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## **New Study: Parents in Western New York Value the Afterschool Programs Their Children Attend, But Five in Six Children Are Missing Out**

*Nearly 161,000 children in the region lack access as cost, transportation, and availability are key barriers*

**BUFFALO, NY** — A new study shows that while parents across Western New York overwhelmingly value afterschool programs and want their children enrolled, most families are unable to access them. An estimated 188,176 children in the region would participate in an afterschool program if one were available, yet only 27,497 students are currently enrolled—leaving more than five in six children whose parents want access for them without it.

Affordability, accessibility, and limited program availability are the most common barriers preventing families from enrolling their children. Among parents unable to access afterschool programs, 51% cite cost, 47% point to inconvenient locations, 43% say their child lacks a safe way to get to and from programs, and 41% report that programs are simply not available in their community. Parents with a child in a program report paying an average \$83.30 per week per child.

These findings come from *America After 3PM 2025*, a [household survey](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. The survey underscores strong regional support for afterschool programs: 91% of Western New York parents favor public funding, while large majorities say programs build social skills and responsible decision-making (92%), encourage fun and learning while reducing screen time (90%), and keep kids safe (83%). Parents also report benefits to student well-being (82%) and improved school attendance (79%).

*America After 3PM 2025* is based on responses from 30,515 households nationwide, including 701 households with 1,232 children in Western New York (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming counties). The survey was conducted by Edge Research.

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

Western New York parents also recognize the benefits afterschool programs provide to working families. Nearly all parents (98%) say programs reduce stress by giving them peace of mind that their child is safe, and 84% say afterschool programs help them keep their jobs or work more hours.

"For years, families across Western New York have been clear about the need to expand out-of-school-time programming," **said Dave Egner, president and CEO of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.** "This parent survey puts important data behind that demand and shows just how wide the access gap truly is. Afterschool is one of the most powerful investments we can make in our young people and our future, and this study helps focus the solutions needed to ensure every child, no matter their zip code, has the chance to thrive after the school day ends."

"We're fortunate to have many strong, proven partners in the afterschool space, and we value the critical role these nonprofits play in delivering high-quality programming to thousands of Western New York students," **said Florine Luhr, president of The Cullen Foundation of Western New York, Inc.** "This report confirms what local providers see every day: demand far exceeds supply, and access is increasingly out of reach—particularly for low- and middle-income families—due largely to funding limitations. Quality afterschool programs fill essential needs for children and working families, and the growing affordability gap is deeply concerning."

In most respects, Western New York 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%).

**On February 3, 2026, The Cullen Foundation of Western New York, Inc. and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**—which made the Western New York study possible—**will convene Western New York afterschool providers, systems leaders, and community members to review the newly released afterschool data.** By bringing stakeholders together, the convening aims to spark meaningful conversations, encourage innovative investments, and drive concrete action to better support kids and families. Those interested in attending can contact [events@collaborativecommunications.com](mailto:events@collaborativecommunications.com) for more information.

Western New York findings [are available here](#), and New York statewide findings [are available here](#).

The *America After 3PM 2025* study was conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-method approach to reach as many households as possible. The margin of error for the national study is +/- <1%. Previous surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. The study is also made possible through the Afterschool Alliance's partnership with the New York Life Foundation.

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**About the Afterschool Alliance**

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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

**About The Cullen Foundation of Western New York, Inc.**

The Cullen Foundation of Western New York, Inc. serves the residents of Erie County (New York) by providing funding and support that significantly enhances the education of students in grades pre-K through 12 and advances theatre and the performing arts. Within its education focus area, the Foundation's priority is to fund programs with direct, measurable academic outcomes, particularly those that serve economically disadvantaged students in grades pre-K through 12. Cullen Foundation is an independent, private foundation located in Buffalo, New York, created in 2003 and funded by the estate of the late John S. "Jack" Cullen II.

**About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect the devotion of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his beloved Buffalo Bills NFL team. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson provided that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. Based in Detroit, the Foundation began with a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable, and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit [www.rcwjrf.org](http://www.rcwjrf.org).

**Media Contacts:**

*Afterschool Alliance Contact:* Lisa Lederer, [lisa@prsolutionsd.com](mailto:lisa@prsolutionsd.com)

*Western New York Contact:* Kate Measer, [kmeaser@martingroupmarketing.com](mailto:kmeaser@martingroupmarketing.com)