup>xii</sup> African-American families spent an average of \$112 per week and Latino families spent an average of \$103 a week, slightly less than the overall average. However, both African-American and Latino families spent 10 percent and 9 percent of their income on child care, versus 7 percent for families overall. Furthermore, *America After 3PM* found that 49 percent of African-American parents and 55 percent of Latino parents reported that the economy has impacted how they care for their children after school and 51 percent of African-American parents and 60 percent of Latino parents stated that it has affected their ability to pay for care. These numbers are significantly higher than responses overall, with 41 percent of all parents reporting that the economy has impacted how they care for their children after school and 46 percent stating that it has affected their ability to pay for care.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Poverty’s Effect on Academic Achievement

Numerous studies have linked living in poverty with youth struggling academically and dropping out of school due to the lack of resources available to them—whether it is academic support, strong mentors, financial support or emotional support.<sup>xiv</sup> A 2012 report by the Urban Institute found that children living in poverty are nearly 90 percent more likely to not have a high school degree by the time they are 20 years old.<sup>xv</sup> African-American and Latino children, as discussed above, are more likely to live in poverty, and are also more likely to live in neighborhoods with low-performing schools.<sup>xvi</sup> The core tenet of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act was to ensure that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education by raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap between white children and African-American and Latino children. Although academic gains have been made by African-American and Latino youth to close the gap, more than 10 years later considerable disparities still remain.

The National Center for Education Statistics’ “Digest of Education Statistics 2011” and “Digest of Education Statistics 2012” found that among white 12<sup>th</sup> graders, the average scores in a variety of subjects—including reading, writing, math and civics—were significantly higher than those of African-American and Latino students:

	White 12 <sup>th</sup> Graders	African-American 12 <sup>th</sup> Graders	Latino 12 <sup>th</sup> Graders
Average Reading Score	296	269	274
Average Writing Score	159	130	134
Math Score	314	287	293
Average Civics Score	167	143	140
Average Economics Score	158	127	133

- In reading and writing, the average scores for white students were 27 points and 22 points higher than African-American students and 29 points and 25 points higher than Latino students.<sup>xvii</sup>
- In math, white 12<sup>th</sup> graders scored 27 points higher than African-American students and 21 points higher than Latino high schoolers.<sup>xviii</sup>
- While 87 percent of white 12<sup>th</sup> graders received at or above a “basic achievement”<sup>5</sup> level in civics, just 62 percent of African-American students and 58 percent of Latino students attained the same achievement level.<sup>xix</sup>

The disparity in academic achievement is also visible when looking at dropout rates in America’s schools and GED attainment after dropping out of school:

- In 2011, the status dropout rate<sup>6</sup> for white students was 5 percent. Among African-American students the status dropout rate was 7 percent, and among Latino students the status dropout rate was almost three times higher (14 percent) than white students.<sup>xx</sup>
- A 2010 report by the Pew Research Hispanic Center found that of high school dropouts, less than 1 in 10 Latino dropouts acquired a GED (9 percent) and just 1 in 5 African-American dropouts had a GED (20 percent), compared to close to one-third of white dropouts (29 percent).<sup>xxi</sup>
- The Pew Research Center reported that 11 percent of African Americans 25- to 29-years old and 25 percent of Latino young adults did not complete high school, compared to 5 percent of white young adults.<sup>xxii</sup>

### How Afterschool Programs Can Help

An April 2013 report by the Urban Institute found that over the past 30 years, the wealth inequalities—which take into account factors such as families’ savings, retirement accounts, real estate and homes—between white families and African-American and Latino families has grown from a gap into a chasm.<sup>xxiii</sup> The report calculated that between 1983 and 2010, the difference between the average wealth of white families and that of African-American and Latino families doubled. In 1983, the average wealth of white families was \$230,000 higher than that of African-American and Latino families and by 2010, the average wealth of white families was more than a half-million dollars higher.<sup>7</sup>

*“Given gender and racial/ethnic disparities in high school graduation rates and subsequent economic and health outcomes, it is critical to identify strategies that are effective for recruiting and retaining older minority boys in these programs.”*

*- “Recruiting and Retaining Older African-American and Hispanic Boys in After-School Programs”*

This wealth gap may help to explain the documented divergence in opportunities between upper-income families and lower-income families. Over the last 40 years, upper-income families increased

<sup>5</sup> Basic achievement denotes “partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade.”

