



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **New Study: STEM Learning Is Widespread in Kent County Afterschool Programs — But More Than 58,000 Children Are Missing Out**

GRAND RAPIDS, MI — Afterschool programs are leading the way in educating the next generation in the subjects the jobs of the future will require. Eighty-eight percent of parents of Kent County afterschool students now say their child's afterschool program offers STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning. More than half of those whose child's program offers STEM (56%) report their child engages in STEM learning after school at least twice per week.

But more than four in five Kent County children whose parents want afterschool programs for them (58,366 children) are not enrolled.

Those are among the findings in [Afterschool STEM Takes Off In Kent County](#), a household survey commissioned by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) and released today by the [Michigan Afterschool Partnership](#). Conducted by Edge Research, it is based on survey responses from 30,515 U.S. households, with 279 households with 475 children in Kent County screened.

Afterschool programs in Kent County are educating students on a range of STEM topics, according to parents, with 88% saying their child's afterschool program offers engagement in science, 85% math, 78% engineering, 74% tech, and 70% computer science. Approximately four in five Kent County parents say afterschool programs help children gain skills and interest in STEM.

"In Kent County and across the country, parents value and prioritize STEM learning in afterschool, and afterschool programs have stepped up to provide it," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool is an ideal place for STEM education. It offers students the chance to explore their interests, engage with peers in hands-on, team-based learning, and see up close how STEM can help solve problems facing our communities and our country. We're thrilled with the tremendous uptick in afterschool STEM learning in Kent County, throughout Michigan, and nationwide. We need to continue the trajectory and, most of all, make afterschool programs available to many more students. As long as millions of children whose parents want afterschool programs for them are missing out, we have more work to do."

"Our afterschool programs are doing vitally important work to educate the next generation about STEM and helping students apply what they learn in real-life settings," said Erin Skene-Pratt, executive director of the Michigan Afterschool Partnership. "That, in turn, can help them imagine themselves in STEM-related careers. But every child in Kent County deserves access to an afterschool program, and there are

still gaps for too many young people. The new \$135 million appropriation in our state's FY27 budget will help, and helps us see how we can continue increasing support until we have enough programs to ensure that no child is missing out."

"Afterschool programs create space for exploration, creativity, and hands-on learning beyond the classroom, and this study shows that STEM learning has become an important part of that experience. Now we need to make sure those opportunities to build confidence and curiosity reach more children in Kent County," said Trudy Ngo-Brown, Director of Learning and Grantmaking at the Steelcase Foundation, which supported the study.

Nationally, the Afterschool Alliance study found that 92% of parents of afterschool students now say their child's program offers STEM learning – up from 69% in 2014. But there are disparities in afterschool access to STEM, with children in rural communities and low-income families lagging behind.

In most respects, the Kent County findings mirror the national survey findings, which also include:

- **Increases in STEM in afterschool from 2014 to 2025 were seen in every state.** The biggest increases were in Arizona, Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Washington State, Wisconsin and Wyoming.
- **Children in families with low incomes are less likely to have multiple exposures to STEM in afterschool each week than those whose families have higher incomes.** Less than half of parents with low incomes (48%) say their child engages in STEM in afterschool multiple times per week, compared to 56% of parents with middle incomes and 60% of parents with high incomes.
- **Rural parents report fewer computer science and technology opportunities in afterschool.** Just 70% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report that the program offers computer science, compared to 88% of urban parents. Similarly, just 66% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report that the program offers technology education, compared to 86% of urban parents.
- **Two in three parents with children in afterschool programs (65%) value STEM extremely or somewhat when selecting a program – but there are differences by race.** Native American parents (73%), Black and Hispanic parents (70%), and Asian American parents (68%) place greater importance on STEM in afterschool than White families (62%).
- **Parents of boys and girls report similar levels of access to STEM in their child's afterschool program, but parents of girls prioritize computer science, technology, and engineering less than parents of boys.** Parents today report that 93% of male children and 91% of females have STEM opportunities in afterschool. But there are differences in how much parents of boys and girls prioritize different STEM subjects, with 63% of boy parents placing greater importance on computer science, technology, and engineering, compared to just 53%, 56%, and 58% respectively, of girl parents.

- **Parents prioritize STEM, and specifically computer science, more as their children age.** Just over half of parents of elementary schoolers (53%) say computer science offerings are important when they choose an afterschool program for their child, compared to 68% of parents of high schoolers.

*Afterschool STEM Takes Off in Kent County* is made possible with support from the Steelcase Foundation. Findings from Kent County are [here](#) and Michigan statewide findings [are here](#). Kent County data were collected between January 31 and June 18, 2025.

The *America After 3PM 2025* study is based on a survey of 30,515 U.S. parents or guardians with a school-aged child living in their household. It was conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. The margin of error for the national study is +/- <1%. Previous *America After 3PM* surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. It is based on research funded by Overdeck Family 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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

*The Steelcase Foundation invests in community initiatives that strengthen public education, recognize the role family well-being plays in students flourishing, and advance change across systems in Kent County. Learn more about the Steelcase Foundation and its grantmaking efforts at [steelcasefoundation.org](http://steelcasefoundation.org).*

*The Michigan Afterschool Partnership champions statewide access to quality and equitable Out-of-School Time programs to ensure that all children and youth succeed.*