

America After 3PM Special Report: **Afterschool in Communities of Concentrated Poverty**



August 2016



**Afterschool
Alliance**

afterschoolalliance.org

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Acknowledgements

Data from this special report are based on the 2014 *America After 3PM* survey results, which relied on critical support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, with further support from the Heinz Endowments, The Robert Bowne Foundation and the Samueli Foundation.

Introduction

Despite our increasingly mobile and interconnected world, where more than 90 percent of U.S. households have a carⁱ and close to 9 in 10 adults have access to the Internet,ⁱⁱ it is a persistent reality that locations and their demographics have a significant impact on people's lives. For children and families, where they call home impacts a number of critical factors, including the number of safe spaces available for playing outside, access to grocery stores with fresh produce, quality of education, and access to afterschool and summer learning opportunities.

Affluent communities offer a host of positive influences and benefits for their residents. But in communities of concentrated poverty, or areas with a high percentage of families living below the poverty level, research has found the opposite. Families living in these high-poverty areas are more likely to be without ready access to supermarkets and grocery stores that sell affordable and healthy foods,ⁱⁱⁱ are less likely to have health insurance, and may have limited job opportunities in their area.^{iv} Children living in communities of concentrated poverty are more likely to attend schools where the dropout rate is high and test scores are low, and to live in neighborhoods with higher crime rates.^v

This is especially troubling in light of a report from the Census Bureau that found that the number of people living in communities of concentrated poverty increased by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2010—from 49.5 million people to 77.4 million people. More than 20 million of those living in poverty areas are children and youth under the age of 18.^{vi,vii} The likelihood of living in an area of concentrated poverty is even higher among African-Americans and Hispanics. African-Americans are 2.5 times as likely as whites to live in a community of concentrated poverty (50 percent versus 20 percent) and Hispanics are approximately two times as likely (44 percent versus 20 percent).^{viii} Among children living in communities of concentrated poverty, again, African-American and Hispanic children were much more likely to live in these communities. African-American and Hispanic children were at least two times as likely as white children to live in communities of concentrated poverty; 45 percent of African-American, 35 percent of Hispanic and 12 percent of white children are in families living in communities of concentrated poverty.^{ix}



What are communities of concentrated poverty?

Communities of concentrated poverty are neighborhoods, or groupings of neighborhoods, in a community where there is a high concentration of families that live below the federal poverty line. In 2016, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four was \$24,300. Scholars have included areas with at least 20 percent of families living below the poverty line up to at least 40 percent of families living below the poverty line as a community of concentrated poverty. For the purposes of *America After 3PM*, survey respondents living in communities of concentrated poverty are those that meet the following criteria:

- Live in a zip code that falls within a census tract that the Census Bureau has designated as a community of concentrated poverty, and
- Live in a zip code that has poverty rate of 30 percent or above.

Department of Health & Human Services. (2016). *Computations for the 2016 Poverty Guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/computations-2016-poverty-guidelines>; Bishaw, A. (2014). *Changes in Areas with Concentrated Poverty: 2000-2010*. American Community Survey Reports. United States Census Bureau.

The effects of living in communities of concentrated poverty are far-reaching and extend beyond issues of access and a person's present day situation. Health issues—including asthma, diabetes and depression—are higher in communities of concentrated poverty, and children living in these communities face higher levels of stress and behavior problems.^x Research has linked early brain development to household income, finding that the brain development of children living in poverty lagged behind that of their higher-income peers. The same study also found that children living in poverty scored lower in academic achievement tests when compared to children living above the poverty line.^{xi} Negative long-term consequences have also been documented; the likelihood of a child's future success also decreases when growing up in a community of concentrated poverty.^{xii} For example, Opportunity Nation¹ found that the opportunities necessary for economic mobility are tied directly to where one lives. (See the box "A tale of two counties" for more details.)

Taking into account both the documented increase in communities of concentrated poverty^{xiii} and the diverse struggles and barriers facing families living in these communities, quality afterschool programs, which include before school, afterschool and summer learning programs, are critical systems of support that can help bring back into balance opportunity at all levels. Afterschool programs provide their students a number of supports, including a safe environment, academically enriching activities, mentors who care about them and who they can look up to, healthy snacks and meals, and opportunities for physical activity. Many programs also provide parents additional opportunities to become more involved in their child's education, offer supportive services for entire families, and give parents peace of mind about their child's safety when they are at work or looking for work.

Research has found that when children from low-income families take part in quality afterschool programs, they see positive gains. Consistent participation in high-quality afterschool programs has been shown to help students improve their work habits and demonstrate higher levels of persistence, and helps to close the achievement gap that exists between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers.^{xiv} It was also found that the positive impact of afterschool programs on children matches that of early childhood programs—from academics to social and behavioral outcomes.^{xv}

Given the promising role afterschool programs can play in addressing the inequities faced by families living in communities of concentrated poverty, and with the rise in the number of people living in communities of concentrated poverty, this special *America After 3PM* report examines the afterschool program experience of children and families living in communities of concentrated poverty in regard to participation, access, activities and satisfaction.

More than 20 million children and youth under the age of 18 live in communities of concentrated poverty.

¹ Opportunity Nation is a nonprofit organization working toward making sure all children are afforded equal opportunities to succeed in life.



A tale of two counties

Below are two neighboring counties in Michigan. Despite the proximity to one another, a child growing up in Wayne County will attend schools that have a lower percentage of students who graduate on time and will live in a community with a higher unemployment rate and a higher percentage of disconnected youth (youth ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor employed).

Wayne County, Michigan (C-)

Michigan's Wayne County received an Opportunity Index grade of "C-." Here, one quarter of the population lives below the poverty line; the unemployment rate is 6 percent, higher than the national rate of 5 percent; the percentage of students who graduate on-time is 74 percent versus the national average of 81 percent; and less than 3 in 10 adults in the county have earned an Associate Degree or higher, nearly 10 percentage points lower than the national average of 38 percent. The percentage of disconnected youth in the area is also higher than that of the national average at 21 percent, compared to 14 percent nationally.



Washtenaw, Michigan (B+)

Washtenaw County, where the percentage of the population living below the poverty line is 15 percent, received a "B+" on the Opportunity Index. Here, the unemployment rate is lower than the national rate and both the percentage of on-time high school graduation and the percentage of adults with an Associate Degree or higher are above the national average. Washtenaw County's percentage of disconnected youth is less than the national average and 15 percentage points lower than Wayne County.



Opportunity Nation. Opportunity Index. Retrieved on July 1, 2016 from <http://opportunityindex.org/#9.00/42.279/-83.336/Wayne/Michigan> and <http://opportunityindex.org/#9.00/42.308/-83.847/Washtenaw/Michigan>.

Executive Summary

Research has documented the positive impacts associated with participation in afterschool programs, including academics and social and emotional outcomes,^{xvi} and many news stories have raised awareness about the essential supports and services afterschool programs provide to students and their families.² Afterschool programs have come to be recognized as critical partners in helping to ensure that all children are afforded the opportunities that will help them thrive and meet their full potential. Afterschool programs can enact meaningful change by encouraging children to explore different interest areas to find their passion, finding new and creative ways to keep kids excited about learning, offering academic help to students who are struggling with their school day lessons, and helping keep their students from hunger by providing nutritious foods.

In particular, afterschool programs have the ability to help address some of the inequalities facing families living in communities of concentrated poverty, including existing disparities in segments of the population that are more likely to live in these high-poverty areas, such as African-American and Hispanic families. Findings from *America After 3PM* document the role that afterschool programs play in supporting families living in high-poverty areas by answering questions about what afterschool program participation looks like, what the demand for afterschool programs is, what is preventing parents from taking advantage of and children from participating in afterschool programs, and what the afterschool program experience is like for families in communities of concentrated poverty.

The demand for afterschool and summer learning programs in communities of concentrated poverty is high

- The demand for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty is much higher than the national average, where more than half of children (56 percent) not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if it were available to them, compared to the national average of 41 percent.
- Two out of three parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (66 percent) would like their child to take part in a summer learning program, 15 percentage points higher than the national average of 51 percent.
- Afterschool program participation in communities of concentrated poverty is higher than the national average. Close to 1 in 4 children living in communities of concentrated poverty participate in an afterschool program (24 percent), compared to less than 1 in 5 children nationally (18 percent).
- More than 4 in 10 parents living in areas of concentrated poverty (41 percent) report that their child took part in a summer learning program, 8 percentage points higher than the national average (33 percent).

