News Release
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Demand for Afterschool Programs in California Is Enormous, New Household Survey Finds

California Parents Give Programs Their Children Attend High Marks, But Barriers Remain for Families Trying to Access Programs

Washington, D.C. – *America After 3PM, a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and released today,* finds that California is among the top states in terms of afterschool participation, and parents in the state are highly satisfied with the programs available to them. Eighty-three percent of California parents with a child in an afterschool program rate it as excellent or very good, and there is overwhelming support among California parents for public funding for these programs. While California invests heavily in afterschool programs, known as Expanded Learning Opportunities, the new survey finds that barriers continue to create challenges for families trying to access these programs.

Overall in California, 9 in 10 parents favor public funding for afterschool opportunities. Large majorities of parents in the state say these programs keep kids safe, build their social skills and responsible decision making, and help parents keep their jobs and boost their productivity at work.

Conducted by Edge Research, the fifth edition of *America After 3PM* is based on a survey of 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children who live in their households, including in-depth interviews with 1,921 in California. The study examines 20 years of data and is the first afterschool household survey conducted post-pandemic. It finds that nationally, the parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs but just 7 million children are enrolled, meaning three in four (77%) students whose parents want afterschool programs for them are being left behind. Children in low- and middle-income families are more likely to be without the afterschool programs their parents want (84% and 73%, respectively) than children in high-income families (59%). California funding prioritizes low to no cost programs for low-income families.

“Parents recognize that programs in California are doing outstanding work,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “In California and across the country, afterschool programs are giving students a safe place to go after the school day ends, boosting their academic achievement, helping address the youth mental health and chronic absenteeism crises, providing alternatives to screen time, giving working parents peace of mind, and much more. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program but sadly, this study shows we’re far from reaching that goal. We need greater support from federal, state, and local governments, businesses, and philanthropy to change that.”

"We are thankful that California leaders understand the importance of access to before school, after school, and summer learning programs as evidenced by over $5.3 billion in state investment into Expanded Learning systems. This scale of investment has prompted explorations statewide on how such a system is part of a broader education, health, and human services ecosystem" said Jeff Davis, Executive Director of the California AfterSchool Network. "We are proud that California is a Top Ten state for participation and parent recognition. However, this study highlights that there is still unmet demand for programs and barriers for families to access existing programs. Next Thursday, on October 23, we will be joining programs across California to participate in *Lights On Afterschool*, the national rally for afterschool programs. We won't stop working until afterschool programs are accessible to all students in our state."

Overall, demand for afterschool programs is highest in the District of Columbia, followed by New York, Massachusetts, California, and Florida. Across the nation, the highest percentages of unmet demand for afterschool programs are in the District of Columbia (68%), Massachusetts (64%), New York (63%), Maine (58%), and Alaska (57%). Afterschool program participation is highest in the District of Columbia (38%), Hawaii (23%), California (19%), New York (19%), and Connecticut (18%).

California's statewide investment in afterschool is making a difference in terms of access to programs for children and families. Compared to the 2020 data, the 2025 *America After 3PM* findings show the state is making gains in several areas:

Leading the nation in participation

- California ranks third in the nation for the percentage of young people participating in afterschool programs, trailing only the District of Columbia and Hawaii.
- Participation among elementary school age students, who are the focus of the statewide investment, increased from 2020 to 2025, while participation among middle school and high school students decreased.

Fewer families cite cost as a barrier to participation in California

- Compared to the national average, fewer California parents report cost is a barrier to participation; 56% nationally compared to 48% in California

Barriers to participation in the state are trending downward compared to 2020, whereas barriers nationally remain high

- Cost as a barrier is down 8 percentage points among California parents
- Location as a barrier is down 8 percentage points among California parents
- Lack of available programs is down 5 percentage points among California parents

In other respects, California results largely mirror national *America After 3PM* findings, which include:

Satisfaction among parents with students in afterschool programs is high.

- Nearly all parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program (95%) and rate the quality of the program as excellent, very good, or good (97%).
- Most parents are happy with the opportunities for reading or writing and time to experience the outdoors (both 77%), healthy snacks and meals (75%), and homework help (72%) their child's program provides; and are satisfied the program helps their child develop social skills (90%);

work on communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership (82%); learn responsible decision-making (82%); and build confidence (86%).

Parents recognize the benefits for children: safety, skills, school engagement, and well-being.

- The percentage of parents who agree that afterschool programs keep kids safe and out of trouble grew from 66% in 2014 to 78% now.
- More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide opportunities to learn life skills, like interacting with peers and responsible decision making (85%).
- Three-quarters of parents (75%) agree afterschool programs help children become more excited about learning and improve their attendance.

Parents say afterschool programs support working families.

- 85% say programs provide working parents with peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised, and 84% agree these programs allow them to keep their jobs or work more hours.
- 88% of parents with a child in an afterschool program say that it boosts their productivity and 92% say they are less stressed knowing their child is safe.

Parents want more public funding for afterschool programs.

- 89% of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. This is a steady increase from 83% in 2009, 84% in 2014, and 87% in 2020.
- Support is the highest among Black families (92%), families in urban communities (92%), households where both parents work (91%), and working moms (90%).

Later this year, the Afterschool Alliance will release results of an oversample of parents in Los Angeles County, measuring their experience with, and views toward, afterschool.

The national and California *America After 3PM 2025* findings and accompanying data are available at aa3pm.co. This fifth edition of *America After 3PM* is based on a survey conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. Data was collected between January 31 and April 21, 2025. The margin of error for the child- and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent. Previous *America After 3PM* surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020.

America After 3PM 2025 is made possible through the Afterschool Alliance's partnership with the New York Life Foundation.

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