

After School In Connecticut

*What are kids doing
after school?*



Connecticut
After School
Network

What We Learned

The initial findings of this survey are striking in the picture they paint of our children's after school hours as one of a hodgepodge of supervised and unsupervised care.

Seventy-five percent of students' waking time takes place outside of regular school hours. Programs that provide supervision and learning opportunities after school and during school vacations—while parents are working—offer a tremendous opportunity for investment in the future of our state and our nation.

The survey results challenge us to think about how we can make better use of these hours, especially when enrichment, recreational and social time are being squeezed out of the regular school day. There is a growing body of evidence, backed by research, linking after school program participation to positive outcomes for children and youth including educational success for those who attend programs on a regular basis. At a minimum, the benefits include providing a safe place for young people, keeping them off the streets and out of trouble and from spending too much time watching TV and playing video games.

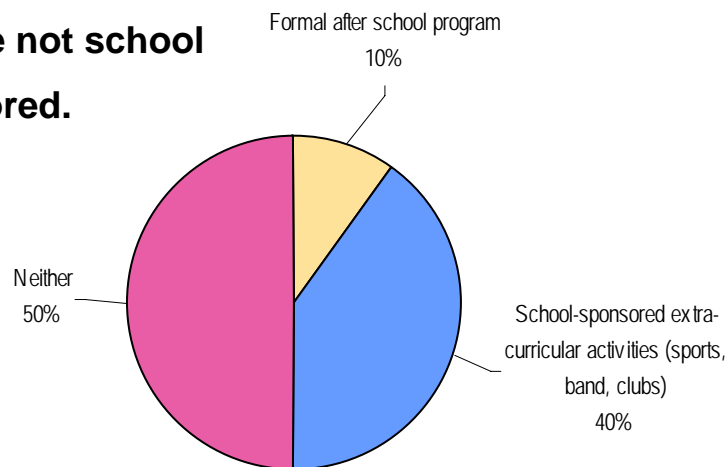
We know that the learning day doesn't end when the school bell rings — and we know that for most families, parents' work days don't end with the school bell either. Our choice is clear — we can leave our kids to their own devices, or we can provide enriching opportunities that help them grow into the multi-skilled adults we hope they will become.

Only
1 in 10 children
participate in a
structured after
school program

Focusing on school-age children ages five to fourteen, parents (or guardians) reported that only 10% participate in a structured after school program or child care center. Another 40% participate in some school-sponsored activities when school is out such as school athletic teams or clubs. Children's after school care looks a lot like a patchwork quilt, with kids spending time in a variety of settings—with parents or other adults, siblings, in formal after school programs or child care centers and by themselves.

Some formal after school programs are located at schools and some children participate in both formal after school programs and school sponsored extra-curricular activities. However, not every school offers extra-curricular activities for children ages five to fourteen, and some children participate in sports and activities that are not school sponsored.

Half do not participate in school-sponsored extra-curricular activities



One in
seven
children
regularly
spends
time after
school
looking
after him or
herself

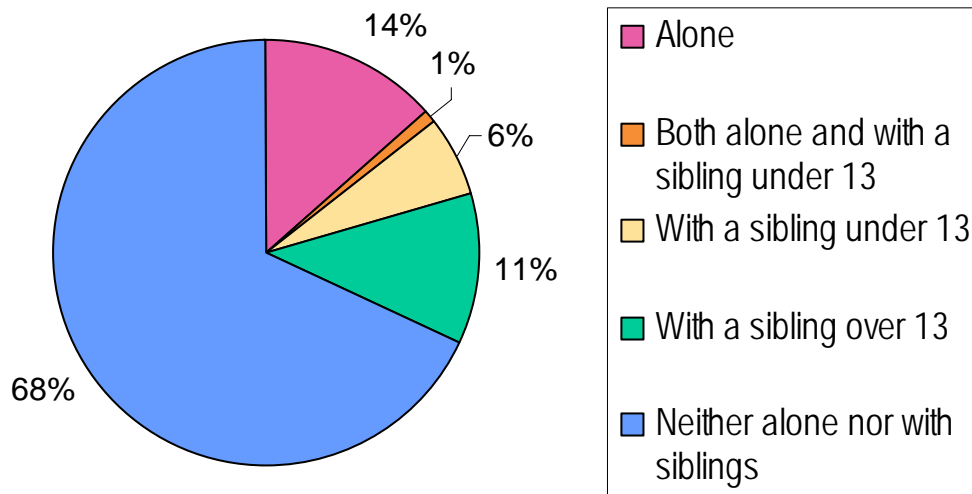
Thousands of
Connecticut children
go home to an empty
house after school.