² Read a selection of news stories that have been published throughout 2016 about afterschool programs across the country in the “Afterschool Stories” boxes. A detailed description of *America After 3PM*’s survey methodology can be found in *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand*, available at: http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_National_Report.pdf.

Afterschool Stories

Thanks to funding from the Utah State Board of Education, 50 homeless children in Salt Lake City will have access to summer education programs provided by the Midvale Boys and Girls Club and Canyon School District. These students will receive meals, academic instruction from certified teachers, field trips and other activities during the summer months.

Desert Morning News. June 7, 2016. “Education for homeless kids gets a boost.”



- African-American families, who constitute a significant percentage of families living in high-poverty areas, have higher levels of participation in and demand for afterschool programs. More than 7 in 10 African-American children (71 percent) living in communities of concentrated poverty who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available to them. Close to 3 in 10 African-American children living in communities of concentrated poverty (27 percent) take part in an afterschool program.

Families living in communities of concentrated poverty face key obstacles

Although the rate of participation in afterschool programs is higher among communities of concentrated poverty compared to their higher-income counterparts, so too is the demand for programs. *America After 3PM* finds three key hurdles standing between children in communities of concentrated poverty and participation in an afterschool program.

Accessibility

Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty—both parents with and without a child in an afterschool program—report challenges regarding the availability and accessibility of afterschool programs in their area.

- More than 2 out of 3 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (67 percent) report that finding an enriching environment for their child in the after school hours was a challenge, compared to 46 percent of parents living outside of these areas.
- Looking only at parents who do not have a child in an afterschool program:
 - More than 4 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (42 percent) report that the lack of afterschool programs in their community was a very important factor in the decision not to enroll their child in a program, 14 percentage points higher than parents living outside of areas of concentrated poverty (28 percent).
 - Parents living in areas of concentrated poverty were more likely than their higher-income counterparts to report that lack of a safe way for their children to get to and home from afterschool programs (51 percent versus 39 percent), hours of operation (47 percent versus 31 percent) and inconvenient locations (41 percent versus 33 percent) were important factors in their decision not to enroll their child in a program.

America After 3PM in Communities of Concentrated Poverty: By the numbers

Stark differences arose when examining the demographics of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty that were surveyed for *America After 3PM*. Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are more likely to live in an urban community and their children more likely to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (FRPL). African-American parents are also much more likely to live in a community of concentrated poverty, compared to white parents.

	Communities of Concentrated Poverty	Non-Communities of Concentrated Poverty
Community Type		
Rural community:	24%	26%
Suburban community:	28%	51%
Urban community:	45%	20%
Low-Income		
Qualify for FRPL:	66%	40%
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American:	37%	11%
Hispanic:	20%	16%
White:	39%	64%





Afterschool Stories

Now in its 25th year, the Boys and Girls Club of Benton County provides participants with food, academic help, guidance on healthy lifestyles, and lessons on character and citizenship. Thanks to the supportive staff, many of the students—who come from high schools with dropout rates of nearly 30 percent—continue on to become first generation college students of their families.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. March 13, 2016. “Club impacts young lives over long term.”

- Among parents in communities of concentrated poverty with a child in an afterschool program, close to 3 in 10 parents (27 percent) report that an extremely important factor in their selection of a program was that no other program was available, 10 percentage points higher than parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty (17 percent).

Affordability

For parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, the cost of an afterschool program weighed heavily both in their selection of a program and in the decision some made to not send their child to an afterschool program. For parents living outside of high-poverty areas, cost was less of a factor.

- More than 6 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (61 percent) agree that current economic conditions have made it difficult for them to afford placing their child in an afterschool program, 14 percentage points higher than parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty (47 percent).
- Close to 3 in 4 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (73 percent) say that program cost was very important in their selection of an afterschool program, with more than half reporting that cost was extremely important in their decision (53 percent).³ Among parents living outside communities of concentrated poverty, 67 percent report that cost was an important factor in choosing a program, with 44 percent reporting that it was an extremely important reason.
- Among parents who do not have a child in an afterschool program, almost half of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (47 percent) report that the cost of afterschool programs was a very important factor in their decision not to enroll their child in a program, compared to 43 percent of parents living outside of high-poverty areas.

Negative perceptions of afterschool programs persist among parents who do not have a child involved in an afterschool program

In addition to issues of accessibility and affordability, a close examination of parental responses finds that, although a positive afterschool program experience is reported by parents with a child enrolled in a program, a number of negative perceptions of afterschool programs among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty influenced the decision not to enroll their child in a program. The lack of research on perceptions of parents living in areas of concentrated poverty relating to education, programs and services in the community makes it difficult to determine if this finding is unique to afterschool programs or in line with the sentiments toward other offerings in the area.

- Among parents without a child in an afterschool program, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty were more likely to say that the quality of services in afterschool programs were unsatisfactory than parents living out of high-poverty areas. The difference was more than 10 percentage points. This group of parents living in areas of concentrated poverty were also more likely to believe the quality of care in afterschool programs was not satisfactory (44 percent versus 31 percent), the quality of academic help was unsatisfactory (42 percent versus 31 percent) and programs do not offer enough physical activity (42 percent versus 30 percent).

³ Parents with a child in an afterschool program were asked on a 7-point scale, where 7 represented “extremely important” and 1 represented “not at all important,” “How important were each of the following reasons in selecting your child’s primary afterschool program?” For the purposes of this report, “very important” is defined as parents whose response to the question was a 6 or a 7.

Afterschool Stories

CodeChangers, an afterschool program with camps in Utah, Nevada and Washington, as well as in Mexico, began as a way to prepare children for the ever-changing job market. Through the program, which includes coding classes, hands-on projects—such as creating apps and products—and take-home projects, students learn that anyone can be a coder and that they could make a career out of coding in the future.

The Spectrum. June 7, 2016. “Coding: it’s not just for computer nerds.”



Afterschool Stories

This summer, the YMCA of Southwestern Indiana has expanded their summer reading program to serve the first and second graders of Chandler Elementary school, a high-need community with 69 percent of participant’s eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Throughout the six-week program, students will be reading, writing and learning about a range of subjects. Additionally, each participant will be given 13 books to add to their personal libraries, an initiative aimed at closing the achievement gap between low-income and high-income students. On average, children from high-income families have 13 books, compared to one book for every 300 children from low-income families.

Boonville Standard & Newburgh-Chandler Register. June 11, 2016. “Summer program helping kids to succeed.”

- Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty who do not have a child in an afterschool program were also less likely to see the value of programs for their child. Again, more than 4 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that their child does not enjoy afterschool programs (43 percent) and would not benefit from programs (41 percent), 10 and 9 percentage points higher, respectively, than parents living outside of concentrated poverty areas (33 percent and 32 percent).

Afterschool programs creating opportunities for all students

Children living in high-poverty areas take part in a wide variety of learning experiences and access a number of essential resources that can be a lifeline for families living in communities of concentrated poverty. Additionally, the afterschool program experience of children living in communities of concentrated poverty looks very similar to that of children living outside of these areas.

- An overwhelming majority of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that their child’s afterschool program provides opportunities for physical activity (87 percent); homework assistance (81 percent); STEM learning opportunities (78 percent); opportunities for reading or writing (76 percent); and beverages, snacks or meals (75 percent).
- Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are more likely than their higher-income counterparts to report that their child has opportunities for physical activity (87 percent versus 80 percent); STEM learning opportunities (78 percent versus 68 percent); opportunities for reading or writing (76 percent versus 72 percent); and beverages, snacks or meals (75 percent versus 71 percent).
- Satisfaction with the experiences and opportunities provided by their child’s afterschool program is high among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, with most parents reporting that they are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program overall (91 percent), the program’s quality of care (85 percent), the knowledge and training of program staff (81 percent), the program’s variety of activities (80 percent), the opportunities for reading or writing (78 percent), and the healthfulness of the snacks or meals provided by the program (77 percent).



Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty look to afterschool programs as a source of support

For parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, afterschool programs also help to provide services that other families may take for granted—such as a safe environment and nutritious foods. *America After 3PM* found that access to these fundamental necessities is especially important to parents living in areas of concentrated poverty when selecting their child's afterschool program.

