

Thriving in afterschool: Promoting healthy futures for young people

This June marks more than one year of living in the new normal created by the pandemic. For children and families alike, the new normal has brought with it unease and anxiety, feelings of isolation, and increased levels of stress.¹ Parents' level of concern for their children's social and emotional health remained high throughout 2020. Summer and fall parent surveys found that more than 8 in 10 parents were concerned about their child's social and emotional well-being, with nearly half of these parents reporting extreme concern for their child.²






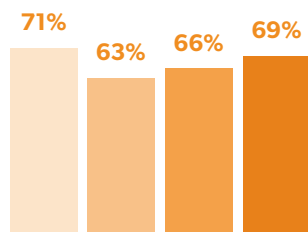
Afterschool and summer programs are rising to the moment

Afterschool and summer enrichment programs have been a consistent source of support to young people and families who are juggling remote school or work, dealing with the health and economic stressors created by the pandemic, and managing the toll that COVID-19 is taking on their mental health and overall well-being.

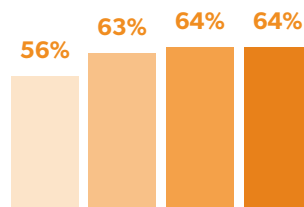
Throughout 2020 and into 2021, afterschool and summer learning programs have stayed in contact with their students and families, finding ways to support them as the nation continues to navigate the short- and long-term effects of the pandemic.³

A spring 2021 survey of program providers found that in addition to academic enrichment, an overwhelming majority of programs that are open are:⁴

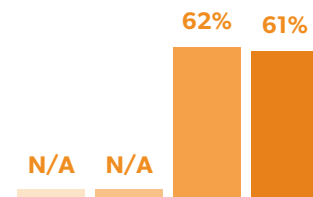
	Giving young people the time to interact with their peers and build social skills	86%
	Creating the space to talk with their peers or staff members about how they are feeling	80%
	Providing opportunities to be active and away from screens	81%



Finding ways to stay connected to youth



Connecting families with community resources



Providing a safe, supervised learning environment during virtual school days

● Spring 2020

● Summer 2020

● Fall 2020

● Spring 2021

Relationships are key

Research conducted by the Search Institute has found that strong relationships between adults and youth have a positive impact on youth development. Young people in out-of-school time (OST) settings who reported strong developmental relationships had higher self-rated social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. On average, youth in OST reported stronger high-quality relationships with staff compared to the other youth development settings included in the study.

Search Institute (2020). The Intersection of Developmental Relationships, Equitable Environments, and SEL [Insights & Evidence Series]. Retrieved from <https://www.searchinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Insights-Evidence-DRs-DEI-SEL-FINAL.pdf>

“The most meaningful part of my afterschool program is the sense of community and family that I feel inside the program. Sometimes a child doesn’t have that example at home of a family and feels alone and isolated. I can relate to that. When I went to my afterschool program, it was this experience of family and community and I appreciate that.”

—Angeles Mejia-Sierra,
Youth Force- L.I.F.E.
program, Oakland, Florida



Promoting positive developmental supports

Afterschool and summer enrichment programs serve both as a fundamental setting in which healthy development and learning takes place, as well as an intervention through which social and emotional skills and competencies are fostered. Through afterschool and summer enrichment programs, young people will have the support they need to re-engage, recharge, and rebound from the pandemic.

Afterschool programs provide integral developmental supports:



Caring and supportive mentors



Safe spaces where students build confidence and feel a sense of belonging



Opportunities to work collaboratively, problem solve, and think critically

In turn, these supports help kids:⁵



Gain self-control and confidence



Develop strong social skills



Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults



Improve work habits and grades



Improve school day attendance and behavior



Reduce risky behaviors, such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use

Endnotes

- 1 Patrick, S.W., Henkhaus, L.E., Zickafoose, J.S., Lovell, K., Halvorson, A., Loch, S., Letterie, M., & Davis, M.M. (2020). Well-being of Parents and Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A National Survey. *Pediatrics*, 146 (4). Retrieved from <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/4/e2020016824>; Leeb, R.T., Bitsko, R.H., Radhakrishnan, L., Martinez, P., Njai, R., & Holland, K.M. (2020). Mental Health-Related Emergency Department Visits Among Children Aged <18 Years During the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, January 1–October 17, 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69 (45). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm>; Chatterjee, R. (2021). Child Psychiatrists Warn That The Pandemic May Be Driving Up Kids’ Suicide Risk. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/02/02/962060105/child-psychiatrists-warn-that-the-pandemic-may-be-driving-up-kids-suicide-risk>
- 2 National household surveys of parents of school-aged children commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. The first survey was of 1,071 parents, conducted Aug. 4-18, 2020, and the second was of 1,202 parents, conducted Oct. 12-29, 2020.
- 3 National surveys of afterschool and summer program providers, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance: May 28-June 30, 2020; July 20-Aug. 31, 2020, Sept. 28-Oct. 27, 2020, and Feb. 19-March 15, 2021.
- 4 A national survey of 1,235 afterschool and summer program providers, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted Feb. 19-March 15, 2021.
- 5 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2017). Preventing Youth Marijuana Use: Programs and Strategies; Vandell, D.L., Reisner, E.R, & Pierce, K.M. (2007). *Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs*. Policy Studies Associates, Inc; DuBois, D.L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J.E., Silverthorn, N., Valentine, J. (2011). “How Effective Are Mentoring Program for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence”. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*; Afterschool Alliance. (2021). The evidence base for afterschool and summer. Retrieved from <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/The-Evidence-Base-For-Afterschool-And-Summer-2021.pdf>



**Afterschool
Alliance**

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The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs.