

NEWS RELEASE
May 26, 2010

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Just 24 Percent of Illinois Children Attend Summer Learning Programs, According to “America After 3PM, Special Report on Summer”

An Estimated 936,000 Illinois Kids Would Likely Participate in a Summer Learning Program, Based on Parent Interest

When schools close for the summer, safe and enriching learning environments are out of reach and replaced by boredom, lost opportunities and risk for too many children. New analysis of data from the *America After 3PM* study measures the extent of this problem, concluding that just 24 percent of Illinois’ schoolchildren (an estimated 548,306 kids) participate in summer learning programs – safe, structured programs that provide a variety of activities designed to encourage learning and development in the summer months.

Fifty-four percent of Illinois kids (an estimated 936,690 children) not currently enrolled in a summer learning program would likely participate, based on parent interest. Four in five Illinois parents (81 percent) support public funding for these programs.

America After 3PM is a survey of nearly 30,000 households across the United States, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and JCPenney Afterschool in 2009. The summer learning report is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation. It finds that just 25 percent of children in the United States attend summer learning programs. Nearly half of kids whose parents say they are interested in enrolling them in summer learning programs (46 percent) qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

“In Illinois, we’re losing critical opportunities to educate and enrich our students during the summer,” said Jorge Perez, President and CEO of the YMCA of Southwest Illinois and an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance. “All students should have the chance to participate in summer learning programs so they can explore their talents, maintain their academics and enrich their lives.”

“These findings are sobering, especially because we know that inequities in summer learning are a major contributor to the achievement gap between high- and low-income students,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “By not creating and funding enough summer learning programs, we are missing the chance to engage and educate millions of students during the summer, and instead are leaving them unsupervised and at risk.” Grant urged lawmakers to fund 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which support afterschool and summer programs.

“The long summer break is a precarious time when many low-income children fall behind academically and lose the nutritious meals, supervision, and structure that school provides,” said Ron Fairchild, chief executive officer of the National Summer Learning Association. “This survey shows just how great the demand is for meaningful summer activities and that too many children are left wanting for quality programs – the very children who could benefit most if given the opportunity. Policymakers and educators who are cutting summer programs should pay attention to these findings.”

The new report and state data are available online at www.afterschoolalliance.org. *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer* is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation. All data cited in the report are from the 2009 *America After 3PM* research, which was sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool.

Between March and May 2009, 29,754 parents/guardians responded to survey questions about their after school and summer child care arrangements during the summer of 2008 and the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. According to U. S. Census data from 2007, the total school-age population is 57.3 million, which is the foundation for the national projections in *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer*.

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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 Wallace Foundation is an independent, national foundation dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. The Foundation maintains an online library of lessons at www.wallacefoundation.org about what it has learned, including knowledge from its current efforts aimed at: strengthening educational leadership to improve student achievement; enhancing out-of-school-time learning opportunities including summer learning; and building appreciation and demand for the arts.