- Families living in communities of concentrated poverty look to afterschool programs as a source of support to help meet their family's everyday needs—much more so than families living outside of these communities. Eighty-six percent of parents living in areas of concentrated poverty say that safety was very important in their selection of a program, compared to 80 percent of parents living outside of high-poverty areas. More than 7 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (72 percent) say that safety was extremely important in their decision, compared to 63 percent of parents not in these communities. Close to 7 in 10 parents (68 percent) living in areas of concentrated poverty report that snacks and meals (68 percent) and healthy snacks and meals were important (68 percent), higher than parents living outside of high-poverty areas (55 percent and 62 percent).
- To parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, afterschool programs are also a support system that provides much-needed assistance to working families. Eighty-three percent of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs, and 82 percent agree that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, compared to 74 percent and 75 percent of parents living outside of these high-poverty areas.
- Overall, a strong majority of parents in communities of concentrated poverty (83 percent) agree that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them learn, 11 percentage points higher than parents living outside high-poverty areas (72 percent).
- Agreement on the value of afterschool programs is also strong among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty. An overwhelming majority of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs can help their child develop social skills (86 percent), gain workforce skills such as teamwork and critical thinking, and improve his or her school day behavior (77 percent) and attendance (74 percent). A large percentage of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty also agree that programs can excite their child about learning (79

Afterschool Stories

To help fight joblessness in Chicago's high-poverty communities, the One Plus summer program puts disadvantaged high school students from high-violence neighborhoods in eight-week nonprofit or government jobs, where they work with mentors who teach them how to succeed at work. In response to impressive outcomes such as reduced crime rates, the program expects to expand to serve 3,000 students, up from 2,000 last year.

New York Times. March 14, 2016. "Jobs for the young in poor neighborhoods."

percent) and reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors (83 percent).

- The supports that afterschool programs provide are especially important to African-American parents. Close to 9 in 10 African-American parents agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind (87 percent) and that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides them opportunities to learn (88 percent). Approximately 3 in 4 African-American parents (74 percent) said that their child getting snacks or meals at a program was important in their selection of a program, with 57 percent saying it was extremely important in their program selection.

Recommendations

Taken collectively, the previous findings help to establish the unmistakable value of afterschool programs as one strategy to address the inequalities prevalent in communities of concentrated poverty. At the same time, these findings underscore the number of children living in communities of concentrated poverty who are missing out on taking part in an afterschool program and the number of benefits and supports being missed by children who are unable to take part in an afterschool program. The following are recommendations to bring more quality afterschool programs to children and families living in communities of concentrated poverty and help bring opportunity back into balance in these high-poverty areas.

- **Make investment in afterschool programs a priority.** Designating investment in afterschool programs as a priority at the national, state and local levels will help afterschool program providers better meet the needs of children and families in communities of concentrated poverty. Targeted investments in afterschool programs can help programs expand their capacity to serve more children and families in communities of concentrated poverty, provide services at an affordable rate, retain qualified staff, and implement program evaluations to monitor and refine program quality. Nine in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty support public funding for afterschool programs, and 9 in 10 parents living in these communities favor public funding for summer learning opportunities.
- **Capitalize on opportunities in the Every Student Succeeds Act to meet the needs of children and families during the afterschool hours.** The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places much of the decision making authority in the hands of state and local education agencies. In the implementation of 21st Century Community

Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, state education agencies should take great care to ensure that children living in communities of concentrated poverty have access to afterschool and summer learning programs funded by 21st CCLC. One way to do this is including schools that are at least 40 percent Free and Reduced Price Lunch as a statewide category of schools that are eligible for 21st CCLC funding.

- **Better integration of afterschool programs and additional supports for families in communities of concentrated poverty.** Comprehensive afterschool programs can play a central role in helping coordinate a wide variety of supports for families in need by serving as a platform for—or a connector to—such services as mentoring programs, access to nutritious meals, healthcare and wellness check-ups, and housing. Whether as a part of a community school initiative, Promise Neighborhood effort, other place-based strategy or as a standalone program, afterschool programs are a natural hub for the types of supports families can use to meet a variety of needs.
- **Raise awareness about the array of supports afterschool programs can provide in communities of concentrated poverty.** Increasing awareness of the opportunities and supports afterschool programs offer can help begin to address the disconnect between the afterschool program experience of children living in communities of concentrated poverty and the experience parents without a child in an afterschool program envision. Outreach to parents, schools and community partners can play a role in educating parents living in communities of concentrated poverty that afterschool programs are not only a resource for their child, but are a resource for the family as well.
- **Increase awareness among afterschool program providers of available resources.** More work is needed to ensure that afterschool program providers are aware of the resources at the federal, state and local levels that are available to them. Program providers can be better informed of professional development opportunities for staff, successful practices around establishing citywide supports and infrastructures that maximize the use of resources, and ongoing research on program improvement and evaluation. By helping ensure that programs serving communities of concentrated poverty are aware of and accessing available resources, we can better ensure that the services provided are high quality and are meeting the needs of children and families.

The demand for afterschool and summer learning programs in communities of concentrated poverty is high

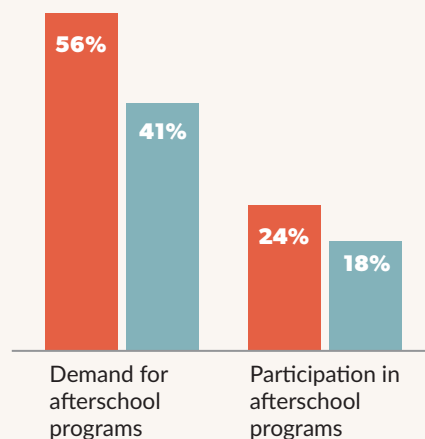
Given the resources and services afterschool and summer learning programs provide children and families living in communities of concentrated poverty, combined with the positive impacts afterschool programs can have on children, it is not surprising to find significant demand for afterschool and summer learning programs in high-poverty areas. Nationally, the number of children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available has grown by more than 20 percent in the past decade, increasing from 15.3 million children in 2004 (30 percent) to 18.5 million children in 2009 (38 percent) to 19.4 million children in 2014 (41 percent). In 2014, demand for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty is even higher than the national average, where more than half of children (56 percent) not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if it were available to them. When asked about participation in summer learning programs, 2 out of 3 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (66 percent) would like their child to take part in a summer learning program, 15 percentage points higher than the national average of 51 percent.

Participation in afterschool programs has also steadily increased over the course of the past 10 years, examining 2004 through 2014. Rising from 6.5 million children in 2004 (11 percent) to 8.4 million children in 2009 (15 percent) to 10.2 million children in 2014 (18 percent), afterschool programs are increasingly becoming an answer for parents who are looking for a safe, supportive and academically enriching environment for their child between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m., or the hours after the last school bell rings and before parents return home from work.

In 2014, the rate of afterschool program participation in communities of concentrated poverty was higher than the national average. Close to 1 in 4 children living in communities of concentrated poverty participate in an afterschool program (24 percent), compared to less than 1 in 5 children nationally (18 percent). Similarly, *America After 3PM* asked all parents surveyed about summer learning program participation and found that more than 4 in 10 parents living in areas of concentrated poverty (41 percent) report that their child took part in a summer learning program, 8 percentage points higher than the national average (33 percent).

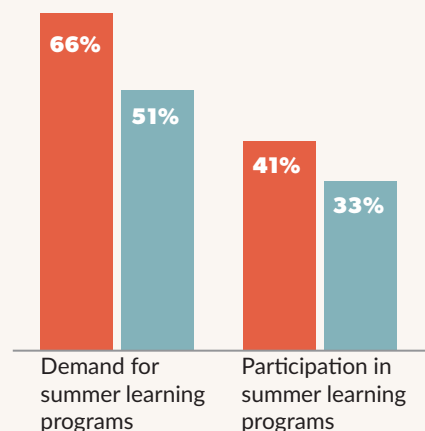
Afterschool program demand and participation

Communities of Concentrated Poverty
National Average



Summer learning program demand and participation

Communities of Concentrated Poverty
National Average



The above figures help establish the significant need for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty, where the call for afterschool programs in these communities is especially high. Additionally, a closer examination of communities of concentrated poverty reveals that differences between segments of this population exist, particularly regarding African-American and Hispanic children and families living within communities of concentrated poverty, all of whom report greater demand.