<sup>6</sup> The status dropout rate measures “the percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential.”

<sup>7</sup> Inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars.

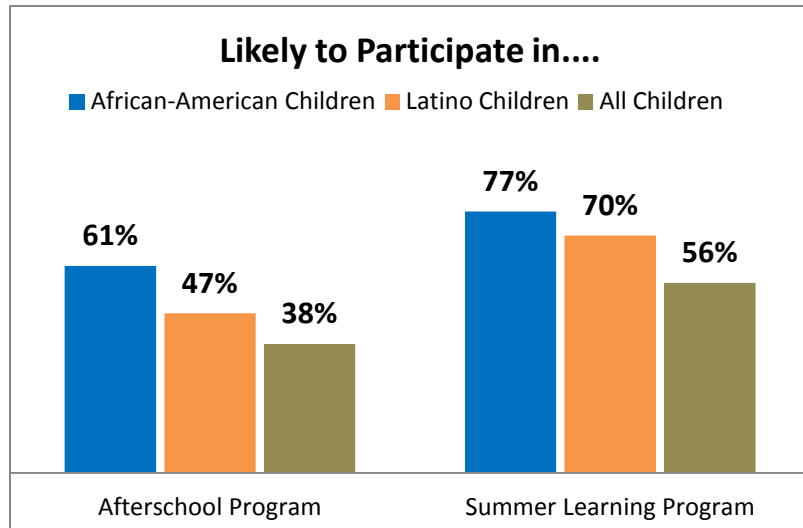
their spending on out-of-school activities by approximately \$5,300 per year, whereas spending by lower-income families increased by only \$480 per year.<sup>xxiv</sup> Given that African-American and Latino families face both wealth and income disparities, they are also more likely to be affected by this widening opportunity gap.

To help close this gap, afterschool and summer learning programs are providing valuable services—such as a safe and supervised environment, academic enrichment opportunities, and healthy snacks and meals—to children and families most in need of support. A 2012 survey of afterschool providers found that on average, almost 7 in 10 youth participating in the programs qualify for federal free or reduced price lunch. Among afterschool programs that serve a majority of African-American children this number jumps to 88 percent, and among programs that serve predominantly Latino children the number is just as high at 86 percent.

The survey also found that 84 percent of afterschool program providers serving a majority of African-American youth reported that their programs have seen an increase in enrollment in the past three years due to greater demand for services for children, such as provision of food or access to technology—23 points higher than afterschool providers overall (61 percent). Almost 7 in 10 afterschool programs serving predominantly Latino children shared that they experienced an increase in enrollment for the same reasons (69 percent).

#### *A Larger Demand for Afterschool Programs*

African-American and Latino parents of children not enrolled in an afterschool program are significantly more likely than the general population to say they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available. More than 4.1 million, or 61 percent, of African-American parents of children who are not enrolled in an afterschool program say that they would enroll their children in quality afterschool programs if programs



were available.<sup>xxv</sup> This is significantly higher than the national average of 38 percent. Almost half, or 4.2 million, of Latino parents of children not currently enrolled in afterschool programs say they would enroll their children if programs were available. The demand for summer learning programs is even higher. More than 3 in 4 African-American kids and 7 in 10 Latino kids would likely enroll in a summer learning program, based on parent interest.

Similarly, in a 2012 survey, afterschool program providers serving predominantly African-American and Latino youth reported that an overwhelming number of children in their community need afterschool care, but aren't enrolled. Eighty-seven percent of African-American majority programs and 92 percent of Latino majority programs revealed that there are children in their community who need afterschool care, but are unable to access it.<sup>xxvi</sup>

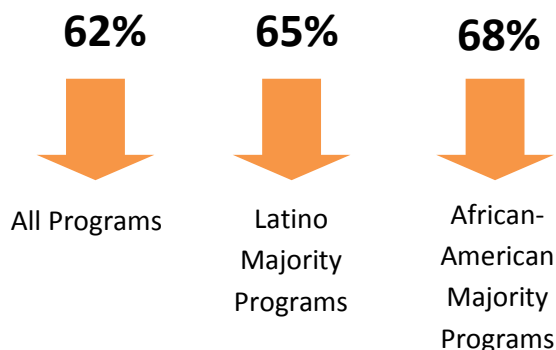
**Despite the Need for Afterschool Programs, Issues of Access Exist**

In spite of the significant need for afterschool programs in African-American and Latino communities, afterschool programs serving these groups are struggling to meet the increasing demands.

