



NEWS RELEASE
December 8, 2020

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While Nebraska Parents Give Programs Very High Marks, State Is Falling Behind on Meeting the Demand for Afterschool, New Household Survey Finds

Washington, DC — Nebraska is losing ground relative to other states on afterschool. In fact, unmet demand for programs – the percentage of children in Nebraska not currently in an afterschool program whose parents say they would be enrolled if an afterschool program were available to them – has increased since 2014. That is according to a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and released today. It finds that the number of children in Nebraska who would participate if an afterschool program were available now surpasses the number of children in afterschool programs by a considerable margin, with low-income families in particular citing cost as a barrier to enrolling their children. For every child in an afterschool program in Nebraska today, four more are waiting to get in.

[*America After 3PM 2020*](#) is based on survey responses from more than 30,000 American households, including 395 in-depth interviews in Nebraska. It was completed before the coronavirus pandemic struck. It finds overwhelming satisfaction with afterschool programs among parents, but there's been a drop in participation. Ten percent of Nebraska students, 34,677 children and youth in all, are enrolled in afterschool programs, down from 18% in 2014, when the survey was last conducted. Today, 141,365 Nebraska students are without the afterschool programs their parents say they need.

“Unfortunately, despite the remarkable work of afterschool providers and advocates here, Nebraska is falling behind in terms of making afterschool programs available to children and families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Too many parents in the state who want their child in a program can’t find one. But we know that can be changed and that Nebraska can resume its leadership on afterschool. Every parent should have access to an affordable, quality afterschool program that will keep their child safe, supervised and learning. Quality afterschool programs boost student success in school and life. If we want to emerge from this pandemic strong, we need to provide all our children and youth access to the important enrichment opportunities and resources afterschool programs provide. We’re not doing that now.”

“We are excited to learn of the depth and breadth of support Nebraskan’s have for afterschool programs that this report identifies,” said Jeff Cole, Network Lead of Beyond School Bells, a statewide initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. “*America After 3PM 2020* finds incredibly strong support for afterschool programs among Nebraska parents, with

93% saying they are satisfied with the program their child attends. Also encouraging is the overwhelming support for public funding of afterschool, with 92% of Nebraska parents expressing their support. That's a strong foundation that we will build on. Students and families need afterschool programs now more than ever, since the pandemic has changed school schedules, disrupted our economy, and put many children and youth at risk. We are calling on lawmakers, businesses and others to help us make afterschool programs more available to students and families here in Nebraska."

To determine the state rankings, a composite score was calculated for all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, and indexed against the national average. Each state's overall score is based on afterschool program participation, afterschool programs reaching children in need, and parents' satisfaction with key features of their child's afterschool program.

In important respects, Nebraska results mirror the national survey findings, which include:

- Support for afterschool programs is strong. Parents give high marks to afterschool programs, with 83% agreeing programs give working parents peace of mind, 81% agreeing programs help parents keep their jobs, and 76% agreeing programs help children gain interest and skills in STEM – all increases from 2014.
- Unmet demand for afterschool programs is soaring. Demand has grown 60% since 2004, from 15.3 million children (30% of non-participants) waiting to get into a program in 2004 to 18.4 million children (38%) in 2009 to 19.4 million children (41%) in 2014 to 24.6 million children (50%) in 2020.
- Cost and access are barriers to participation, and inequities persist. Sixty-one percent of low-income parents report that cost is a barrier to enrolling their child in an afterschool program. Access (lack of a safe way for their child to get to and come back from a program) is a barrier for 58%. Both are significant increases from 2014.
- Just 7.8 million children are enrolled in an afterschool program today, down from a high of 10.2 million children in 2014. The inequities in terms of which students are accessing programs are stark. The number of children from low-income households participating in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020, while the number of higher-income children in afterschool fell by just under 450,000 over the same period.
- The number of elementary school students on their own after school rose slightly to more than 850,000, an increase of almost 38,000 since 2014, while the number of unsupervised middle and high school students dropped from 2014 to 2020.
- Eighty-seven percent of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. Support crosses demographic and political divides, with 91% of parents who identify as Democratic, 87% of those who identify as Independent, and 85% of parents who identify as Republican in favor of public funding.

“During the pandemic, in Nebraska and around the country, afterschool programs have been stepping up to meet the growing needs of students and families, even as programs face higher costs, dwindling budgets, and uncertain futures themselves,” Grant added. “Nationally, [half of afterschool programs that are serving students in person, and are located in school districts that are operating virtually, have wait lists](#). We must do better. Publicly funded afterschool programs have been a lifeline for low-income children. We need to bring more federal, state, local, business and philanthropic support to meeting the needs of students and their families after school.”

The national and Nebraska *America After 3PM 2020* reports, and accompanying data, are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Findings from *America After 3PM 2020* are based on a nationally representative survey of randomly selected adults who live in the United States and are the parent or guardian of a school-age child who lives in their household. A total of 31,055 households were surveyed in English or Spanish, and a subset of households (14,391 respondents) answered follow-up questions regarding afterschool experiences or barriers to participation in afterschool, as well as perceptions of afterschool programs. Data from interviews are weighted on race and income within states and by state population. The overall margin of error for child-level and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent. The survey included at least 200 interviews in every state and the District of Columbia. Data were collected between January 27 and March 17, 2020, by Edge Research.

The October 2020 survey of parents was conducted by Edge Research and is a nationally representative online survey fielded October 12-29, 2020, of 1,202 parents of school-aged children.

America After 3PM 2020 is made possible with support from the New York Life Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Altria Group, the Walton Family Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott 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.