



NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Lisa Lederer
202/371-1999

Afterschool Alliance Lauds New Public Agenda Study, Renews Call for Afterschool for All by the Year 2010

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today praised a new study which finds that American youth overwhelmingly agree that structured afterschool activities play a “crucial and positive role in their lives.” Eighty-five percent of teens said that peers who participate in afterschool activities are better off than those who do not. Yet, despite the popularity of afterschool activities, the survey finds a shortage. While 57 percent of middle and high school students participate in some kind of non-school activity nearly each day, almost three in ten are home alone at least three days a week. The study also finds that low-income and minority families in particular have trouble finding quality afterschool programs.

All Work and No Play: Listening to What Kids and Parents Really Want from Out-of-School Time was commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, a national supporter of expanded learning and enrichment opportunities, to bolster the voices of parents and children in the national debate on afterschool and out-of-school time. The survey was conducted by the nonpartisan opinion research organization Public Agenda.

“This new study confirms what the Afterschool Alliance found this spring in its household survey, *America After 3 PM*, which was funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund,” said Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson. “The majority of students and parents want afterschool activities, and will participate if programs are available. But there is a tremendous unmet need for afterschool programs in this nation today.”

In the new Public Agenda study, parents and youth said they want more than academic help from afterschool programs. Parents expressed a desire for activities that, rather than simply extending the school day, help youth develop values and cultivate extracurricular interests. “This shows once again that applying an academics-only evaluation standard to afterschool programs is short-sighted and counterproductive,” Samelson said. “The best afterschool programs incorporate learning and academics into activities that are fun for students, rather than just preparing them to take tests.”

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The *No Child Left Behind Act* calls for \$2 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers federal afterschool initiative in Fiscal Year 2005, which would give 2.8 million children access to federally funded afterschool programs next year. President Bush and Congress seem likely to provide just half that – \$1 billion – next year. “We need to do better in terms of supporting the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families,” Samelson said. “We must make afterschool available to all families by the year 2010.”

The new Public Agenda report is available at www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/all_work_no_play.pdf.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The Wallace Foundation is an independent, national private foundation established by DeWitt and Lila Acheson Wallace, the founders of The Reader’s Digest Association. The Wallace Foundation’s mission is to enable institutions to expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. It does this by supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices. To achieve this mission, The Wallace Foundation has three objectives: strengthen education leadership to improve student achievement; improve after-school learning opportunities; and expand participation in arts and culture. For more information and research on education leadership, visit www.wallacefoundation.org.

Public Agenda is a nonprofit organization dedicated to nonpartisan public policy research. Founded in 1975 by former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Daniel Yankelovich, the social scientist and author, Public Agenda is well respected for its influential public opinion surveys and balanced citizen education materials. Its mission is to inject the public’s voice into crucial policy debates. Public Agenda seeks to inform leaders about the public’s views and to engage citizens in discussing complex policy issues. More information is available at www.publicagenda.org

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