*Unable to Meet Demand*

In the Afterschool Alliance's 2012 survey, although a majority of afterschool program providers revealed that their program's budget is inadequate to meet the needs of the students and families in their community, this number is even higher among Latino majority programs and African-American majority programs. Additionally, African-American majority programs and Latino majority programs were more likely to report that their funding is down from three years ago.<sup>xxvii</sup>

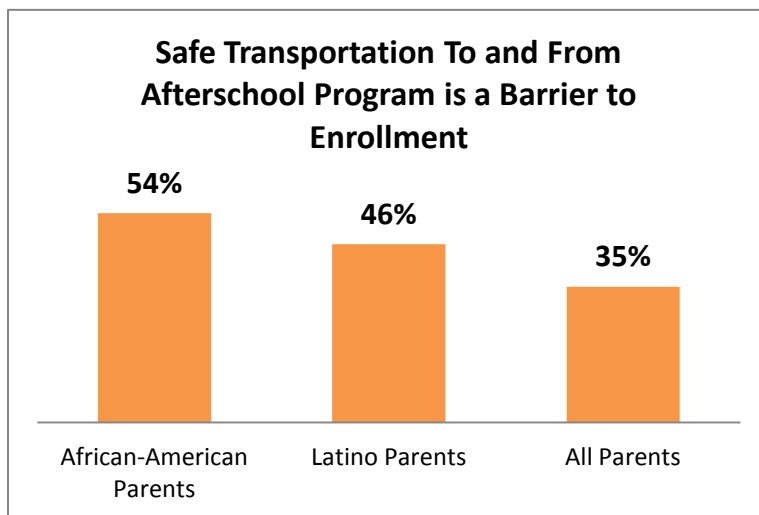
**Funding is Down from Three Years Ago**



In turn, the decrease in funding has directly impacted afterschool programs' ability to meet the needs of the children in their communities. Sixty-five percent of African-American majority programs and 70 percent of Latino majority programs revealed that they are operating at or above maximum capacity. One in 5 afterschool programs serving majority African-American children and 21 percent of afterschool programs serving majority Latino youth said that a loss of funding directly resulted in major cutbacks or forced them to shut down program sites.<sup>xxviii</sup>

*Barriers to Enrollment*

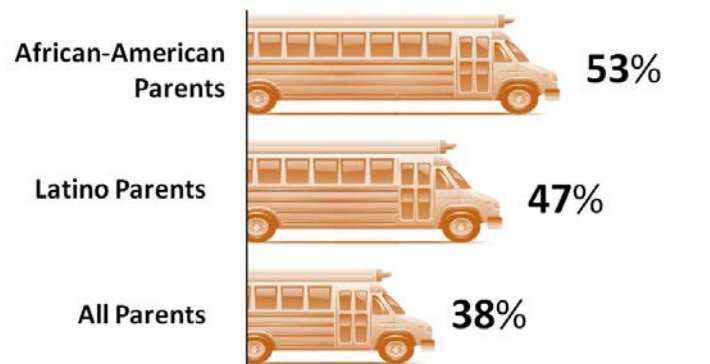
The *America After 3PM* survey found that the predominant obstacles to enrollment for African-American parents after lack of need include lack of safe transportation, preference for alternative activities and cost. After lack of need, the predominant obstacles to enrollment for Latino parents include cost and transportation.





Transportation, safe transport in particular, is a significant hurdle to enrollment in afterschool programs in African-American and Latino communities. African-American parents and Latino parents were both much more likely to cite that their children did not have a safe way to get to and from afterschool programs as a barrier to enrollment than parents overall. Additionally, approximately half of African-American and Latino parents of kids not enrolled in an afterschool program indicated that transportation to and from afterschool programs factored into their decision not to enroll their child, compared to less than two-fifths of parents overall.

**Transportation was a Reason Why Child Was NOT Enrolled in an Afterschool Program**



These findings are similar to the *Uncertain Times 2012* report, where three-fourths of afterschool programs serving predominantly African-American children and 69 percent of programs serving majority Latino youth said that a barrier to participating in afterschool is transportation.

