

Minnesota Parents & Youth Want Afterschool Opportunities



Center for Youth Development

Phone Survey of Minnesota Parents and Youth

In 2008, The University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development, working with Wilder Research, conducted phone interviews with over 1600 parents and 800 7th - 12th grade youth around the state about afterschool programs.

Are Minnesota Youth Participating?

Parents indicate that 88% of their 7th - 12th grade children participated in some form of organized afterschool activity at some point during the year. However, only 40% would be participating on a regular basis throughout the year—leaving lots of room for greater participation. Each youth also described a single preferred opportunity in greater detail. For these opportunities, 52% of youth said they participate almost everyday (when it operates). On average, youth reported participating in sports and organized activities about 3.1 times in a typical week, compared to 3.4 times per week spent with friends, 1.5 times at home alone, and 0.8 times at work. There are major grade differences in what youth do.

Is There an Opportunity Gap?

Quite simply, yes! The level of participation varies dramatically by income level with only 66% of those with incomes under \$25,000 participating in anything at all during the year compared to over 92% for families with incomes over \$50,000. This gap in opportunity also exists between whites (91% participate) and youth of color (74%) and youth of immigrants (67%). The data also suggest that the quality of programs as experienced by youth is lower for low-income families. Research shows that in many cases low-income youth and minority youth (as well as those with low supervision during these hours) benefit the most from participating in positive opportunities. The opportunity gap in the summer is also pronounced and highly related to the achievement gap.

Is There a Demand for These Programs?

Overall, 44% of parents would like to change the way their children spend their time in these hours. Only 16% think their schedules are too hectic. Furthermore, unlike participation, demand for opportunities does not vary as much by income except that low-income families want more opportunities for help with homework.

The vast majority of parents very much want their youth to have opportunities that:

- Help youth explore things that interest them (85%)
- Teach the value of hard work & commitment (85%)
- Encourage their child to try new things (75%)

- Do volunteer work & help others (73%)
- Help their child get along with others (70%)
- Help them get into college or careers (64%)
- Help their child make changes on issues (63%)
- Promote athletic activities or team sports (62%)

Are There Enough Opportunities in Minnesota Communities?

Roughly 1/3 parents talked about how hard it is to find programs that are affordable, of high quality, and interesting to their child. Approximately 1/4 parents talked about the challenges of finding age-appropriate afterschool opportunities that were conveniently located to them, or run by trusted adults.

Once again there are dramatic differences by income with 59% of parents with incomes less than \$25,000 saying it is somewhat or very hard to find high-quality programs compared to 26% for those with incomes over \$75,000. Similarly, 45% of families of color and 58% of immigrant families found it somewhat or very hard to find quality programs compared to 31% of white families. It is also harder to find quality programs in the urban area (52%), compared to rural areas and small towns (37%), large cities in greater Minnesota (33%), and metro suburban communities (26%).

While 80% of parents in the metro suburbs say their community is doing very well at having enough for teenagers to do, 60% of parents in the urban Twin Cities and about 67% of parents in rural areas and small towns feel this way. Both parents and youth noted it is harder to find things in the summer, which research shows is an especially important time to engage youth.

Bottom Line

If Minnesota seeks to make the most of afterschool learning opportunities for the learning and development of youth, it is important to close the opportunity gap in participation between low-income and average income families as well as increase the supply of high-quality and affordable opportunities in Minnesota communities.

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The sample of random phone numbers was drawn from eight different regions of the state as represented by the six Initiative Fund areas, suburban metro area, and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Statewide estimates of parent perspectives are weighted to better represent the entire state.