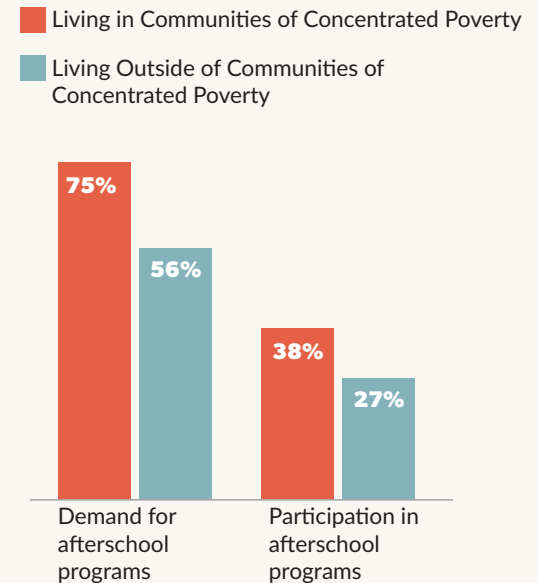
More than 7 in 10 Hispanic (75 percent) and African-American children (71 percent) living in communities of concentrated poverty who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available to them, much higher than families living in these high-poverty areas overall. Close to 4 in 10 Hispanic children (38 percent) and 27 percent of African-American children living in communities of concentrated poverty take part in an afterschool program, again higher than children living in communities of concentrated poverty overall.⁴

The report *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand* also found that the demand for afterschool programs and participation in afterschool programs in the Hispanic and African-American communities overall was higher than the national average.^{xvii} However, the demand for and participation in afterschool programs among Hispanic and African-American children living in communities of concentrated poverty is even greater than that of Hispanic and African-American children living outside of these high-poverty areas.

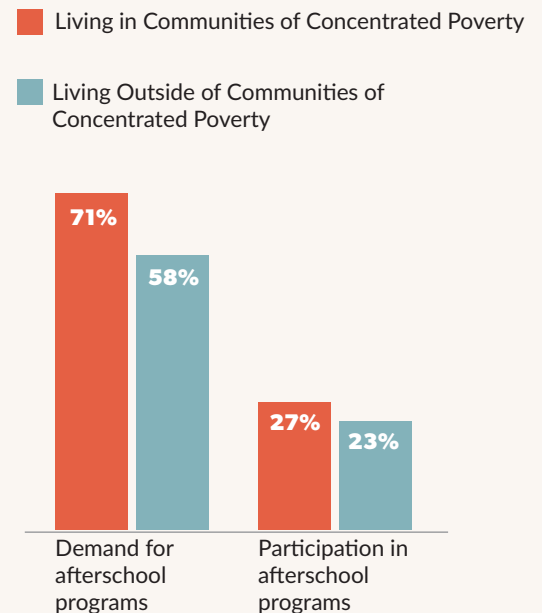
⁴ Hispanic and African-American community of concentrated poverty numbers all have small base sizes.



Afterschool program demand and participation among Hispanic children



Afterschool program demand and participation among African-American children



Barriers to participation in afterschool programs

Based on responses from *America After 3PM*, it is clear that both the need and the demand for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty are high. With the majority of families in communities of concentrated poverty who are not in a program demanding an afterschool program, attention must turn to identifying the barriers and challenges that are preventing parents in these high-poverty areas from taking advantage of afterschool programs.

The most common reason why parents living in communities of concentrated poverty did not enroll their child in an afterschool program was that there was a parent or guardian at home during the hours after school. However, when focusing on reasons related to barriers to participation, issues such as accessibility—including the challenge of locating available afterschool programs in the area, finding conveniently-located afterschool programs and finding afterschool programs with hours of operation that meet parents' needs—and affordability were reported as key obstacles parents living in communities of concentrated poverty face when looking for an afterschool program for their child. A third barrier revealed in parents' responses is that, among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty who do not have a child in an afterschool program, negative opinions of programs also factored into their decision, although less so than challenges around accessibility and affordability.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a very real barrier families living in communities of concentrated poverty face when it comes to participating in an afterschool program compared to families living outside of communities of concentrated poverty. While challenges accessing afterschool programs include matters of logistical convenience, such as an afterschool program's hours of operation, a more fundamental issue of locating existing afterschool programs was raised as a problem among a significant number of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty.

Among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, more than 2 out of 3 (67 percent) report that finding an enriching environment for their child in the after school hours was a challenge, compared to less than half of parents living outside of these areas (46 percent). Finding an enriching afterschool program was even more of a challenge for Hispanic and African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty,

2 out of 3 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty say that finding an enriching environment for their child after school was a challenge, compared to less than half of parents living outside of high-poverty areas.

with close to 8 in 10 Hispanic parents (78 percent) and more than 7 in 10 African-American parents (73 percent) reporting that finding an enriching environment for their child in the after school hours was a challenge.

Looking only at parents who do not have a child in an afterschool program, more than 4 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (42 percent) report that a very important factor in the decision not to enroll their child in a program was that afterschool programs were not available in their community. The percentage of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty that report the lack of available afterschool programs is not only higher than parents living outside of areas of concentrated poverty (28 percent), but higher than low-income families as well (35 percent).

The absence of afterschool programs is a significant issue for parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty in particular, where 65 percent say that a reason for not enrolling their child in an afterschool program was that afterschool programs were not available in their community, higher than both parents living in urban (37 percent) and suburban (26 percent) areas of concentrated poverty. Additionally, similar to findings that locating an enriching afterschool program was more challenging for Hispanic and African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, Hispanic and African-American parents without a child in an afterschool program in these communities were more likely to report a lack of available programs as a reason why they did not enroll their child in a program. More than half of Hispanic parents (53 percent) and 46 percent of African-American parents living in areas of

concentrated poverty report that an important reason why they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program was that programs were not available in their community.

Even among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty who were able to find an afterschool program for their child, program availability was reported as an issue. Close to 3 in 10 parents (27 percent) living in communities of concentrated poverty with a child in a program report that an extremely important factor in their selection of their child's program was that no other program was available, 10 percentage points higher than parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty (17 percent). Again, lack of available afterschool programs was high among parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty (50 percent) and Hispanic (55 percent) and African-American parents (37 percent) living in communities of concentrated poverty.

Other barriers related to accessibility, including transportation, program location and program hours, are program features all parents take into consideration when deciding where their child is going to go during the hours after school. However, these factors were of greater importance to parents living in communities of concentrated poverty regarding the selection of an afterschool program and were also cited as reasons why parents chose not to enroll their child in an afterschool program.

42% of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that afterschool programs were not available in their community compared to 28% of parents living outside of high-poverty areas.

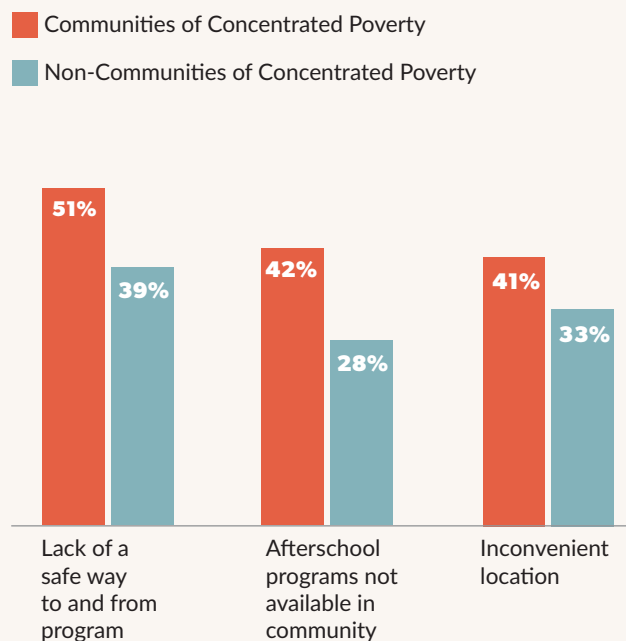
Parents in communities of concentrated poverty with a child in an afterschool program were more likely to say that hours meeting their needs was very important in selecting their child's afterschool program when compared to both parents living outside of high-poverty areas and to low-income families—85 percent, versus 77 percent and 76 percent.

When parents without a child in an afterschool program were asked how much a program's hours of operation and location factored into their decision to keep their child out of a program, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty were again more likely to report that these factors influenced their decision when compared to parents living outside of these high-poverty

areas. Close to half of parents living in areas of concentrated poverty (47 percent) report that afterschool programs' hours of operation not meeting their needs was an important factor in deciding to not enroll their child in an afterschool program, 16 percentage points higher than parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty (31 percent).