**The Benefits of Afterschool**

Afterschool programs are an essential source of support for African-American and Latino families. While unmet demand is great, African-American and Latino children are much more likely to be enrolled in afterschool programs compared to the national average of 15 percent. Approximately 2.1 million, or 24 percent, of African-American children and close to 2.4 million, or 21 percent, of Latino children are enrolled in afterschool programs.<sup>xxix</sup>

In addition to making sure that kids are kept safe, have supportive mentors they can turn to, and have healthy food to keep their energy and concentration levels up, research shows that students who participate in quality afterschool and summer learning programs see improvement in their academics, are more engaged in learning and are more self-confident in what they can achieve. For instance:

- The Promising Afterschool Programs Study observed approximately 3,000 students, 85 percent of whom were Latino or African-American, from low-income families attending 35 high-quality afterschool programs across the nation. The study determined that those who attended high-quality programs regularly over the course of two years saw gains in their standardized math test scores compared to non-participants. Students regularly participating in the afterschool programs also saw reports of misconduct decrease, and students also shared that they decreased their use of drugs and alcohol.<sup>xxx</sup>
- Evaluations of LA’s BEST, an afterschool program serving primarily Latino and African-American students at close to 200 elementary school sites across Los Angeles, CA, found that students participating in the program had higher aspirations concerning finishing school and going to college, improved their school day attendance and were 20 percent less likely than non-participants to drop out of school.<sup>xxxi</sup> One study reviewing previous evaluations of the program stated that results, “...suggest that LA’s BEST participants continued to have better school

attendance even seven years after they left the program.” Yet another study of the program revealed that children attending LA’s BEST are 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities when compared to non-participants, estimating that for every dollar invested in the program, the city saves \$2.50 in crime-related costs.<sup>xxxii</sup>

- In a study of Project Exploration—an afterschool program that works with 250 Chicago Public School middle- and high-school students each year, 85 percent of who come from low-income African-American and Latino families—researchers reported that 95 percent of Project Exploration participants have graduated or are on track to graduate from high school, nearly double the overall rate of Chicago Public School students. Additionally, researchers found that participants’ self-confidence and verbal, writing and leadership skills increased. Three in 5 former participants of the afterschool program who are enrolled in a four-year college are pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)-related fields.
- An evaluation of Building Educated Leaders for Life’s (BELL) summer learning program aimed at low-income youth in Boston; New York; and Washington, D.C., found that BELL significantly improved their students’ reading skills. Students participating in the program, of which more than 90 percent are African-American or Latino, gained approximately a month’s worth of reading skills more than students not participating in BELL.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

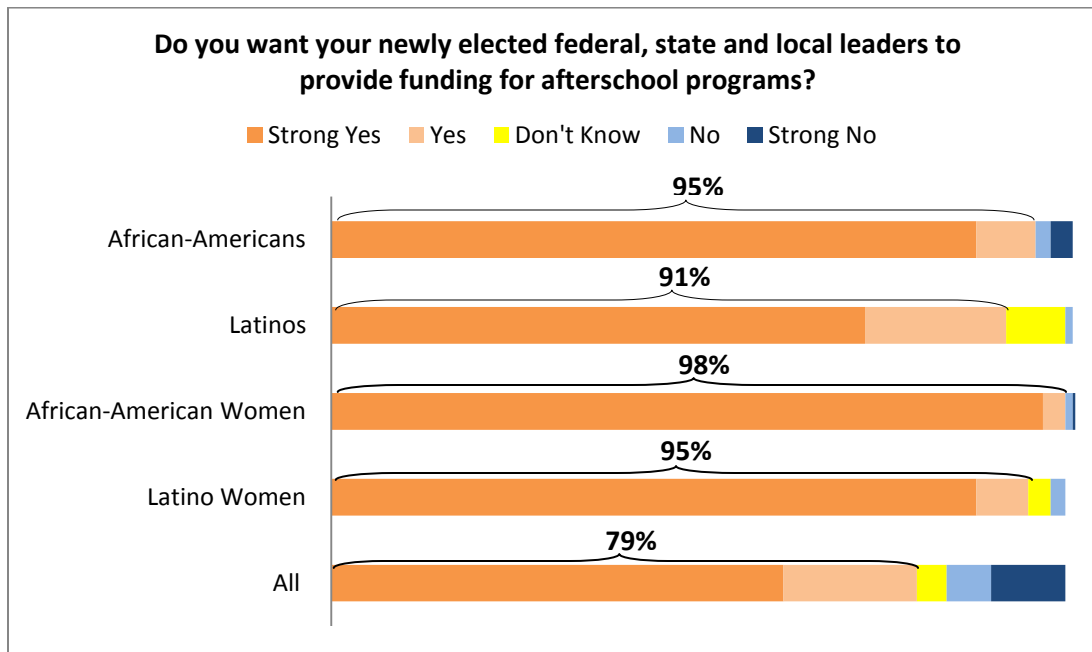
### **Parents and Voters Value Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs**

African-American and Latino parents of children enrolled in afterschool programs also recognize that afterschool programs not only help keep their children safe, but support their academic, social and emotional growth.

