



NEWS RELEASE
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New Jersey Named a Top 10 State for Afterschool Programs But Expert Says State Has “Long Way to Go”

Afterschool Alliance Survey of New Jersey Households, Sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Finds Marked Increase in Afterschool Enrollment Since 2004, But Also Vast Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – Comparatively strong participation in afterschool programs by New Jersey youth, along with high satisfaction rates among their parents, has landed the state in the Afterschool Alliance’s newly named “Top 10 States for Afterschool” list. The ranking is based on data from the landmark *America After 3PM* study, conducted for the Afterschool Alliance and sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. It is being released this month in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide rally for afterschool set for October 22.

America After 3PM found that 14 percent of New Jersey schoolchildren are enrolled in afterschool programs, up from 12 percent in 2004. “New Jersey is ahead of the pack on afterschool, and can be proud of that,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But the data also show another side of the story. The majority of New Jersey parents who want their kids in afterschool programs aren’t able to find them, usually because programs aren’t available, they can’t afford the fees, or transportation issues make it impossible. These are all barriers we can and should overcome. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Every New Jersey family that needs an afterschool program should have access to one.”

Although there has been an increase in the number of New Jersey children attending afterschool programs over the last five years, today 28 percent of the state’s schoolchildren are on their own in the afternoons, and another 14 percent are in the care of their brothers or sisters. In addition, the parents of 35 percent of children not already in afterschool say they would enroll their kids in a program if one were available.

Ninety-five percent of New Jersey parents say they are satisfied with the afterschool program their child attends. “We’re proud of the progress we’ve made in providing afterschool for New Jersey kids and families,” said Diane Genco, executive director, NJSACC, the network for New Jersey’s afterschool communities. “But this survey is a call to action – to many children who need afterschool programs don’t have them, and families are carrying a heavier burden as a result. That’s particularly difficult during these hard economic times. For afterschool programs to meet the huge unmet demand from families, they’re going to need more support from all

sectors – from the business and philanthropic communities, as well as from the government at all levels.”

“This research confirms what we see every day, that afterschool programs are reaching only a fraction of the children and families that need them – and the recession is making matters worse,” said Afterschool Ambassador Diane Sellers, Executive Director of Haddonfield Child Care. “Afterschool programs make such a difference in children’s lives and futures. We simply must find a way to significantly expand the availability of afterschool programs.”

The “Top 10 States for Afterschool” in the new report are: Hawaii, Arizona, New York, California, New Jersey, Virginia, New Mexico, Florida, Texas and North Carolina.

In key respects, the New Jersey results from the *America After 3PM* study reflect national findings:

- The number and percentage of children participating in afterschool programs in the nation has increased significantly in the last five years, with 8.4 million children (15 percent) now participating. That compares with 6.5 million children in 2004 (11 percent).
- But the number of children left alone after the school day ends also has risen, to 15.1 million children (26 percent of school-age children) in 2009. That is an increase of 800,000 children since 2004. Thirty percent of middle schoolers (3.7 million kids) are on their own, as are four percent of elementary school children (1.1 million children).
- The parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) not currently participating in an afterschool program would enroll their children in a program if one were available to them, a significant increase from the 15.3 million (30 percent) seen in 2004.
- The vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and overall public support for afterschool programs is similarly strong. Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend. Eight in 10 parents support public funding for afterschool programs.

In conjunction with *Lights on Afterschool* events across the nation, the JCPenney Afterschool Round-Up program will kick off in JCPenney stores throughout the U.S. From Oct. 16 to Oct. 25, customers will have the opportunity to “round-up” their JCPenney purchases to the nearest whole dollar and donate the difference to afterschool programs in their local communities that provide life-enriching programs for children in need. Last year, through “Round Up” and other initiatives, JCPenney contributed approximately \$420,000 in New Jersey to support local afterschool initiatives.

“With more than \$80 million contributed to afterschool programs over the past 10 years, JCPenney stands out among the nation’s corporations for helping to frame and solve the afterschool issue and increasing access to afterschool programs that provide meaningful activities for children in need,” Grant added.

The *America After 3PM* report and accompanying data are available online at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Findings from *America After 3PM* are based on 29,754 parent/guardian responses to survey questions about after school child care arrangements during the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. The entire survey was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. RTi also conducted the 2004 *America After 3PM* household survey.

Grant cautioned that, despite the good news, the state and the nation have a long way to go to reach afterschool for all. That is why, on October 22, at more than 7,500 sites across the nation, Americans will rally in support of afterschool programs, as part of the Afterschool Alliance's tenth annual celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*. For more information or to find a local event, visit www.AfterschoolAlliance.org, or contact the Afterschool Alliance media office at 202/371-1999.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a charitable organization committed to providing children in need with access to life-enriching afterschool programs that inspire children to be smart, strong and socially responsible. To date, JCPenney and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund have contributed more than \$80 million to local afterschool programs in every JCPenney community through partnerships with the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National 4-H and FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). For more information, visit www.jcpennyafterschool.org.