



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Two in Five Nebraska Children Whose Parents Want Structured Summer Learning Programs for Them Are Missing Out, Most Often Due to Cost**

*Parents of Students Who Are Enrolled Give Programs High Marks*

OMAHA — The summer struggle is daunting for working families in Omaha and throughout Nebraska. Parents want affordable summer programs that keep their children safe, offer activities that are fun and educational, with the chance to experience the outdoors, and staff who are knowledgeable and caring. But there is a vast unmet need throughout the state for these programs, which include enrichment or sports programs, summer camps or schools, and jobs or internships.

The parents of 65,856 children in Greater Nebraska, excluding Omaha, want summer programs for them, but 27,218 of those children are missing out. The parents of 46,045 Omaha children want summer programs for them, but 17,449 of those children are missing out.

The barriers that most often prevent enrollment in Omaha and statewide are cost, issues with location or transportation, difficulty finding information on summer programs, and programs not being available in their communities.

Those are among the findings in [The Summer Struggle for Greater Nebraska Families](#) and [The Summer Struggle for Omaha Families](#), both based on a household survey commissioned by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). They were released today by [Collective for Youth](#) and [Beyond School Bells](#). Conducted by Edge Research, the survey included 30,515 U.S. households, with 428 Greater Nebraska households with 560 children – plus 444 Omaha households with 670 children – screened.

*The Summer Struggle* finds that many families face barriers to accessing summer programs, but parents whose children are attending give them high marks. Ninety-five percent of Omaha parents whose child is enrolled report being satisfied with the summer program their child attends, as do 90% of Greater Nebraska parents with a child enrolled. More than 90% of parents in both jurisdictions (94% in Omaha, 91% in Greater Nebraska) favor public funding for summer learning opportunities.

“Finding affordable summer programs for their children is a major challenge for too many families in Omaha and throughout Nebraska,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Parents need to stay in their jobs to provide for their families, but when they can’t find affordable summer programs, their children may be unsupervised, on screens, at risk, and in some cases without healthy food during the summer months. Throughout Nebraska and nationwide, we can and must do better by investing more in the summer programs that keep kids safe, engaged, and learning while giving working families peace of mind.”

“Omaha has made a real commitment to afterschool and summer programs, and we have strong programs that are doing remarkable work with children and youth,” said Collective for Youth Executive Director Megan Addison. “But this study shows we have more work to do. Working with Beyond School Bells, we have convened a statewide group of experts to build a coalition dedicated to ensuring no child is left out due to cost or location.”

“The demand for summer programs across Nebraska far outpaces supply, and that is a missed opportunity to help children and families thrive,” said Alison O’Toole, Vice President and Network lead, Beyond School Bells, Nebraska’s statewide afterschool network. “This study shows that Nebraskans recognize the value of these programs. It is a call to action for lawmakers, philanthropy, and local partners to do more to ensure that all of our state’s young people can access summer programs that will support their success in school and in life.”

Nationally, just 13% of children in low-income families; 26% of children in middle income-families; and 45% of children in high-income families attend a summer program. In most respects, the Omaha and Greater Nebraska findings mirror the national survey findings, which also include:

**Affordability is the most common barrier faced by families unable to enroll their child.**

- 38% of these families cite cost as a factor contributing to their inability to enroll their child in a summer program.
- 18% cite programs’ location or transportation as a reason.
- 13% report having difficulty finding a program, say summer programs are not available in their community, or the program’s hours do not meet their needs.
- 10% say programs had no open slots.

**Parents with a child enrolled give summer programs high marks.**

- 96% of these parents report being satisfied with the summer program their child attends, with 63% reporting extreme satisfaction.
- Half of parents with a child in a summer program (50%) say they are extremely confident their child will be well prepared for the coming school year, compared to 43% of parents whose child is not in a summer program.

**Parents’ support for public funding for summer programs is strong and growing.**

- Nine in ten parents (89%) favor public funding for summer learning opportunities, up from 83% in 2009, 85% in 2014, and 88% in 2020.
- In the current study, 94% of Democrats, 89% of Independents, and 87% of Republican parents support public funding.
- 93% of parents in urban communities, 89% of those in suburban communities, and 87% of parents in rural communities support public funding.

**Across demographic lines, parents want summer opportunities for all children.**

- 87% of parents agree that all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs.
- 92% of parents who are Democrats and 85% of those who are Independents or Republicans agree.
- 88% of parents in suburban and urban communities, and 85% of those in rural communities agree. Support is overwhelming in every region of the country.
- At least 86% of parents of every race/ethnicity agree.

*The Summer Struggle* studies are made possible with support from Beyond School Bells and Collective for Youth. Omaha findings [are here](#) and Greater Nebraska findings [here](#). The 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 The Wallace 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).*

**Beyond School Bells (BSB)**, an initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), is Nebraska's statewide afterschool network. BSB strengthens and expands high-quality afterschool and summer programs, what we call Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs), that serve K–12 youth. Through partnerships, capacity building, and innovative programming, BSB helps ensure that all Nebraska youth have access to safe, engaging, hands-on learning opportunities beyond the school day.

**Collective for Youth**

*Collective for Youth, an Omaha-area nonprofit, brings together funders, schools, and community partners to ensure children have access to safe, high-quality afterschool experiences when it matters most. Serving a network of 41 programs across the Omaha metro, Collective for Youth manages shared resources, uses robust data to drive continuous improvement, and advocates for a strong afterschool ecosystem that supports youth development and keeps families in the workforce. [CollectiveforYouth.org](http://CollectiveforYouth.org)*