



News Release

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STEM Is Our Future – and Afterschool Programs Are Leading the Way

*New Study Finds Huge Leap in Afterschool Programs Providing STEM Education,
But Students in Rural Communities and Low-Income Families Lag Behind;
More Computer Science & Tech Education Needed in Afterschool*

Washington, D.C. – Many more parents than ever before report there are STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning opportunities in their child’s afterschool program. Ninety-two percent of parents of afterschool students now say their child’s program offers STEM learning – a significant increase from a decade ago. But there are disparities in afterschool access to STEM based on family income and community type, and more than three in four children and youth whose parents want afterschool programs for them are not enrolled at all.

[*Afterschool STEM Takes Off*](#), released today by the Afterschool Alliance, finds a dramatic jump in parents reporting their children engage with STEM in their afterschool programs, from 69% in 2014, to 73% in 2020, to 92% – or 6.4 million students – today. A majority of families today (54%) report their children engage with STEM in afterschool at least two or three times per week, but those with low incomes report significantly less frequency than parents with higher incomes. The study is based on a survey of 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children who live in their households, conducted by Edge Research.

It also finds that rural families face barriers to accessing STEM in afterschool, with 88% of rural families reporting that STEM activities are available in their child’s afterschool program, compared to 96% of urban parents. Rural parents report much less tech and computer science in afterschool programs than urban parents, and just 39% of rural parents report that their child participates in afterschool STEM activities at least two or three times per week, compared to 67% of parents in urban communities.

“In our world today, STEM literacy is no longer optional. It’s the foundation of nearly every aspect of our economy and our world, and we’re counting on the next generation to ensure AI and other innovations are used responsibly and in ways that improve our lives,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Afterschool is an optimal setting for STEM education because it creates opportunities for students to explore their interests and see the relevance of STEM to solve real-world problems through hands-on, team-based engagement outside the constraints of the school day. We are thrilled with the tremendous uptick in afterschool STEM learning. An immense amount of work went into making that happen, and the field deserves enormous credit. We need to continue the progress and, most of all, ensure that millions more children and youth can access afterschool programs and the STEM learning opportunities they provide. As long as 22.6 million students whose parents want afterschool programs for them are missing out, we have urgent unfinished business.”

The study, part of the *America After 3PM* series of household surveys, finds that more parents report their child is getting math (87%) and science (85%) instruction in afterschool than engineering (81%), computer science or technology (both 77%). Four in five parents with a child in an afterschool program that offers STEM (82%) agree the program helps their children gain STEM skills and interest. Three in five (61%) report satisfaction with the STEM offerings in their child's afterschool program.

"Afterschool and summer programs play a pivotal role in building the agency, cognitive skills, and meaningful connections students need to thrive in our increasingly complex world," said Emma Banay, Senior Portfolio Manager, Future Readiness at Overdeck Family Foundation. "This study underscores the remarkable work out-of-school time programs are doing to help students discover the joy in learning while preparing them to succeed now and into the future. Increasing access to these types of learning opportunities is essential to respond to overwhelming parent demand and build the next generation of critical thinkers and engaged citizens."

Among the other findings:

- **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. Only the District of Columbia saw a very small drop.
- **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 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 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.

- **STEM is less of a priority for parents when choosing summer programs than afterschool programs.** Low-income parents prioritize STEM in summer programs more than higher-income parents. Nearly all parents with a child in a summer STEM camp (97%) are satisfied with the STEM experience.
- **Parents who homeschool their children report higher afterschool STEM participation, importance, and satisfaction than parents of children in public or private school.** Eighty-four percent of parents who homeschool their children prioritize STEM when selecting an afterschool program, compared to 64% of parents of children in public school and 69% of parents of children in private school.

The new study offers recommendations, including increased funding to meet the demand for afterschool and summer programs. Other recommendations include:

- **Ensure afterschool programs are included as partners in legislation focused on education and training in emerging STEM fields.**
- **Increase targeted investments in computer science, technology, and engineering offerings in afterschool programs,** including through STEM-subject-specific legislation targeting those subjects and by providing funding for professional development for program staff and partnerships with technical experts and industries.
- **Increase investment in afterschool and summer programs serving rural communities,** expand STEM-specific funding for rural programs, and support greater virtual, hybrid, and mobile programming that can reach families in communities where in-person STEM infrastructure is limited or absent.
- **Invest in, facilitate, and incentivize partnerships rooted in real-world contexts to better serve older youth.**
- **Help afterschool programs articulate the connection between STEM content and the skills parents value most, including durable skills development.**
- **Direct summer funding to the communities where demand for STEM most outpaces access to it.**

This is the Afterschool Alliance's fifth national household survey. It included 30,515 U.S. parents or guardians with a school-aged child living in their household, with at least 200 interviews completed in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Conducted in English and Spanish, it used a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. Data were collected from January 31 to April 21, 2025. The margin of error for the child- and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent. Previous *America After 3PM* household surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020.

The *America After 3PM* STEM findings are based on research funded by Overdeck Family Foundation.

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About the Afterschool Alliance

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.

About Overdeck Family Foundation

Founded in 2011, Overdeck Family Foundation aims to provide all children the opportunity to unlock their potential. The Foundation partners with education organizations dedicated to helping more children enter school ready to thrive, succeed in literacy and math, and develop the skills and agency to shape their futures. To learn more, visit <https://overdeck.org/>.