



NEWS RELEASE
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Vast Unmet Demand for Afterschool Among Rural Black Children

Nearly Three in Five Rural Black Students Not in Afterschool Would Be Enrolled If a Program Were Available, Study Finds

WASHINGTON, DC — Communities of color and families with low incomes in rural communities have extremely high levels of unmet demand for afterschool and summer learning programs. Fifty-nine percent of rural Black children who are not in afterschool would be if a program were available, their parents say. The same is true for 47% of rural children overall and 58% of the country's Black children in communities of any size. A powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in school attendance and engagement, grades, behavior and more among children who participate in afterschool programs.

The study, [*Spiking Demand, Growing Barriers: The Trends Shaping Afterschool and Summer Learning in Rural Communities*](#), finds that just 11% of America's rural children are enrolled in an afterschool program. That is 1.15 million rural kids, down from 1.19 million in 2014. The drop mirrors national trends as public funding for afterschool programs has not kept up with demand. For every rural child in an afterschool program today, four more are waiting to get in. Among Black rural children, 13% are enrolled in an afterschool program. Fully 90% of Black rural parents are satisfied with the afterschool program their child attends.

The unmet need for summer learning programs is also high among rural families of color. Nearly seven in ten Black parents (68%) of children not in a summer learning program would enroll their child if a program were available – appreciably higher than the 54% of rural parents overall. *Spiking Demand, Growing Barriers* is based on a household survey conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance.

“Too many rural students of color are without access to the afterschool and summer learning programs their parents want for them,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Our study finds that rural parents of color recognize the value afterschool programs provide. We need to increase access to both afterschool and summer learning programs, so more students can benefit from the supports they provide. All students, regardless of the size of their community or their family's race or income, need these programs. As we emerge from the pandemic, afterschool and summer learning programs will be even more critical in helping children and youth learn and thrive.”

Spiking Demand, Growing Barriers is based on survey responses from more than 31,000 U.S. families, including 9,690 rural households, 734 of whom are Black. It includes national-level findings from smaller surveys of parents and program providers conducted in 2020 and 2021, also by Edge Research. Among the key results:

- **Rural communities of color and rural families with low incomes have the highest levels of unmet demand for afterschool programs.** Fifty-nine percent of Black rural children, 57% of rural Latino children, and 57% of rural Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

(AANHPI) children are without the afterschool programs their parents want for them, compared to 47% of rural children overall. The same is true for 52% of rural children in families with low incomes.

- **Cost and transportation are significant barriers that prevent many rural parents from enrolling their child in an afterschool program.** More than half of rural Black parents (55%) cite cost as an important reason they did not enroll their child and 59% cite not having a safe way for their child to get to and from programs. Forty-nine percent cite that no programs were available in their community. Both lack of a safe way to and from programs and lack of available programs are higher than for rural parents overall.
- **Cost is lower for rural programs and offerings more scant.** The average weekly cost for afterschool programs as reported by rural parents is \$69.30, compared to a national average of \$99.40 and an average for families living in non-rural communities of \$106.90. Summer programs, too, cost less in rural communities. Fewer rural than urban and suburban parents report that their child's afterschool program offers science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), although more rural parents report programs are offering STEM now than in the past.
- **Rural afterschool programs have stepped up during the pandemic to support students and families.** By the summer of 2021, 84% of rural programs were physically open in some capacity with more than 9 in 10 providing academic enrichment, outdoor activities, and time for students to interact with peers and two-thirds providing snacks or meals. Thirty-seven percent of rural programs reported having a wait list this spring and 45% had a wait list this summer.
- **Strong majorities of rural parents support public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs.** Eighty-seven percent of rural Black parents support public funding for afterschool in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth; and 86% support public funding for summer learning opportunities.

The new study includes a series of recommendations. Among them: grow public awareness about the need for more afterschool programs in rural communities through concerted outreach; improve the accessibility of afterschool programs in rural communities; conduct more research to better understand the views about afterschool programs among rural parents of color; and increase overall support for rural afterschool programs.

Findings in *Spiking Demand, Growing Barriers: The Trends Shaping Afterschool and Summer Learning in Rural Communities* are based on *America After 3PM*, a nationally representative survey of randomly selected adults who live in the United States and are the parent or guardian of a school-age child who lives in their household. A total of 31,055 households, including 59,983 children, were surveyed in English or Spanish between January 27 and March 17, 2020. Nearly 10,000 respondents (9,690) reported that they live in a "rural area/small town," including 734 of whom are Black. The overall margin of error for child-level and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent. Data were collected by Edge Research.

Spiking Demand, Growing Barriers: The Trends Shaping Afterschool and Summer Learning in Rural Communities was supported by the Walton Family Foundation. The 2020 *America After 3PM* survey was made possible with support from the New York Life Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Altria Group, and the Walton Family Foundation, as well as the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The full study, *America After 3PM*, and accompanying data, are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

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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.