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September 16, 2026

New Study: Parents Report Vast Majority of Afterschool Students in Western New York Are Engaging in STEM Learning in Their Afterschool Programs, But Thousands of Children Shut Out

BUFFALO, NY — Afterschool programs are leading the way in educating the next generation in the STEM subjects the jobs of the future will require. Eighty-five percent of parents of Western New York afterschool students now say their child's afterschool program offers STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning. Nearly one-third of those whose child's program offers STEM (32%) report their child engages in STEM learning after school at least twice per week. But more than five in six Western New York children whose parents want afterschool programs for them (160,679 children) are not enrolled.

Those are among the findings in [Afterschool STEM Takes Off In Western New York](#), a household survey commissioned by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) and released today by [The Cullen Foundation of Western New York](#) and the [Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation](#). Conducted by Edge Research, it is based on survey responses from 30,515 U.S. households, with 700 households with 1,232 children in Western New York screened. In this study, Western New York includes Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming counties.

Afterschool programs in Western New York are educating students on a range of STEM topics, according to parents, with 77% saying their child's afterschool program offers engagement in math, 64% science, 53% computer science, 50% engineering, and 49% tech. Approximately four in five Western New York parents say afterschool programs help children gain skills and interest in STEM.

"In Western New York and across the country, parents value and prioritize STEM learning in afterschool, and afterschool programs have stepped up to provide it," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool is an ideal place for STEM education. It offers students the chance to explore their interests, engage with peers in hands-on, team-based learning, and see up close how STEM can help solve problems facing our communities and our country. We're thrilled with the tremendous uptick in afterschool STEM learning in Western New York, statewide, and throughout the country. We need to continue the trajectory and, most of all, make afterschool programs available to many more students. As long as millions of children whose parents want afterschool programs for them are missing out, we have more work to do."

"Afterschool programs give young people the opportunity to explore and see where their interests can take them," said David Egner, president and CEO of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. "These findings show that STEM learning is already an important part of that experience for many young people across Western New York, while also making clear that too many families still cannot access afterschool opportunities at all. Closing that gap will take continued collaboration across communities to ensure more young people have the chance to learn, grow and discover what is possible."

"Afterschool programs in our communities have made an impressive commitment to STEM learning in afterschool," said Florine Luhr, president of The Cullen Foundation of Western New York. "But we have

more work to do to make afterschool programs and the STEM learning opportunities they provide available to all children and youth. We are calling on lawmakers, philanthropy, and local partners to do more to ensure that all of our state’s young people can access the afterschool programs that will prepare them for college and careers.”

Nationally, the Afterschool Alliance study found that 92% of parents of afterschool students now say their child’s program offers STEM learning – up from 69% in 2014. But there are disparities in afterschool access to STEM, with children in rural communities and low-income families lagging behind.

In most respects, the Western New York findings mirror the national survey findings, which also include:

- **Increases in STEM in afterschool from 2014 to 2025 were seen in every state.** The biggest increases were in Arizona, Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Washington State, Wisconsin and Wyoming.
- **Children in families with low incomes are less likely to have multiple exposures to STEM in afterschool each week than those whose families have higher incomes.** Less than half of parents with low incomes (48%) say their child engages in STEM in afterschool multiple times per week, compared to 56% of parents with middle incomes and 60% of parents with high incomes.
- **Rural parents report fewer computer science and technology opportunities in afterschool.** Just 70% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report that the program offers computer science, compared to 88% of urban parents. Similarly, just 66% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report that the program offers technology education, compared to 86% of urban parents.
- **Two in three parents with children in afterschool programs (65%) value STEM extremely or somewhat when selecting a program – but there are differences by race.** Native American parents (73%), Black and Hispanic parents (70%), and Asian American parents (68%) place greater importance on STEM in afterschool than White families (62%).
- **Parents of boys and girls report similar levels of access to STEM in their child’s afterschool program, but parents of girls prioritize computer science, technology, and engineering less than parents of boys.** Parents today report that 93% of male children and 91% of females have STEM opportunities in afterschool. But there are differences in how much parents of boys and girls prioritize different STEM subjects, with 63% of boy parents placing greater importance on computer science, technology, and engineering, compared to just 53%, 56%, and 58% respectively, of girl parents.
- **Parents prioritize STEM, and specifically computer science, more as their children age.** Just over half of parents of elementary schoolers (53%) say computer science offerings are important when they choose an afterschool program for their child, compared to 68% of parents of high schoolers.

Afterschool STEM Takes Off In Western New York is made possible with support from The Cullen Foundation of Western New York and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. Findings from that study are [here](#) and New York statewide findings [are here](#). Western New York data were collected between January 31 and June 18, 2025.

The *America After 3PM 2025* 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 based on research funded by Overdeck Family 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.

About The Cullen Foundation of Western New York

The Cullen Foundation of Western New York 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.

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