This can result in
conditions for chil-
dren and youth that
leave them vulnerable
to risky situations
and increase the
opportunities to
engage in unsafe
behaviors.

The risks associated
with children left
alone and in self-care

include developmental and safety risks, an
increased probability of substance abuse,
delinquent behavior and sexual experimen-
tation. Unsupervised children are also at
higher risk of becoming victims of crimes.

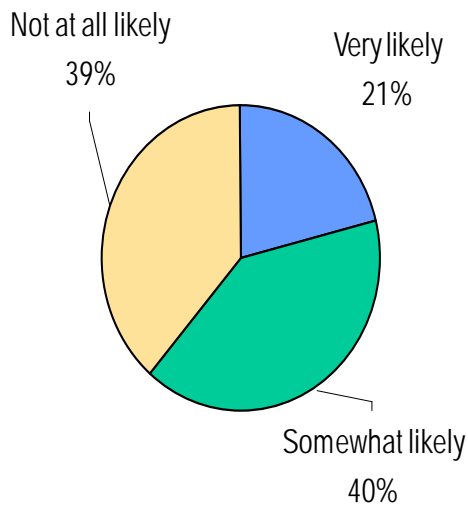
Some of these children are also caring for younger siblings. Seven percent (7%) of the kids in our sample were watched by a sibling age 12 or younger, and another 11% spent some time in the care of a sibling age 13 or older.



Many more children and families would take advantage of after school programs if programs were available in their communities that were safe and enriching as well as affordable and convenient.

Six out of ten parents

with children who do not participate in a formal after school program would likely enroll their kids if more after school programs were available and met their needs



Families face barriers, such as cost and accessibility that make enrolling in after school programs difficult, if not impossible.

⇒ **38% of parents agree that costs limit their options when it comes to choosing after school care**

⇒ **37% of parents agree that finding after school care that meets their needs is a challenge**

⇒ **Among parents whose children do not participate in formal after school programs, 28% agree that the options for after school care in their communities are limited.**

**Finding
high-
quality
affordable
after
school
programs
can be a
challenge**

After school programs help parents work

For parents with children in formal after school programs:

- ♦ **78 % agree that having their child in a supervised after school program helps them miss work less often.**
- ♦ **95% agree that knowing that their child is in a supervised after school program helps them better focus on their jobs during those hours.**

For those parents whose children do not participate in an after school program:

- ♦ **23% agree that they would miss less work if their child/children were in such a program.**
- ♦ **36% agree that they would be better able to focus on their jobs if their child/children were in such a program.**

For the 57% of the parents in our survey that work outside the home during the after school hours:

- ♦ **22% said they worry all or most of the time about their children during these non-school hours while they are at work, and another 20% said they worry sometimes.**

These survey results support other research findings by the Brandeis University *Community, Families & Work Program* (Barnett & Gareis, 2004) that showed that parents with high levels of parental after-school stress report significantly more job disruptions (on average five days of missed work per year per employee) and lower productivity than do their counterparts with low levels of parental after school stress.

Parents with
kids in formal
after school
programs
overwhelmingly
agree that
these programs
help their
families

Program's hours of
operation meet
their needs

Child enjoys their
after school
program

Program gives the
child opportunity to
be physically
active

Program helps
their child develop
social skills

Program helps
their child do better
in school



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Why we conducted this poll

The Connecticut After School Network commissioned this poll in order to measure and better understand how kids are spending their time when they're not in school, how their families made choices about child care and the effects of these choices. It is important that leaders in government, business and civic organizations know the complex reality that families face and what their options are when making public policy decisions.

Who we surveyed

This survey was conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. A total of 513 parents or guardians with at least one child between the ages of 5 and 14 were selected at random from across Connecticut and interviewed by telephone between November 15 and December 19, 2005. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error is plus/minus 4.5%.

About the Connecticut After School Network

The Network's vision is that every Connecticut child and youth will have the opportunity to participate in high quality affordable after school programs.

We are a partnership of organizations, after school professionals and other individuals working to make this vision a reality.

Our mission is to lead, educate and advocate for excellence in the after school field by building professionalism, strengthening program quality and increasing availability and affordability.

**Connecticut
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