- Agreement is close to unanimous among African-American parents and Latino parents that there should be “some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn.” Nine in 10 African-American parents and 93 percent of Latino parents reported satisfaction with the afterschool program their child attends.
- Additionally, African-American and Latino parents overwhelmingly support summer learning programs. Fully 95 percent of African-American parents and 91 percent of Hispanic parents support public funding for summer learning programs.
- African-American and Latino parents with children enrolled in an afterschool program reported higher levels of satisfaction with the academic support offered by afterschool programs—such as the quality of academic programs, homework assistance and tutoring—and voiced above average satisfaction with the life skills and opportunities their children gain from participation, specifically the promotion of workforce skills such as team work and critical thinking, access to technology, access to music art and culture, and opportunities for community service.<sup>xxxiv</sup>
- Overwhelming majorities of African-American and Latino voters believe that afterschool programs are important given that research shows that high quality afterschool programs can lead to increased attendance, improved behavior and improved grades among children who regularly attend afterschool programs. In a 2012 election eve poll, almost all African-Americans (98 percent) and 92 percent of Latinos agreed that afterschool programs are important when presented with the research.

### Support for Funding Afterschool

Given the increased demand for and satisfaction with afterschool programs within African-American and Latino communities, it stands to reason that African-American and Latino voters are also much more likely than voters overall to support funding for afterschool programs. According to a recent poll, 95 percent of African Americans and 91 percent of Latinos support their newly elected federal, state and local leaders providing funding for afterschool programs. Almost all African-American and Latino women agree that elected officials at all levels should provide funding for afterschool programs.



When presented with afterschool programs' financial difficulties, the inability of federal funding for afterschool programs to keep pace with the demand, and the cutting back of services or closing down programs as a result, strong majorities of African-Americans and Latinos, especially African-American and Latino women, respond that they want their leaders at the federal, state and local levels to provide more funding for afterschool programs.

### CONCLUSION

Afterschool and summer learning programs are crucial allies in our country's never-ending pursuit to ensure our children are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in school, careers and life. These programs can provide much needed support as school time becomes increasingly stretched thin with the pressures of standardized testing, as families—especially African-American and Latino families—feel the strain of providing the basic necessities for their children and as communities deal with a challenging economic environment.

A 2013 report by the Equity and Excellence Commission, a body created by Congressional mandate to examine and recommend ways to address the disparities in educational opportunities that lead to the achievement gap between white children and African-American and Latino children, opens with the

statement, “...America’s K-12 education system, taken as a whole, fails our nation and too many of our children. Our system does not distribute opportunity equitably. Our leaders decry but tolerate disparities in student outcomes that are not only unfair, but socially and economically dangerous.”<sup>xxxv</sup> This troubling and disheartening finding mirrors numerous studies and data that have also shown that issues of racial and ethnic equity extend to family income, employment and family wealth, which in turn contribute to higher rates of food insecurity, homelessness and the ever-growing opportunity gap.

Funding for afterschool and summer learning programs is a sound investment that helps address this multitude of issues. In African-American and Latino communities, afterschool and summer programs can help combat these disparities by:

- Ensuring children have access to academically enriching activities, helping close the opportunity gap between higher-income and lower-income families;
- Tackling the achievement gap between white students and African-American and Latino students by increasing attendance, homework completion and engagement in school and ultimately raising graduation rates and test scores;
- Combating food insecurity among children by providing nutritious snacks and meals, which are especially important during the summer months when schools are out of session; and
- Providing working parents with peace of mind knowing that their child is in a safe and supervised space during the out-of-school hours.

At a time when afterschool programs serving communities that are in most need of help are struggling to keep pace with demand, greater investments at the federal, state and local levels are essential to make certain all children have access to the range of benefits afterschool and summer learning programs provide and are better equipped to succeed in school and life.

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<sup>i</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *America After 3PM*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3_Full_Report.pdf).

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