



NEWS RELEASE

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New Study: Parents in Greater Nebraska Value the Afterschool Programs Their Children Attend, But Four in Five Kids Are Missing Out

LINCOLN, Neb. — A new survey finds that most parents in Greater Nebraska (statewide excluding the Omaha and Lincoln metro areas) want their children enrolled in afterschool programs but cannot access them. Parents of 60,727 children report wanting afterschool care, yet only 10,629 students are enrolled - leaving more than 50,000 children without access.

Cost and access remain the biggest barriers. Among parents unable to enroll their children, 42% cite affordability, 38% cite inconvenient locations, and 36% report a lack of available programs or safe transportation. Parents who do enroll their children report paying an average of \$137 per week for afterschool care.

These findings come from [Afterschool in Greater Nebraska](#), a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, released today. It finds that an overwhelming majority of parents in Greater Nebraska (90%) favor public funding for afterschool. Eighty-six percent of these parents say afterschool programs encourage fun and learning and decrease screen time; 85% say they build social skills and responsible decision making; and 83% agree they boost teamwork, critical thinking, and social skills. Strong majorities say afterschool programs support well-being (78%), keep kids safe (76%), and excite them about learning and improve school attendance (71%).

[America After 3PM](#) is based on survey responses from 30,515 American households, with 428 households with 560 children in Greater Nebraska screened. It was conducted by Edge Research. The Afterschool Alliance and Collective for Youth released [a study of Omaha-area parents](#) earlier this week; it had similar results, concluding that three in four of the city's children whose parents want to enroll them in afterschool programs are being left behind.

“Quality afterschool programs are essential to student success in school and life,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Afterschool providers and supporters in Greater Nebraska are doing powerful work, but this study shows there aren’t nearly enough programs to meet the demand, and too many students and families are missing out. The vast majority of parents who want their child in an afterschool program can’t access one, and that needs to change. We need more support from government at all levels, businesses, and philanthropy to meet the demand for afterschool programs.”

Greater Nebraska parents also recognize that afterschool programs offer tremendous benefits to parents, with 87% of those with a child in a program agreeing that it helps parents keep their jobs or

work more hours, and 91% agreeing that it leads to less stress because parents know their child is safe in the afternoons.

“This data makes one thing clear: demand for afterschool programs in Greater Nebraska far outpaces supply,” said Alison O’Toole, Vice President and Network lead, Beyond School Bells, Nebraska’s statewide afterschool network. “Families see the value, children benefit, and communities are stronger when programs are available. Meeting this demand will require shared responsibility—from public funding, philanthropy, and local partners - to ensure that more children can access safe, engaging opportunities after school.”

In most respects, the Greater Nebraska findings mirror the national survey findings, which include:

Access is uneven by age.

- More than half the elementary schoolers not in an afterschool program (58%) would be if a program were available, as would 49% of middle school students, their parents say.

Cost is the greatest challenge for families whose child is not in an afterschool program.

- 56% cite cost as an important factor preventing them from enrolling their child.
- These parents cite accessibility as another primary barrier, with 49% saying their child does not have a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and 48% saying program locations are inconvenient.
- Four in ten of these parents (42%) report a lack of programs in their communities.

Satisfaction among parents with students in afterschool programs is high.

- Nearly all parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program (95%) and rate the quality of the program as excellent, very good, or good (97%).
- Most parents are happy with the opportunities for reading or writing and time to experience the outdoors (both 77%), healthy snacks and meals (75%), and homework help (72%) their child’s program provides; and are satisfied the program helps their child develop social skills (90%); work on communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership (82%); learn responsible decision-making (82%); and build confidence (86%).

Parents recognize the benefits for children: safety, skills, school engagement, and well-being.

- The percentage of parents who agree that afterschool programs keep kids safe and out of trouble grew from 66% in 2014 to 78% now.
- More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide opportunities to learn life skills, like interacting with peers and responsible decision making (85%).
- Three-quarters of parents (75%) agree afterschool programs help children become more excited about learning and improve their attendance.

Parents say afterschool programs support working families.

- 85% say programs provide working parents with peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised, and 84% agree these programs allow them to keep their jobs or work more hours.
- 88% of parents with a child in an afterschool program say that it boosts their productivity and 92% say they are less stressed knowing their child is safe.

Parents want more public funding for afterschool programs.

- 89% of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. This is a steady increase from 83% in 2009, 84% in 2014, and 87% in 2020.
- Support is the highest among Black families (92%), families in urban communities (92%), households where both parents work (91%), and working moms (90%).

[Afterschool in Greater Nebraska](#) is made possible with support from Beyond School Bells. The data were collected between January 31 and June 18, 2025.

The *America After 3PM* study is based on a survey of 30,515 U.S. parents or guardians with a school-aged child living in their household. It was conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. The margin of error for the national study is +/- <1%. Previous *America After 3PM* surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. It is made possible through the Afterschool Alliance's partnership with the New York Life 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.

***Beyond School Bells (BSB)**, an initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), is Nebraska's statewide afterschool network. BSB strengthens and expands high-quality afterschool and summer programs, what we call Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs), that serve K–12 youth. Through partnerships, capacity building, and innovative programming, BSB helps ensure that all Nebraska youth have access to safe, engaging, hands-on learning opportunities beyond the school day.*