



NEWS RELEASE
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Montana Parents Give High Marks to Afterschool Programs, But New Household Survey Finds Huge Unmet Demand Here, With Montana Trailing Most Other States in Making Programs Available

Washington, DC — Despite parents’ overwhelming satisfaction with afterschool programs in Montana, the gap between the number of parents who want afterschool programs for their children and the number who are able to access them is larger in Montana than in most other states, according to a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and released today. It finds the percentage of children in Montana not currently in an afterschool program whose parents say they would be enrolled if an afterschool program were available to them has increased over the past six years, with low-income parents in particular citing cost as a barrier to enrolling their child. For every child in an afterschool program in Montana today, four more are waiting to get in.

[America After 3PM 2020](#) is based on survey responses from more than 30,000 American households, including 295 in-depth interviews in Montana. It was completed before the coronavirus pandemic struck. It finds that 11% of Montana students, 16,203 children and youth in all, are enrolled in afterschool programs, down from 13% in 2014, when the survey was last conducted. In addition, 68,668 Montana students are without the afterschool programs their parents say they need today.

“Unfortunately, despite the remarkable work of afterschool providers and advocates here, Montana lags behind much of the rest of the nation in terms of making afterschool programs available to children and families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Most parents in the state who want their child in a program can’t find one. We need to fix that. Every parent should have access to an affordable, quality afterschool program that will keep their child safe, supervised and learning. Quality afterschool programs are essential to student success in school and life. If we want to emerge from this pandemic strong, we need to provide all our children and youth access to the important enrichment opportunities and resources afterschool programs provide. We’re not close to that now.”

“We are determined to make significant progress in making afterschool programs available to many more children and youth here in Montana,” said Laurie Bishop, Director of Montana Afterschool Alliance. “*America After 3PM 2020* finds incredibly strong support for afterschool programs among Montana parents, with 91% saying they are satisfied with the program their child attends. Also encouraging is the overwhelming support for public funding of afterschool, with 83% of Montana parents expressing their support. That’s a strong foundation to build on. Students and families need afterschool programs now more than ever, since the pandemic has

changed school schedules, disrupted our economy, and put many children and youth at risk. We are calling on lawmakers, businesses and others to help us continue to make afterschool programs more available to students and families here in Montana now.”

To determine the state rankings, a composite score was calculated for all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, and indexed against the national average. Each state’s overall score is based on afterschool program participation, afterschool programs reaching children in need, and parents’ satisfaction with key features of their child’s afterschool program.

In important respects, Montana results mirror the national survey findings, which include:

- Support for afterschool programs is strong. Parents give high marks to afterschool programs, with 83% agreeing programs give working parents peace of mind, 81% agreeing programs help parents keep their jobs, and 76% agreeing programs help children gain interest and skills in STEM – all increases from 2014.
- Unmet demand for afterschool programs is soaring. Demand has grown 60% since 2004, from 15.3 million children (30% of non-participants) waiting to get into a program in 2004 to 18.4 million children (38%) in 2009 to 19.4 million children (41%) in 2014 to 24.6 million children (50%) in 2020.
- Cost and access are barriers to participation, and inequities persist. Sixty-one% of low-income parents report that cost is a barrier to enrolling their child in an afterschool program. Access (lack of a safe way for their child to get to and come back from a program) is a barrier for 58%. Both are significant increases from 2014.
- Just 7.8 million children are enrolled in an afterschool program today, down from a high of 10.2 million children in 2014. The inequities in terms of which students are accessing programs are stark. The number of children from low-income households participating in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020, while the number of higher-income children in afterschool fell by just under 450,000 over the same period.
- The number of elementary school students on their own after school rose slightly to more than 850,000, an increase of almost 38,000 since 2014, while the number of unsupervised middle and high school students dropped from 2014 to 2020.
- Eighty-seven% of parents favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. Support crosses demographic and political divides, with 91% of parents who identify as Democratic, 87% of those who identify as Independent, and 85% of parents who identify as Republican in favor of public funding.

“During the pandemic, in Montana and around the country, afterschool programs have been stepping up to meet the growing needs of students and families, even as programs face higher costs, dwindling budgets, and uncertain futures themselves,” Grant added. “Nationally, [half of afterschool programs that are serving students in person, and are located in school districts that are operating virtually, have wait lists](#). We must do better. Publicly funded afterschool programs

have been a lifeline for low-income children. We need to bring more federal, state, local, business and philanthropic support to meeting the needs of students and their families after school.”

The national and Montana *America After 3PM 2020* reports, and accompanying data, are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Findings from *America After 3PM 2020* are based on 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 were surveyed in English or Spanish, and a subset of households (14,391 respondents) answered follow-up questions regarding afterschool experiences or barriers to participation in afterschool, as well as perceptions of afterschool programs. Data from interviews are weighted on race and income within states and by state population. The overall margin of error for child-level and household-level data is +/- < 1%. The survey included at least 200 interviews in every state and the District of Columbia. Data were collected between January 27 and March 17, 2020, by Edge Research.

The October 2020 survey of parents was conducted by Edge Research and is a nationally representative online survey fielded October 12-29, 2020, of 1,202 parents of school-aged children.

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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.