



The Iowa Afterschool Alliance recognizes the importance of gaining an accurate picture of statewide public opinion on afterschool programming when looking forward and planning for the future. In the fall of 2008, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance conducted a survey of Iowans across the state to measure overall public support for afterschool programming and to gain a clear picture of how Iowans believe children and youth should be spending time out of school. The survey focused on Iowans, and collected thoughts and statements directly from the mouths of Iowans. The sample population represented all ages, family situations, and localities across the state.

An overwhelming 84 percent of Iowans surveyed agree that at a very minimum, children enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade should have access to afterschool programs.

Respondents recognized the role that afterschool programs play in keeping children safe after school citing “child safety” as the number one benefit of a child attending afterschool programming. Supervision by adults and knowing where their kids were followed in levels of importance cited by respondents in the survey.

Results also strongly reflect that Iowans possess a high level of knowledge and awareness of the value of quality afterschool and view expanding high quality afterschool programs a priority. Respondents cited a professionally

trained staff as the most important factor used to determine if a program is of high quality. More than 36 percent reported their willingness to pay higher fees for afterschool programming designated as “high quality”. Iowans believe that programs provide much more than a safe place to go afterschool. The majority of Iowans surveyed believe that ensuring physical and recreational activities for children and youth is very crucial to program quality. These results support the growing trend of building programs structured around academic improvement, cultural competence, team

Afterschool Programs Provide Essential Life Skills

Throughout Iowa, afterschool programs are focusing on ways in which youth can develop important “real world” skills that will help them throughout life. An afterschool program at Holmes Jr. High in Cedar Falls has developed programming that has allowed students to form their own credit union and learn financial literacy. During summer day camp at the YMCA in Cedar Rapids, youth ages 12 and up have the opportunity to become “Counselors in Training,” allowing them to experience what it’s like to hold a real job. Programs across Iowa develop the skills of promising youth in a variety of different programs and contexts. It’s not surprising that Iowans view opportunities like these as essential to the development of successful children and youth.

building, civic engagement, and the arts, recognizing a more comprehensive approach to healthy growth and development.

A majority of Iowans also believe that there is a shortage of afterschool programs, especially for older youth. Only about half, or 48 percent of respondents reported that there are afterschool programs available in their communities that they were aware of.

Less than 19 percent said afterschool programs are available for middle school students, and only eight percent report afterschool programs available for high school students in their communities.

Although afterschool programs were held in high regard by a majority of respondents, barriers to enrolling were reported.

Approximately 50 percent of respondents acknowledged issues related to lack of transportation to and from programs and cited conflicting schedules as factors that make it difficult to enroll their children.

The results gathered from the Iowa Afterschool Alliance survey clearly reflect that Iowans recognize the ways in which afterschool programs help provide Iowa's young people the tools they need to be competitive in the global economy and life. Public opinion in Iowa reflects that our state has a responsibility to its children, families, and communities to provide access to high-quality, affordable afterschool. In order to truly provide afterschool opportunities for all, afterschool champions must continue to work to develop policies and sustainable funding to construct a statewide infrastructure that systemically strives to increase the accessibility and quality of afterschool programming.

What is Afterschool?

Afterschool programs provide experiences that are meaningful and beneficial to children, youth, families, and communities by offering safe, engaging, and enriching environments for children and youth when they are not in school. Quality afterschool programs utilize a youth development philosophy that incorporates the strengths and assets of youth to build their skills and broaden their experiences. Afterschool programs not only assist youth with academic issues, but help them develop career paths and volunteer opportunities, build social skills, and become civically engaged, as well as providing preventive, gender-specific, and other specialized programming. These ongoing, continuous programs occur before school, after school, in the evenings, weekends, school and other breaks, school in-service days, or for late starts or early dismissals. They can be offered by a school, by a contractor with a school, by a community-based organization, or other partnerships at a school or other location. These programs might also be referred to as "extended learning opportunities," "out-of-school" programs, or "enrichment" programs.

About the Iowa Afterschool Alliance

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) is a statewide afterschool network, operating into its sixth year with primary support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and with additional support from a variety of state agencies and non-profits. The IAA counts more than 700 individuals and organizations in its membership, including afterschool programs and afterschool champions and advocates. The IAA is staffed by State Public Policy Group, Inc., and the Chrysalis Foundation serves as fiscal agent.

To continually strive for access to high quality afterschool programming for all Iowa children and youth, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance recognizes the following long-term priorities for afterschool in Iowa:

1. The creation of a single, sustainable source of funding for afterschool programs in Iowa to meet known demand for funding to provide programming to children and youth around the state.
2. The creation of a formal state-level Council to study afterschool demand and possible solutions.
3. Considering the importance of afterschool programming in the overall educational success of Iowa's students, especially in those communities facing challenges through poverty, high crime rates, and those recovering from disasters.



Public Opinion of Afterschool in Iowa:
Programming is Essential for Our Children and Youth