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Contact: [Luci Manning](#)
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Wisconsin Parents Value Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Learning Opportunities Provided by Afterschool Programs

But Parental Satisfaction Levels Signal Need to Grow Afterschool STEM in State

Washington, DC — At a time when many experts are concerned that U.S. students are not prepared for a changing economy that relies on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), most parents in Wisconsin say they believe afterschool programs should provide opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning, according to a household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. A special report released today, [Full STEM Ahead: Afterschool Programs Step Up as Key Partners in STEM Education](#), finds broad support among Wisconsin parents for providing such STEM learning in afterschool. However, parents of children in Wisconsin programs say that their children's afterschool programs do not provide all the STEM opportunities they would like.

Findings from the new report are based on responses collected for *America After 3PM* from 30,000 U.S. households, including in-depth interviews with more than 13,000 parents and guardians, and 256 parents in Wisconsin.

“Afterschool is a dynamic, effective setting for innovative STEM education,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “With their focus on hands-on learning and youth development, and the time they can give students to experiment, afterschool programs are well positioned to help increase STEM skills. These new data make clear that parents in Wisconsin recognize the value of the STEM education afterschool programs can provide. Wisconsin and the nation will be better positioned to succeed in tomorrow's economy if we make afterschool STEM education offerings even more robust.”

Key findings from *Full STEM Ahead*, which is based on *America After 3PM*, the most comprehensive survey ever to ask parents about their children's participation in afterschool STEM programs:

- **Most Wisconsin parents say afterschool programs can help students gain STEM skills.** Fully 56 percent of parents agree with that statement.
- **Most Wisconsin parents agree that afterschool should offer STEM.** In all, 65 percent of Wisconsin parents believe afterschool programs should provide opportunities for children to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning.
- **Many parents in Wisconsin signal need to increase and improve afterschool STEM offerings.** Some 47 percent of parents whose children attend afterschool programs say that their child's program provides STEM learning opportunities. Overall, the afterschool STEM

opportunities were deemed satisfactory by 53 percent of parents with children in afterschool in Wisconsin.

“Those of us in the afterschool field know first-hand that we’ve got a special opportunity to help children learn about — and get excited about — STEM fields,” said Dave Knutson, Vice President of Government Affairs, Greater Milwaukee Boys and Girls Clubs. “We’ve seen terrific growth in STEM instruction in afterschool over the years, and we know we’ve got more ground to cover. But because afterschool is so well suited to the kinds of hands-on learning that STEM often demands, we know we’ve got the setting and the tools to give the workforce of tomorrow the opportunities it needs to excel in STEM.”

Full STEM Ahead offers recommendations to reduce missed opportunities in afterschool STEM education. They include engaging and educating parents about the important role afterschool programs can play in supporting STEM learning; increasing technology and engineering programming in afterschool programs; and increasing investment in afterschool programs so many more children can access the STEM learning opportunities these programs can provide.

In October 2014, the Afterschool Alliance released findings from [America After 3PM](#), revealing a dramatic increase in participation in afterschool over the past decade, from 6.5 million to 10.2 million children. The survey also documented a vast and growing unmet demand for afterschool, with the parents of 19.4 million children reporting that they would enroll their child in a program *if one were available*. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends. National and state results from that report are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/.

The *America After 3PM* survey was conducted by Shugoll Research. It is based on in-depth interviews with 13,709 households with children, completed via an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. In order to participate, respondents had to live in the United States and be the guardians of a school-age child living in their household. All interviews were completed between February 28 and April 17, 2014.

Full STEM Ahead is sponsored by Comcast Tech R&D Fund, the Noyce Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Comcast Corporation’s Internet Essentials program is the nation’s largest and most comprehensive program to close the digital divide. Internet Essentials has connected more than 500,000 low-income families with school-aged children, or more than 2 million low-income Americans, to the power of the Internet at home.

[America After 3PM](#) is funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, with additional support from the Heinz Endowments, The Robert Bowne Foundation and the Samueli Foundation.

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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.

