



NEWS RELEASE
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One in Four African American Students Care for Themselves After the School Day Ends, Study Finds

Many More Would Join if Afterschool Programs Were Available

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States is failing to give its children safe, supervised activities during the often-dangerous afternoon hours, and African American families are feeling the crunch. Some 2 million kindergarten through 12th grade African American children (25 percent) take care of themselves after the school day ends, according to a new study.

America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America finds that just 20 percent of African American children are in afterschool programs. Demand for afterschool programs is great in the African American community, with 53 percent of African American parents saying they would enroll their children in a program if one were available. In particular, 71 percent of rural African American parents, and 66 percent of low-income African American parents, say they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available.

“The absence of afterschool programs in many communities forces parents to make impossible choices,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson. “Parents worry about their children from 3 to 6 PM, for good reason. Despite our nation’s increased focus on afterschool programs, we aren’t yet doing enough. This study should be a wake-up call to lawmakers and the nation.”

Funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, the study was released in May by the Afterschool Alliance, which is urging lawmakers to increase funding for afterschool programs. The “No Child Left Behind Act” calls for \$2 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative in Fiscal Year 2005, which would give 2.8 million children access to federally funded afterschool programs next year. President Bush has proposed just \$1 billion for the program next year.

“We’ve known for some time that the demand for afterschool far exceeds supply, and now we know by how much,” said JCPenney Afterschool Chair Gary Davis. “The parents of more than 15 million kids say that their children will participate in an afterschool program if one is available in their community. We have a lot of work to do.”

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America After 3 PM finds:

- Demand for afterschool programs is much higher among African American and Hispanic families than among the overall population. Fifty-three percent of African American parents and 44 percent of Hispanic parents say they would enroll their children in an afterschool program, if one were available. Just 23 percent of Caucasian parents say the same.
- Only eleven percent of the nation's youth are in afterschool programs. Twenty-five percent care for themselves in the afternoons.
- Among children who take care of themselves on weekday afternoons from 3 – 6 PM, African American and Hispanic youth spend *more time* unsupervised than other children – eight hours per week, compared with an average of seven hours for all children.
- African American children are more likely than other children to attend afterschool programs run by religious organizations. Forty percent of African American children enrolled in afterschool programs attend programs provided by religious organizations.
- Overall, the parents of African American children in afterschool are satisfied with their children's afterschool programs. Ninety-two percent report being either "extremely" or "somewhat satisfied."
- On average, families spend \$22 per week for afterschool programs.
- The parents of African American children who are not enrolled in afterschool programs are more likely than other parents to say that finding afterschool care is a challenge.

Research shows that afterschool programs are a good investment. Youth who participate have been shown to perform better in school and have greater expectations for the future, while children who are unsupervised during the afternoon hours are at greater risk of becoming involved with crime, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

For *America After 3 PM*, more than 1,800 parents of afterschool participants and more than 16,000 parents of non-participants completed questionnaires. National participation levels have a sampling error of +/- one percent. GE Consumer Finance donated the team of experts who analyzed the data. Rothstein-Tauber, Inc-Directions for Decisions (RTi-DFD) helped with survey design, data collection and data weighting procedures.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org

The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization contributing financial support to five of America's leading after school advocates – the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 4-H, Junior Achievement and the Afterschool Alliance. Support from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund helps provide safe, fun and educational after school programs and raise awareness of the need for more such programs across the country.

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