Among parents without a child in an afterschool program, more than half (51 percent) living in areas of concentrated poverty report that a lack of a safe way for their child to get to and home from an afterschool program was an important factor why they did not enroll their child in a program, compared to 39 percent of parents living outside of areas of concentrated poverty. A lack of a safe way for their children to get to and home from afterschool programs was especially relevant to parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty and Hispanic and African-American parents living in areas of concentrated poverty, with 70 percent of parents living in rural communities, 69 percent of Hispanic parents and 58 percent of African-American parents reporting it as an important factor in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program.⁵ More than 4 in 10 parents in communities of concentrated poverty (41 percent) report that afterschool programs' inconvenient locations factored into their decision, 8 percentage points higher than parents living outside of high-poverty areas (33 percent).

Parents report that the following reasons were important in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program



⁵ All rural communities of concentrated poverty numbers are based on a very small base size.

Affordability

America After 3PM also found that parents living in communities of concentrated poverty struggle with the affordability of afterschool programs. More than 6 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (61 percent) agree that current economic conditions have made it difficult for them to afford placing their child in an afterschool program, 14 percentage points higher than parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty (47 percent). Agreement that economic conditions have made it difficult to afford placing their child in an afterschool program is particularly high among Hispanic parents living in areas of concentrated poverty (77 percent) and parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty (68 percent).

More than 6 in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that the current economic conditions have made it difficult for them to afford placing their child in an afterschool program.

For parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, the cost of an afterschool program weighed heavily both in their selection of a program as well as their decision to not enroll their child in a program. When asked about considerations taken into account in choosing an afterschool program, cost was a significant factor for a number of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty. Close to 3 in 4 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (73 percent) say that program cost was very important in their selection of an afterschool program, with more than half reporting that cost was extremely important in their decision (53 percent).⁶ Among parents living outside communities of concentrated poverty, 67 percent report that cost was an important factor in choosing a program, with 44 percent reporting that it was an extremely important reason.

For parents living in areas of concentrated poverty who chose not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, close to half (47 percent) report that the cost of afterschool programs was a very important factor in their decision, compared to 43 percent of parents living outside of high-poverty areas. Cost was especially important to Hispanic and African-American parents living in areas of concentrated poverty and parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty, where 63 percent of Hispanic parents,

51 percent of African-American parents and 55 percent of parents living in rural communities of concentrated poverty reported that cost was a very important factor in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program.

It is worthwhile to note that parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are more likely than parents living outside of these high-poverty areas to report that they do not pay for their child’s afterschool program. More than 1 in 3 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that they do not pay for their child’s afterschool program (35 percent), compared to 24 percent of parents living outside of communities of concentrated poverty. Additionally, parents living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely than parents living outside of these areas to report receiving government assistance to pay for their child’s afterschool program—27 percent compared to 19 percent. However, among parents who report paying for their child’s afterschool program, the average amount spent per week on the program is only slightly lower for parents living in communities of concentrated poverty when compared to parents not living in areas of concentrated poverty, \$105 versus \$114. Interestingly, among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty who pay for their child’s afterschool program, 77 percent report that they are satisfied with the cost of their child’s afterschool program, which may speak to how much they value the benefits the program provides.

The amount parents pay for their child’s afterschool program

	Parents Living In Communities Of Concentrated Poverty	Parents Living Outside Communities Of Concentrated Poverty
\$1-\$20 per week	17%	15%
\$21-\$40 per week	15%	14%
\$41-\$60 per week	16%	18%
\$61-\$80 per week	6%	8%
\$81-\$100 per week	18%	14%
More than \$100 per week	28%	33%

⁶ Parents with a child in an afterschool program were asked on a 7-point scale, where 7 represented “extremely important” and 1 represented “not at all important,” “How important were each of the following reasons in selecting your child’s primary afterschool program?” For the purposes of this report, “very important” is defined as parents whose response to the question was a 6 or a 7.

Perceptions of afterschool programs among parents without a child in a program

Issues such as accessibility and affordability are clear challenges parents living in communities of concentrated poverty face regarding enrolling their child in an afterschool program. However, a closer examination of parental responses also found that negative perceptions of afterschool programs among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty factored into the decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program—more so than both parents living outside of high-poverty areas and low-income parents.

America After 3PM asked parents without a child in an afterschool program about a variety of factors that may have contributed to their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, ranging from the lack of need for a program during the hours after school (such as they already had a parent or guardian to take care of their child), to enrollment barriers including issues with program availability and cost, to an aversion toward programs (such as concerns about the quality of care and activities offered in an afterschool program). While not among the most common reasons selected when deciding not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, negative perceptions about various aspects of afterschool programs emerged as a more prevalent explanation among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty.

For instance, parents living in areas of concentrated poverty were more likely than parents living outside of these high-poverty areas as well as low-income parents to cite unsatisfactory quality



of care, lack of quality academic help, access to unhealthy snacks and a lack of physical activity as reasons why they decided to keep their child out of an afterschool program. Parents living in areas of concentrated poverty were also more likely than their counterparts living outside of high-poverty areas to report that their child would not enjoy an afterschool program, would not benefit from the activities and services afterschool programs have to offer, and would not have their individual needs met. It is difficult to determine if this finding is unique to afterschool programs or if it is common for parents living in areas of concentrated poverty to perceive the offerings in their community in a negative light. While there is research regarding the demographics, changing composition and negative consequences of concentrated poverty, there is an absence of research examining the opinions of individuals living in communities of concentrated poverty.

Percent of parents who agree the following reasons were very important in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program

	Parents living in areas of concentrated poverty	Parents living outside of high-poverty areas	Low-income parents
Quality of care in afterschool programs is not satisfactory	44%	31%	36%
Their child does not enjoy afterschool programs	43%	33%	37%
Quality of academic help in afterschool programs is not satisfactory	42%	31%	36%
Afterschool programs don't offer enough opportunities for physical activity	42%	30%	35%
Afterschool programs offer unhealthy foods	40%	27%	33%
Afterschool programs wouldn't benefit their child	41%	32%	34%
Afterschool programs don't address the special needs of their child	38%	27%	35%

Afterschool programs are creating opportunities for all students

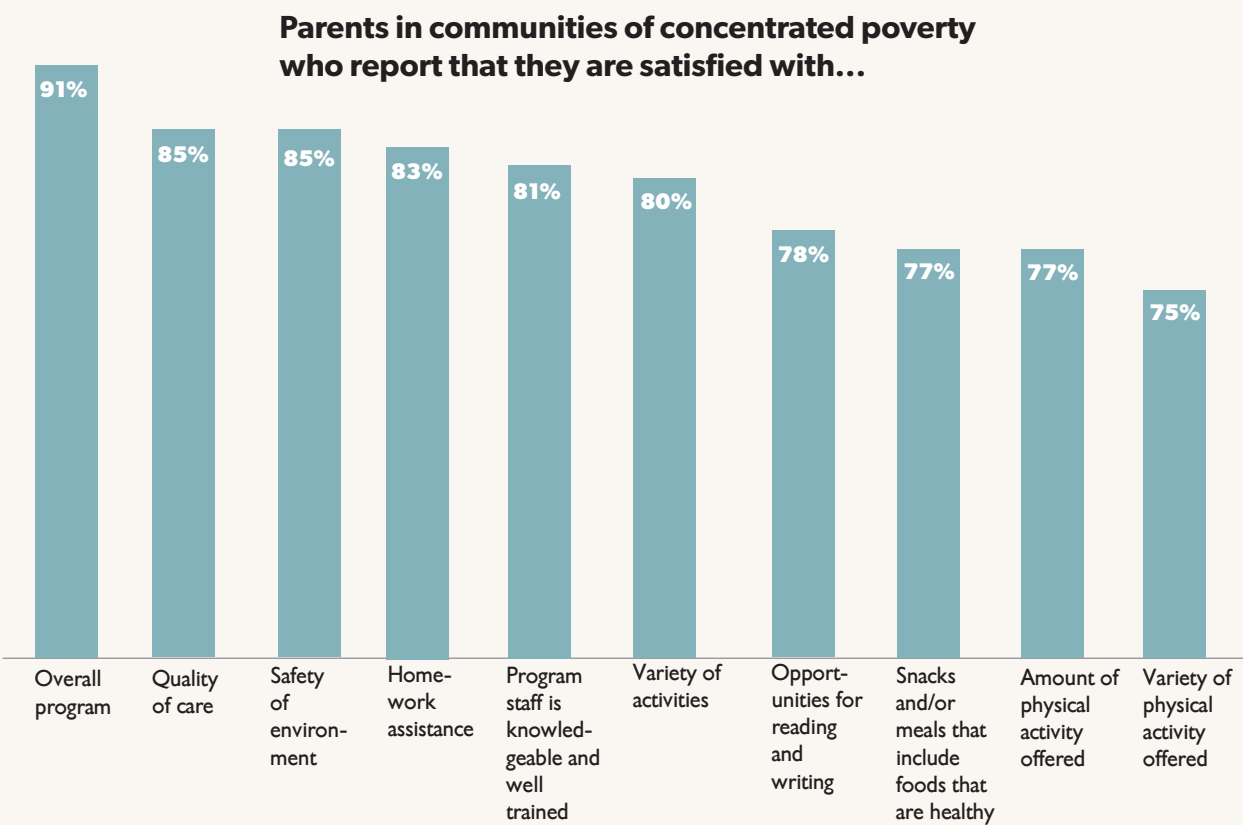
Afterschool programs are helping children and families across the country by providing academic enrichment, keeping young people active, serving nutritious food, giving working parents peace of mind about their child and much more. These services and supports can be a lifeline for families living in communities of concentrated poverty. *America After 3PM* finds that parents living in high-poverty areas not only report that their children take part in a wide variety of learning experiences and access a number of essential resources, but the reported afterschool program experience of children living in communities of concentrated poverty looks very similar to that of children living outside of these areas.

