



News Release
March 10, 2016

Contact: [Luci Manning](#)
202/371-1999

Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs Is High in Rural Communities

Majority of Rural Parents Value Afterschool Opportunities, Support Public Funding for Afterschool

Washington, D.C. – As many families living in rural communities struggle for economic security, the afterschool programs that can help their children succeed in school and in life are in short supply. A special report released today, [The Growing Importance of Afterschool in Rural Communities](#), finds that just 13 percent of rural students in the United States (1.2 million) participate in an afterschool program – up from 11 percent in 2009, but considerably below the 18 percent of students who participate in these programs nationwide. Yet, according to a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, for every rural child in an afterschool program, the parents of three more say their child would be enrolled, if an afterschool program were available. That puts unmet demand for afterschool programs in rural communities at 39 percent of those not currently enrolled (3.1 million children).

The new report finds the unmet demand is especially high among Hispanic, African-American and low-income rural families. Findings 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.

“Rural America is as rich and diverse as the country as a whole,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “There are rural communities in all 50 states and many are characterized by strong and enduring social networks and community ties. But persistent poverty, food insecurity and low education levels also are more common in rural than urban and suburban communities. In fact, in 2014, [one in four](#) rural children was living in poverty. Quality afterschool programs keep students safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They are a valuable gateway to a more secure and successful future, but there aren’t nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need in rural America. It should be a high priority for our leaders to change that.”

The Afterschool Alliance released its new report, underwritten by John Deere, at the Beyond School Hours XIX: National Education Conference in Dallas, Texas today. It finds:

- One in five rural students is unsupervised after the school day ends.
- More than four in five rural parents (84 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs.
- While the percentage of rural children in afterschool programs rose from 11 percent in 2009 to 13 percent in 2014, the percentage of rural families with a child enrolled in a summer learning program rose more dramatically, from 20 percent in 2008 to 28 percent in 2013. Yet 45 percent of rural parents reported wanting their child to take part in a summer learning program in 2014, but only 28 percent had a child enrolled in 2013 – suggesting significant unmet demand for summer programs.
- In rural communities, 24 percent of Hispanic children, 18 percent of African-American children and 14 percent of low-income children participate in an afterschool program. But 51 percent of Hispanic children, 45 percent of African-American children and 44 percent of low-income rural children

would be enrolled in an afterschool program, if one were available. Both participation and unmet demand are lower among children in White (9 percent participate/37 percent would participate) and higher-income (12 percent participate/34 percent would participate) rural families.

- An overwhelming majority of rural parents report that they are satisfied with their child's afterschool program overall (85 percent), as well as the safety of the program's environment (89 percent), the quality of care (89 percent), the knowledge and training of program staff (89 percent) and the variety of activities offered (84 percent).
- Two-thirds of rural parents (66 percent) report that their child's afterschool program offers STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning opportunities and are satisfied with those opportunities (68 percent), but an appreciably higher percentage of urban parents (77 percent) report that their child's afterschool program offers STEM learning opportunities.
- Nearly three in four rural parents (72 percent) agree that afterschool programs should provide nutritious foods and 61 percent say they do so; 73 percent of rural parents agree that afterschool programs keep kids physically active.

In an accompanying online survey, rural afterschool program providers reported that the top challenge they face is raising funds to run and sustain their afterschool programs.

[*The Growing Importance of Afterschool in Rural Communities*](#) offers recommendations to help give children in rural communities the ability to participate in quality afterschool programs. They include:

- Make information about afterschool programs more readily available to parents in rural communities;
- Increase national attention to the essential role afterschool programs play in rural communities;
- Provide opportunities to share promising practices and resources for rural afterschool programs, through conferences, symposia and/or an online resource or hub geared to rural communities;
- Increase STEM programming in rural afterschool programs; and
- Increase the investment in afterschool programs serving rural communities.

"As we identify ways to address the enormous challenge of feeding the world now and in the future, it is clear that we will need to utilize all our human resources, including the future leaders growing up in America's rural communities," said Mara Sovey Downing, John Deere's director of global brand management and citizenship. "This report offers clear direction for how best to provide greater and more targeted support to John Deere communities and beyond by strengthening the afterschool and summer learning opportunities that parents value and children need."

Get more background and learn more about the methodology for [***The Growing Importance of Afterschool in Rural Communities***](#), underwritten by John Deere, [here](#).

[*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.

#

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.