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Back to School, But Not Afterschool, for Many Students

New Survey of Parents Finds Historic Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs, Latino and Black Students Most Likely to be Shut Out, and High Levels of Satisfaction with the Programs Children Attend

WASHINGTON, DC – There are 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program who would be enrolled if a program were available to them, according to a survey of 1,500 parents conducted in May and June of this year. That is up from 24.5 million in early 2020, just before the pandemic began, and the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Unmet demand has been growing as the cost of running programs has far outstripped resources.

According to [Access to Afterschool Programs Remains a Challenge for Many Families](#), cost remains the top barrier to enroll, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. A lack of a safe way to get their child to and from the program (52%), inconvenient program locations (51%), and program hours not meeting parents' needs (49%) are the next most commonly cited barriers.

The online survey, conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance, finds that 90% of parents rate the quality of the program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%). Another 10% rate it as good. An overwhelming majority (91%) say the afterschool program is helping their child build social skills – something many parents prioritize following the social isolation the pandemic caused.

“This new survey underscores the importance of the U.S. Department of Education’s new initiative, [Engage Every Student](#), which is a bold, unprecedented call to utilize American Rescue Plan funds, as well as other state and local monies, to ensure that every child can get access to a high-quality afterschool program,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We are far from that now and as the new school year begins and more parents return to in-person work, staffing shortages are exacerbating the problem. Not enough afterschool programs have been able to access federal COVID relief funds and that needs to change. Now more than ever, our kids need the afterschool and summer learning programs that keep them safe, inspire them to learn, and provide working parents with peace of mind. Funding these programs should be a priority for leaders at the local, state and federal levels. We need to give the next generation every opportunity to succeed.”

Other findings from the new survey of parents:

- Eighty-three percent of parents agree that all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs. Even more, 88%, favor public funding for afterschool programs in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth.

- Latino and Black parents are more likely to report barriers to enrolling their child in an afterschool program than parents overall. For instance, 58% of Latino parents, 49% of Black parents, and 44% of parents overall cite afterschool programs not being available in their community as a reason they did not enroll their child. Two-thirds of Latino parents (67%), 58% of Black parents, and 52% of parents overall cited transportation as a barrier.
- Eighty-seven percent of parents say their child’s afterschool program provides time for physical activity; 80% say it provides time for reading and writing. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) say their child’s afterschool program has connected the family to community resources.
- Afterschool programs are a lifeline for working parents. In families in which both parents work on-site or both parents work at all, 87% agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs. Eighty-five percent of working moms agree with that statement, as do 83% of survey respondents overall.

The online survey of 1,489 U.S. adults who are the parent or guardian of a school-age child was conducted by Edge Research from May 12 to June 28, 2022. Results are weighted by race and income to be representative of the population. The margin of error is +/-3%.

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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.