Benefits and supports of afterschool programs

Help with homework, STEM learning opportunities and a snack or meal that can help ward off their child’s hunger are just a few of the benefits that parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that their child’s afterschool program provides.

An overwhelming majority of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that their child’s afterschool program provides opportunities for physical activity (87 percent); homework assistance (81 percent); STEM learning opportunities (78 percent); opportunities for reading or writing (76 percent); and beverages, snacks or meals (75 percent).

Afterschool programs serving children from communities of concentrated poverty are also meeting their families’ expectations, with a high percentage of parents reporting that they are pleased with the experiences and opportunities provided by their child’s program. When asked about satisfaction with aspects of the staffing and structure of their child’s afterschool program, most parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that they are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program overall (91 percent), the quality of care (85 percent), the safety of environment (85 percent), the knowledge and training of program staff (81 percent) and the variety of activities offered (80 percent).



Most parents living in communities of concentrated poverty also report satisfaction with the types of activities and services provided by their child’s afterschool program. Among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, approximately 8 in 10 report that they are satisfied with the homework assistance offered (83 percent) and the opportunities for reading or writing (78 percent), and approximately 3 in 4 say that they are satisfied with the healthfulness of the snacks or meals (77 percent), the amount of physical activity offered (77 percent) and the variety of physical activity offered (75 percent).

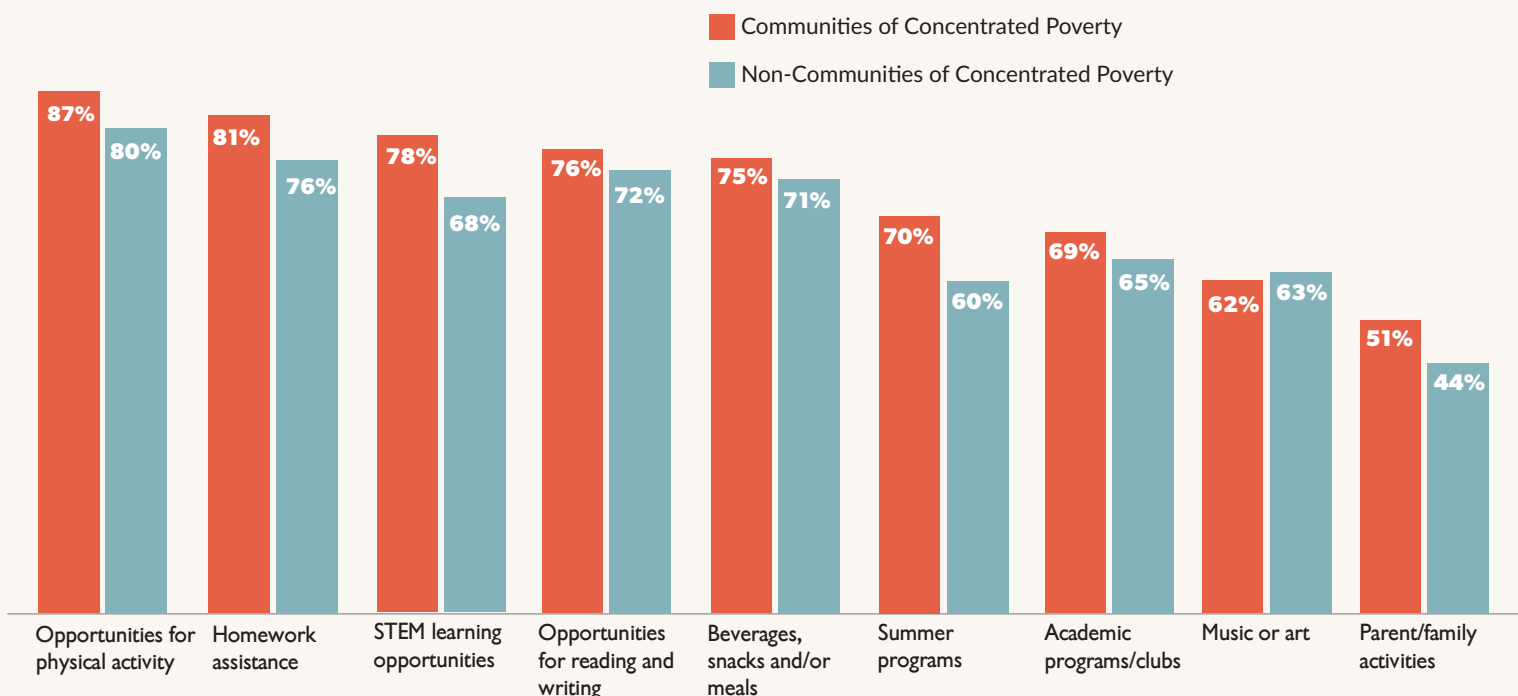
Afterschool programs are helping bring opportunity into balance

A promising finding of *America After 3PM* is that the experience of children living in areas of concentrated poverty who are able to access afterschool programs looks similar to the experience of their peers who live outside of these high-poverty areas and participate in afterschool programs, as reported by their parents. In many cases, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are even more likely than parents living outside of these areas to report that their child’s afterschool program offers academically enriching activities and critical supports. For instance, parents living in high-poverty areas are 10 percentage points more likely to say that their child has STEM learning

opportunities, 7 percentage points more likely to report that their child’s program offers opportunities for physical activity, and 7 percentage points more likely to report that their afterschool program offers parent or family activities.

Taking part in summer learning programs is another important outlet for children in communities of concentrated poverty to engage in learning experiences, be physically active and have access to healthy foods. While June signals the end of the school year, the struggles families living in communities of concentrated poverty face are not put on hold for the summer break. Research has found that during the summer, children from low-income families can lose approximately two months of reading and math skills—what has been referred to as the “summer slide.” Regarding access to nutritious meals, in 2015, 5 out of 6 children from low-income families who ate a free or reduced price lunch during the school year did not participate in the Summer Nutrition Programs.^{xviii, xix} A significant percentage of afterschool programs serving communities of concentrated poverty are also meeting the needs of their families during the summer months. Seven in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that their child’s afterschool program offers a summer learning program, higher than parents living outside of these high-poverty areas (60 percent).

Parents who report that their child’s afterschool program offers...



The value of afterschool programs to parents living in communities of concentrated poverty

The previous analysis of the supports and services afterschool programs bring to communities of concentrated poverty confirms the important role programs play for families and children whose lives are surrounded by the daily challenges and struggles that come with living in a high-poverty community. Therefore, it is not surprising that the demand for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty is high. As noted at the beginning of this report, more than half of children living in communities of concentrated poverty who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if a program were available to them (56 percent). Additionally, more than 8 in 10 parents from communities of concentrated poverty (83 percent) agree that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them learn, 11 percentage points higher than parents living outside high-poverty areas (72 percent).

