



News Release
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New Surveys of Parents and Out-of-School-Time Providers Find Growing Disparities in Access to Afterschool, Summer Programs, as COVID-19 Reshapes Education Landscape

Washington, DC – Following a season during which summer learning programs affected by the pandemic struggled to meet demand for their services, a large majority of afterschool programs that are open this fall report facing significant barriers as they strain to meet the needs of the students and families they have long supported. Among the challenges: Students who stand to benefit the most from these programs are now less likely than others to be able to access them. Those are key results from national surveys of parents and of afterschool providers, conducted by Edge Research and released today by the Afterschool Alliance and the National Summer Learning Association.

The surveys find that both programs and parents are challenged by virtual learning and evolving school schedules; programs are limited by budgets that are inadequate to address new safety protocols and students' emerging needs; and students from low-income families are now much less likely than others to have access to out-of-school-time programs. Programs serving mostly children from higher-income families are almost twice as likely as those serving mostly children from low-income families to report being physically open, and among those that are physically open, those serving mostly children from higher-income families are more likely to be open to all children, including children of non-essential workers, than programs serving mostly children from low-income families.

“There are flashing red lights in these surveys with regard to the sustainability of the programs that families rely on, and the ability of these programs to serve the students who need them the most,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “That’s why the out-of-school-time community continues to urge the U.S. Department of Education to expedite its waiver process to provide flexibility to local programs funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, so they can support students during all the hours schools are now closed – something that should have happened months ago. And it’s why we’re calling on the Senate to join the House of Representatives in passing the 21st CCLC Coronavirus Relief Act, and asking both chambers to provide a onetime \$6.2 billion boost in 21st CCLC funding to ensure out-of-school-time programs can do more to help during this difficult time. Students and families need and deserve this support.”

“When the history books are written for this pandemic, our nation will see the resiliency and resolve of out-of-school-time leaders who have risen to the occasion to serve our most vulnerable young people and families. The survey findings reaffirm that summer and afterschool programs are essential to America’s recovery and that our investment in their very existence will ensure that these critical anchors

in the community continue to help all learners grow stronger, heal, and thrive beyond this crisis,” said Aaron P. Dworkin, CEO, National Summer Learning Association.

Among other findings from the new surveys:

- Seven in ten providers (69%) are concerned that children in their community who needed summer programming were not able to access it. Overall, only 5 percent of summer programs report that they were completely closed. Half (49%) were physically open in some capacity, 34 percent offered virtual programming only, and 24 percent were closed but delivering or offering new services for students and families. Overall, summer programs averaged serving about half as many children in 2020 as they did in 2019 due to social distancing guidelines, reduced student-to-staff ratios, and other factors.
- Programs funded by 21st CCLC, which are mandated to serve lower-income communities, were less likely to report being physically open in some capacity this summer than non-21st CCLC-funded programs (38% vs. 55%). This may be in part because 21st CCLC-funded programs are more likely to be located in a public school than other programs, and many schools were closed over the summer.
- A plurality of parents express concern about being able to juggle working remotely and monitoring their child’s distance learning (48%). Levels of concern are higher among parents living in urban communities and parents of elementary schoolers (59% and 56%, respectively).
- More than half of program providers said they plan to serve students either in person (23%) or in person *and* virtually (39%) this fall. Roughly 1 in 4 (27%) report that they will provide virtual services only.
- Three in four program providers are concerned about meeting the needs of families who will need afterschool programs for longer periods of time due to schools’ mix of virtual and in-person teaching, 65 percent are concerned about maintaining adequate staff through health concerns and new procedures, and 61 percent are concerned about availability of physical space to offer programming while meeting public health procedures.
- Programs serving mostly children from higher-income families are almost twice as likely as programs serving mostly children from low-income families to report being physically open (73% vs 38%). Among programs that are physically open, those serving mostly children from higher-income families are also much more likely to be open to all children, which includes children of essential and non-essential workers, than programs serving children from low-income families (95% vs 73%).
- Programs serving mostly higher-income students are more likely than programs serving mostly low-income students to report planning to serve students in person or employ a hybrid model during the fall (73% vs. 57%), with programs serving mostly higher-income students close to three times as likely to be planning to provide in-person services only (44% vs. 15%).
- Seventy-six percent of program providers serving mostly low-income students are concerned they are facing food insecurity. Low-income parents are more likely to be very concerned about technology and internet access so their child can participate in distance learning than higher-income parents (50% vs. 40%).

- Four in five afterschool program providers (81%) report concern about loss of funding to their program this year, with 39% “extremely” concerned. Fully 89 percent are concerned about the long-term funding and the future of their program, with one in four expressing extreme concern their program will close permanently. Seven in ten (71%) worry about having to lay off or furlough staff in coming months.
- Three in four parents agree that the pandemic has made them appreciate school teachers and afterschool program providers more than ever, with working parents more likely to agree. An overwhelming majority of parents favor of public funding for afterschool opportunities (84%) and summer learning opportunities (84%).

Alicia Copeland, Youth Programs Director, Parks & People Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland and Kujanga (KJ) Jackson, Executive Director of TOUCH/TheZone in Tulsa, Oklahoma, also spoke at the briefing to release the survey results.

To view the briefing on the survey results, go here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_S7c-7za1Q2m6seaE1bLrng.

A brief with the survey results is here: <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-COVID-19-Wave-2-Brief.pdf>. A PowerPoint with key findings is here:

<http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Survey-results-media-briefing-wave-2-and-parent-survey.pdf>.

The parent survey data is from a nationally representative survey of 1,071 parents of school-aged children, conducted online by Edge Research from August 4 - 18, 2020. The provider survey data is based on an online survey of afterschool and summer providers, conducted by Edge Research, with data collected July 20 - August 31, 2020; 1,047 program providers representing more than 7,600 program sites in 49 states and the District of Columbia participated.

In this study, programs serving majority/mostly low-income families are defined as those for which more than 75 percent of children in the program qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program; and programs serving mostly/majority higher-income families are defined as those for which fewer than 50 percent of children in the program qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program.

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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.

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing achievement and opportunity gaps by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in summer learning, delivers community capacity-building offerings and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org