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Parents Value Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Learning Opportunities Provided by Afterschool Programs

STEM Skills Taught in Most Afterschool Programs, Parents Say, Expressing Satisfaction

Washington, DC — At this time when there is widespread concern that U.S. students are not prepared for a changing economy that relies on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), parents of nearly seven in 10 children who participate in afterschool report that their child’s program offers STEM learning opportunities, according to a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. A special report released today, [Full STEM Ahead: Afterschool Programs Step Up as Key Partners in STEM Education](#), finds broad support among parents (70 percent) for providing STEM learning in afterschool, and high satisfaction (80 percent) with afterschool STEM offerings among parents of children in programs that provide this education.

Findings from the new report are based on responses collected for *America After 3PM* from 30,000 U.S. households, including in-depth interviews with more than 13,000 parents and guardians. More than half of parents with children in afterschool (53 percent) say STEM was an important factor in choosing their child’s program, the new report finds, and parents report that STEM activities are offered more often in urban than in rural and suburban programs.

“Afterschool is a dynamic, effective setting for innovative STEM education,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “With their focus on hands-on learning and youth development, and the time they can give students to experiment, afterschool programs are well positioned to help increase STEM skills in this country. These new data make clear that parents recognize the value of the STEM education afterschool programs can provide. Our country will be better positioned to succeed in tomorrow’s economy if we make afterschool STEM education offerings even more robust.”

The Afterschool Alliance released its new report at the inaugural Afterschool STEM Summit – an event that challenged participants to catalyze partnerships for afterschool and summer learning opportunities that prepare and inspire young people to engage in STEM learning and STEM careers. Hosted by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, the summit featured remarks from Jo Handelsman, associate director for science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Victor Cruz, who plays for the New York Giants.

Key findings from *Full STEM Ahead*, which is based on *America After 3PM*, the most comprehensive survey ever to ask parents about their children’s participation in afterschool STEM programs:

- **Most parents say afterschool programs can help students gain STEM skills.** Sixty-five percent of parents agree with that statement, as do 68 percent of low-income parents and more than 70 percent of both African-American and Hispanic parents. More than half of parents in every state agree as well.
- **Low-income, African-American and Hispanic parents are more likely than others to report that their child's afterschool program offers STEM learning.** While 69 percent of parents with children in afterschool programs agree with that statement, 74 percent of Hispanic parents, 73 percent of low-income parents and 72 percent of African-American parents say their child's program offers STEM activities.
- **Most afterschool students have STEM learning opportunities at least once per week.** Seventy-six percent of parents of students in afterschool programs that offer STEM education say it is offered at least once per week. Eighty percent of parents of boys and 73 percent of parents of girls in afterschool programs offering STEM education say STEM is offered at least once per week.
- **Parents whose children learn STEM in afterschool report that math is offered most often among the STEM subjects.** Almost 60 percent of children in afterschool programs study math, while 45 percent have science learning opportunities, their parents say. Technology and engineering activities are offered much less frequently in afterschool programs, these parents report.

Full STEM Ahead offers recommendations to reduce missed opportunities in afterschool STEM education. They include engaging and educating parents about the important role afterschool programs can play in supporting STEM learning; increasing technology and engineering programming in afterschool programs; and increasing investment in afterschool programs so many more children can access the STEM learning opportunities these programs can provide.

“These findings offer hope as well as challenges,” said Afterschool Alliance Vice President for STEM Policy Anita Krishnamurthi. “The economy of tomorrow will be driven by innovation, especially in science and engineering, and it is clear that afterschool programs can help teach the STEM skills that will help the next generation thrive in the global workforce. In particular, afterschool can help reach populations traditionally underrepresented in STEM because girls attend these programs at similar rates as boys, and African-American and Hispanic children are more likely to participate in afterschool than Caucasian children.”

In October 2014, the Afterschool Alliance released findings from [America After 3PM](#), revealing a dramatic increase in participation in afterschool over the past decade, from 6.5 million to 10.2 million children. The survey also documented a vast and growing unmet demand for afterschool, with the parents of 19.4 million children reporting that they would enroll their child in a program *if one were available*. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends. National and state results from that report are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/.

The *America After 3PM* survey was conducted by Shugoll Research. It is based on in-depth interviews with 13,709 households with children, completed via an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. In order to participate, respondents had to live in the United States

and be the guardians of a school-age child living in their household. All interviews were completed between February 28 and April 17, 2014.

Full STEM Ahead is sponsored by Comcast Tech R&D Fund, the Noyce Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Comcast Corporation's Internet Essentials program is the nation's largest and most comprehensive program to close the digital divide. Internet Essentials has connected more than 500,000 low-income families with school-aged children, or more than 2 million low-income Americans, to the power of the Internet at home.

[America After 3PM](#) is funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, with additional support from the Heinz Endowments, The Robert Bowne Foundation and the Samueli 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.