Afterschool programs provide essential supports

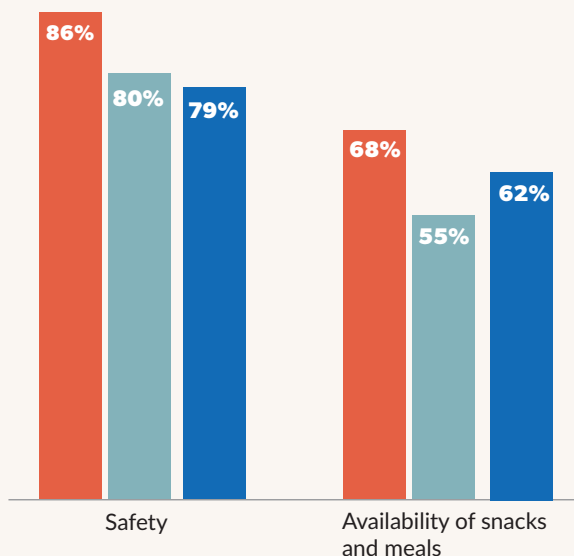
For parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, afterschool programs are also helping provide services that other families may take for granted—such as a safe environment and nutritious foods. *America After 3PM* found that access to these fundamental necessities is especially important to parents living in areas of concentrated poverty when selecting their child's afterschool program.

The most important factor in selecting an afterschool program among parents living in areas of concentrated poverty was safety (6.55 on a 7 point scale), with most parents reporting that this was very important in their choice of a program. Close to 9 in 10 parents living in areas of concentrated poverty say that safety was very important in their selection of a program (86 percent), with more than 7 in 10 reporting that safety was extremely important in their decision (72 percent). This answer was higher than parents living outside of high-poverty areas, as well as low-income families, where 80 percent of parents living outside of high-poverty areas say safety was important and 63 percent say it was extremely important, and 79 percent of low-income families say it was important and 64 percent say it was extremely important.

When asked about the level of importance the availability of snacks and meals was in their selection of a program, close to 7 in 10 parents living in areas of concentrated poverty report that

Parents reported the following factors as very important in the selection of an afterschool program

Communities of Concentrated Poverty
Non-Communities of Concentrated Poverty
Low-Income



snacks and meals were important (68 percent), again higher than both parents living outside of high-poverty areas (55 percent) and low-income parents (62 percent). An afterschool program that provides healthy snacks or meals was also an important factor to a greater percentage of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty than those living outside of high-poverty areas (68 percent versus 62 percent).

Among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty overall, 85 percent believe that afterschool programs should provide children healthy beverages, snacks or meals, 15 percentage points higher than parents living outside of these communities (70 percent) and 11 percentage points higher than low-income parents (74 percent).

Agreement that afterschool programs have a positive impact on youth...

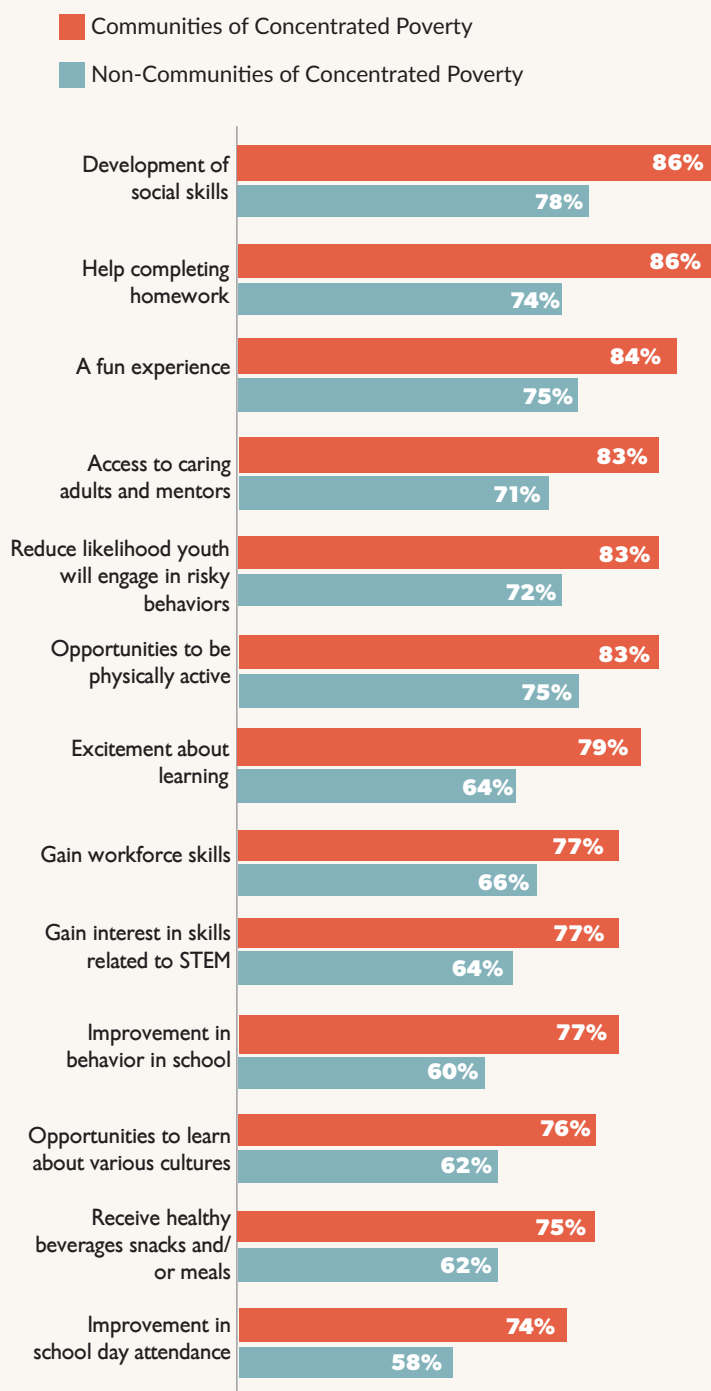
When examining the answers provided by parents living in communities of concentrated poverty regarding the ways in which children can benefit from afterschool programs as a whole, it is evident that there is strong support for programs. From supporting academic development to providing supportive mentors to keeping children active, safe and healthy, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs can positively impact children in a host of ways. For example, an overwhelming majority of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs can help their child develop social skills (86 percent), gain workforce skills such as teamwork and critical thinking, and improve his or her school day behavior (77 percent) and attendance (74 percent). A large percentage of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty also agree that programs can excite their child about learning (79 percent) and reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors (83 percent). It is also noteworthy to point out that a greater percentage of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs have a positive impact on children when compared to parents living outside of these communities, with the percentage difference in answers reaching as high as 17 percentage points.

...and a positive impact on families

To parents living in communities of concentrated poverty, afterschool programs also serve as a support system that provides much-needed assistance to working families. While both parents living in and outside of high-poverty areas view afterschool programs as a source of support for working parents, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are more likely to agree. More than 8 in 10 parents living in communities of

concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs (83 percent), with half of parents strongly agreeing (50 percent). Just 3 percent of parents did not agree. When asked if afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, again, more than 8 in 10 parents in communities of concentrated poverty agreed (82 percent), approximately half of parents strongly agreed with the statement (49 percent) and only 3 percent of parents did not agree.

Parents who report that their child's afterschool program offers...



The value of afterschool programs to African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty

In addition to the important role that *America After 3PM* data show afterschool programs play for families living in communities of concentrated poverty, it also reveals that the supports provided by afterschool programs are also of great importance to African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty—families that comprise a significant portion of families living in high-poverty areas. Close to 9 in 10 African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind (87 percent) and that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides them opportunities to learn (88 percent), higher than parents living in communities of concentrated poverty overall (82 percent and 83 percent, respectively).

