

NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Lisa Lederer
202/371-1999

Just 25 Percent of U.S. Children Attend Summer Learning Programs, According to “America After 3PM, Special Report on Summer”

Survey of 30,000 Households Finds that the Parents of an Estimated 24 Million Children Say They Are Interested in Enrolling Their Children in Summer Learning Programs

Washington, DC – For millions of children in America, when schools close for the summer, safe and enriching learning environments are out of reach, replaced by boredom, lost opportunities and risk. New analysis of data from the *America After 3PM* study measures the extent of this problem, concluding that three-quarters of America’s schoolchildren do not participate in summer learning programs – safe, structured programs that provide a variety of activities designed to encourage learning and development in the summer months. Yet, 56 percent of kids (an estimated 24 million) who are not participating in summer learning programs, would likely enroll in a program, based on parent interest.

America After 3PM is a survey of nearly 30,000 households across the United States, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and JCPenney Afterschool in 2009. The summer learning report, released today, is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation. It finds that 43 percent of the estimated 14.3 million children who attend summer learning programs qualify for free or reduced price lunches. But the unmet demand also is great for low-income children, many of whom are unsupervised during the summer months. Nearly half of kids whose parents say they are interested in enrolling them in summer learning programs (46 percent) qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

“These findings are sobering, especially because we know that inequities in summer learning are a major contributor to the achievement gap between high- and low-income students,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “When we leave children unsupervised during the summer, we miss critical opportunities to improve their academic achievement and we take away crucial supports like nutritious meals and snacks. By not creating and funding enough summer learning programs, we are missing the chance to engage and educate millions of students during the summer, and instead are leaving them unsupervised and at risk.”

Grant urged lawmakers to fund 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which support afterschool and summer programs. Other findings from the new study:

- Thirty-five percent of African-American, 29 percent of Hispanic and 27 percent of low-income children attended summer learning programs in 2008, compared to the national average of 25 percent.
- Yet more than three in four African-American kids (77 percent) and at least two in three Hispanic (70 percent) and low-income (67 percent) kids would likely enroll in a summer learning program, based on parent interest.
- Eight in ten parents (83 percent) support public funding for summer learning programs.
- Fully 95 percent of African-American, 91 percent of Hispanic and 90 percent of low-income parents support public funding for summer learning programs.

“If we are to overcome the achievement gap, we must find ways to increase opportunities for high-quality summer learning and encourage more children to participate in them,” said Nancy Devine, director of communities at The Wallace Foundation.

“The long summer break is a precarious time when many low-income children fall behind academically and lose the nutritious meals, supervision, and structure that school provides,” said Ron Fairchild, chief executive officer of the National Summer Learning Association. “This survey shows just how great the demand is for meaningful summer activities and that too many children are left wanting for quality programs – the very children who could benefit most if given the opportunity. Policymakers and educators who are cutting summer programs should pay attention to these findings.” The National Summer Learning Association is leading a new national initiative called A New Vision for Summer School, which seeks to replace remedial summer school with comprehensive and engaging programs.

The new report provides data on the percent of children who participate in summer learning programs in each state, as well as the percent of children who do not participate but whose parents are interested in enrolling them. It also measures support for public funding of summer learning programs in each state.

The new report and state data are available online at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

America After 3PM Special Report on Summer is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation. All data cited in the report are from the 2009 *America After 3PM* research, which was sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool.

Between March and May 2009, 29,754 parents/guardians responded to survey questions about their after school and summer child care arrangements during the summer of 2008 and the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. According to U. S. Census data from 2007, the total school-age population is 57.3 million, which is the foundation for the national projections in *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer*.

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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.*

***The Wallace Foundation** is an independent, national foundation dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. The Foundation maintains an online library of lessons at www.wallacefoundation.org about what it has learned, including knowledge from its current efforts aimed at: strengthening educational leadership to improve student achievement; enhancing out-of-school-time learning opportunities including summer learning; and building appreciation and demand for the arts.*