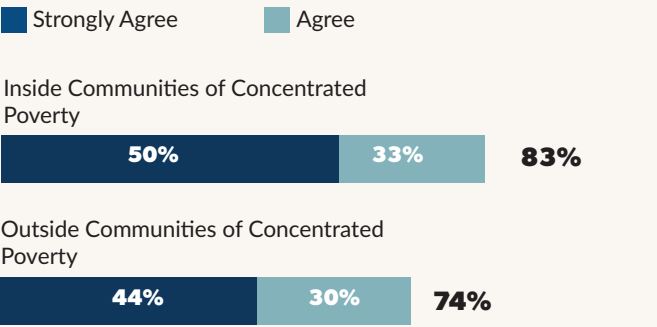
Access to essential supports such as nutritious foods, as well as academically enriching learning opportunities are also highly important to African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty. Approximately 3 in 4 African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (74 percent) said that their child receiving snacks or meals at a program was important in their selection of a program, compared to 68 percent of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty overall. Close to 6 in 10 African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (57 percent) say that a program serving snacks or meals was extremely important in their program selection, compared to 44 percent of parents living in high-poverty areas. When asked about afterschool programs providing healthy snacks or meals, 61 percent of African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty reported that a program serving healthy snacks or meals was extremely important in choosing their child’s afterschool program provider, compared to half of parents living in high-poverty areas (50 percent). Close to 9 in 10 African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty (88 percent) agree that afterschool programs should provide healthy snacks and beverages, with 61 percent of parents agreeing strongly.

Regarding academically enriching activities, overwhelmingly, African-American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agree that afterschool programs should offer learning opportunities that aren’t provided during the regular school day (91 percent), help their children develop workforce skills (86 percent), and provide opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning (82 percent). Based on parents surveyed, *America After 3PM* finds that afterschool programs are meeting parents’ expectations, with 92 percent of African-

American parents living in communities of concentrated poverty agreeing that they are satisfied overall with their child’s afterschool program, 89 percent are satisfied with the quality of care, 78 percent are satisfied with the STEM learning opportunities and 78 percent are satisfied with the program’s opportunities for workforce skill development.



Parents who agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs



Recommendations



The high participation in afterschool programs, the call for more afterschool programs, and the supports and services afterschool programs provide to students and their families in communities of concentrated poverty collectively establish the unmistakable value of these programs in helping address the inequalities that perpetuate the cycle of poverty in these underserved communities, including among communities of color that disproportionately live in these high-poverty areas. Parents living in communities of concentrated poverty say afterschool programs support children by improving their ability to interact positively with their peers and think critically, providing help with homework and access to supportive adults and mentors, and improving their access to essential resources such as healthy snacks and meals.

At the same time, these findings bring to light both the high percentage of children living in communities of concentrated poverty who are not in an afterschool program, as well as the number of opportunities that are missed because these children are unable to take part in programs. The following recommendations are key steps to take at the national, state and local levels to bring more quality afterschool programs to children and families living in communities of concentrated poverty and to help address the unequal opportunities that deny supports to children in high-poverty areas.

Make investment in afterschool programs a priority.

The need and the demand for afterschool programs in communities of concentrated poverty is high, but there remain

significant barriers around accessibility and affordability that families in these areas face that prevent them from taking advantage of the opportunities that afterschool programs afford. Considering accessibility and program affordability from a program provider's point of view, a 2012 survey of program providers found that nearly 6 in 10 program providers (57 percent) reported that their program's budget was inadequate to meet the needs of their community and more than 6 in 10 program providers (62 percent) reported that their funding was down from three years previous.^{xx}

Designating investment in afterschool programs as a priority at the national, state and local levels will help afterschool program providers better meet the needs of children and families in communities of concentrated poverty. Targeted investments in afterschool programs can help programs expand their capacity to serve more children and families in communities of concentrated poverty, provide services at an affordable rate, retain qualified staff, and implement program evaluations to monitor and refine program quality. In particular, funding for flexible federal programs that support afterschool and summer learning programs should be increased as they fund infrastructure and partnerships that result in both increased quality of and access to afterschool and summer learning programs for students in all grade levels, elementary school through high school. Nine in 10 parents living in communities of concentrated poverty support public funding for afterschool programs and 9 in 10 parents living in these communities favor public funding for summer learning opportunities.

Additionally, identifying investment in afterschool programs as a priority helps to safeguard current and future funding for afterschool programs by signaling to community partners, policy makers, families living in high-poverty areas and afterschool programs serving these families that the commitment to afterschool programs is a long-term investment, not an interim solution.

Capitalize on opportunities in the Every Student Succeeds Act to meet the needs of children and families during the afterschool hours.

In the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), state and local education agencies hold much of the decision making authority. It is recommended that in the implementation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, state education agencies should take steps to ensure that children living in communities of concentrated poverty have access to afterschool and summer learning programs funded by 21st CCLC.

For example, given that communities of concentrated poverty have higher rates of students who qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program (FRPL), including schools that are at least 40 percent FRPL as a statewide category of schools that are eligible for 21st CCLC funding will help to ensure that 21st CCLC funded afterschool and summer learning programs are available to families living in communities of concentrated poverty. Additionally, state and local education agencies should look for other opportunities to support afterschool in ESSA implementation, including using Title I “Targeted Assistance to Schools” funds, which are specifically mentioned as an instructional strategy to boost student achievement in the legislation, to support afterschool programs. Furthermore, Title IV A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants can be used to support increased collaborations between schools and STEM afterschool programs, fund resource counselors to establish community partnerships, and fund afterschool programs to support mentoring and student healthy lifestyles.

Integrate afterschool programs and additional supports for families in communities of concentrated poverty.

Afterschool programs are integral partners in efforts to provide much needed support to families living in communities of concentrated poverty, who are less likely to have access to venues selling affordable and accessible healthy foods, less likely to have health insurance and more likely to attend a school with a high dropout rate. Comprehensive afterschool programs can play a central role in helping coordinate a wide variety of supports for families in need by serving as a platform for—or a connector to—mentoring programs, access to nutritious meals, healthcare and wellness check-ups, and housing, among other services.

For example, by partnering with public or private affordable housing, afterschool programs can provide a safe learning environment convenient to where children live. Integrating afterschool programs and additional supports for families in communities of concentrated poverty can take advantage of afterschool programs’ natural role as a hub for the range of supports families in high-poverty areas are in need of—whether as a part of a community school initiative, Promise Neighborhood effort, other place-based strategy or as a standalone program.

Raise awareness about the array of supports afterschool programs can provide in communities of concentrated poverty.

When asked about the learning opportunities and supportive features of their child’s afterschool program, parents living in communities of concentrated poverty are just as likely—and in some instances more likely—as parents living outside of these high-poverty areas to say that their child takes part in physical activities, has opportunities for reading and writing, is exposed to music and art, and is able to have a nutritious snack or meal between the end of school and dinner. Yet, among parents living in communities of concentrated poverty who do not have a child in an afterschool program, when asked about the reasons behind their decision not to enroll their child in a program, factors including not enough opportunities for physical activity, a lack quality academic help, and that their child would not enjoy or benefit from afterschool programs were given. These reasons were more likely to be cited by parents in communities of concentrated poverty than by parents living outside of these communities.





Increasing awareness of the variety of opportunities and supports that afterschool programs offer students and their families can help to address the disconnect between the afterschool program experience that children living in communities of concentrated poverty have and the perception held by parents without a child in an afterschool program. Outreach to parents, schools and community partners can play a role in educating parents living in communities of concentrated poverty that afterschool programs are not only a resource for their child that can build on lessons learned during the school day, provide caring and supportive mentors, and generate excitement about learning, but can also serve as a resource for the family that can provide peace of mind that their child is in a safe and supported environment with access to nutritious food.

Increase afterschool program providers' awareness of available resources.

The flipside of ensuring that parents and families are aware of the supports offered by afterschool programs is making sure that afterschool programs are doing what they can to provide the quality supports that will best serve the children and families in their community. A part of this is increasing awareness among program providers of the resources at the federal, state and local levels that are available to help programs meet the needs of their community. For example, 85 percent of parents in communities of concentrated poverty believe that afterschool programs should provide healthy beverages, snacks and meals and 68 percent of parents with a child in an afterschool program report that an afterschool program that provides healthy snacks or meals was important in their selection of a program. However, a 2014 survey of afterschool program providers found that 40 percent had not heard of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal funding source that programs serving low-income communities can tap into to help pay for snacks and meals.^{xxi}

Program providers can be better made aware of professional development opportunities for staff, successful practices around establishing citywide supports and infrastructures that maximize the use of resources, and ongoing research on program improvement and evaluation. By helping ensure that programs serving communities of concentrated poverty are aware of and accessing available resources, we can better ensure that the services provided are high-quality and meeting the needs of children and families.



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