

Wyoming Afterschool Alliance Stakeholder & Policymaker Assessment and Evaluation of Programs

Survey on Afterschool/Out-of-School Time Programs

RESULTS

Prepared by The Third Mile Group



As part of the evaluation and assessment of afterschool programs in Wyoming, The Third Mile Group (TMG) conducted a survey in May 2011 to glean information about what a variety of individuals and role groups know generally about afterschool and/or out-of-school programs. Approximately 1,400 people from the following role groups and organizations in the state of Wyoming were invited to complete the survey:

State Legislators	Health and Human Services
Congressional Delegation	Wyoming Youth Services Association
Wyoming Department of Education	Native American Liaisons
Board of Education	Foundations
Higher Education	21st Century Learning Centers
Community Colleges	Mayors
School Principals	City Councils
Teachers	County Commissioners
Superintendents	Cooperative Extensions
Wyoming School Board Association	Parks and Recreation
Wyoming Education Association	Wyoming Council for Women's Issues
PTA-PEN-PIC	Industry
Early Childhood	Child Advocacy
Juvenile Justice	United Way
Workforce Services	

The survey was available online through Survey Monkey for five weeks. A reminder notice was sent two after the first notice to increase the response rate. A total of 409 people responded, although not all respondents answered all questions. The survey consisted of 35 questions that were both multiple choice and open-ended, and covered the following categories around afterschool and out-of-school-time programs:

- Demographics
- General Knowledge of Afterschool/OST Programs
- Current Programs
- Policy Support
- Access and Affordability
- Advocacy/Funding
- Summary

All answers and comments submitted by respondents are completely anonymous, although respondents were asked to indicate their county. All Wyoming counties are represented in the survey results, with the most responses from Natrona County (59) and the fewest from Sublette County (5).

Demographics

The following role groups responded to the survey by the percentages and numbers indicated:

TABLE 1: ROLE GROUPS			
Role Group	(n=409)	Response %	Response #
State Policymakers		3.9%	16
Colleges/Universities		6.1%	25
K-12 Teachers		26.2%	107
K-12 Principals		14.7%	60
Program Providers		8.1%	33
Funders		1.2%	5
Parents		14.2%	58
Other		28.1%	115

Respondents in the “Other” category included individuals from the various groups invited to complete the survey: superintendents, board members, counselors, and individuals from city and county government, workforce development, juvenile justice, special education, business and industry, law enforcement, city recreation, and non-profit organizations.

General Knowledge of Afterschool/OST Programs

A majority of respondents (96%) indicated that they are familiar with afterschool and out-of-school-time (OST) programs such as Boys and Girls Club, 4H Clubs, YMCA, scouting, church programs, arts, sports, and/or academic enrichment activities. Specific programs mentioned by respondents included all of these or similar examples.

To gauge respondents’ general knowledge and opinions about afterschool/OST programs, the first open-ended question of the survey asked, what are the key purposes of such programs? Responses ran the gamut from simple babysitting, i.e., keeping kids safe and occupied while parents work, to more substantial activities such as academic enrichment, including tutoring or remediation; extending or expanding learning; and fostering both personal and social skill development through organized group activities such as sports, clubs, and games. Regardless of whether programs provide high-quality enrichment activities or just daycare, most respondents indicated that an underlying purpose of all afterschool/OST programs is to keep children occupied during the time after school ends and before parents are home from work. And a majority of respondents were very positive about such programs, indicating that they benefit students by fostering positive behavior and personal growth, and by providing enrichment, academic assistance, social networks, and safety. They benefit the community by promoting community values and citizenship,

contributing to community projects, employing program providers, and keeping children in a safe environment (and away from “trouble” in the community). Afterschool/OST programs benefit families by caring for students while parents are at work, and by providing structure, additional learning opportunities, socialization, and community engagement to participating students.

The survey also asked respondents whom they think afterschool/OST programs are for. Again, answers covered a very broad spectrum:

- All children
- Children aged 3 through high school
- K-8 students
- K-12 students
- At-risk youth
- Low-income children
- Children with working parents
- Children whose parents want or need daycare
- Students in need of academic help
- Motivated and/or high-achieving students
- Children whose family can afford such programs
- Children whose parents want greater opportunities for them
- Children of parents who cannot or do not want to take care of them.

This broad range of answers was found in all responding role groups; no single group indicated that one type of child or population was more likely to or should participate in afterschool/OST programs over any other type of child. Some answers indicated that the school district or community makes a difference, for example, in smaller communities most or all children participate in the available programs. In some cases the school district determines if a child should participate in a particular program. In some communities opportunities are not available for all age groups and/or school levels. The economy is also a factor: responses indicated that some families cannot afford the programs. On the other hand, working parents, especially those with more than one job, rely on the programs to take care of their children during work hours.

Current Programs

Quality of Programs

A majority (48.2%) of all respondents rated the quality of programs in their school district or community as good. A smaller percentage (28.9%) felt that program quality was excellent; 15.3% indicated the quality to be fair; 2.8% rated the quality as poor; and 8% of respondents were not sure. This response pattern (most rating the program quality as good) held across all role groups except two: the majority of Program Providers (53.8%) felt program quality is excellent, and an equal number of respondents from State Agencies rated program quality as excellent and good (35.7% in each category).

As part of the question on quality, respondents were asked to name programs they had in mind. Out of 205 responses, the specific programs praised most frequently were: Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Lights On, 4H Club, and YMCA, along with sports and arts activities. Responses indicated that some programs were not well run because of inadequate number and/or training of staff, insufficient funding, and insufficient coordination with schools/districts.

Strengths and Challenges

The most common strengths of the programs respondents had in mind were: safe environment, structure/supervision, enrichment/additional opportunities for children, professional/trained staff, and imparting skills and/or positive behaviors. Survey respondents were asked what *types* of programs exhibited the strengths cited above and were given a list of options. Results are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: TYPE OF PROGRAM EXHIBITING STRENGTHS		
<i>What types of programs exhibit strengths? (n=232)</i>	Response %	Response #
School-based	79.3%	184
Summer	54.7%	127
Licensed childcare	26.3%	61
Faith-based	36.6%	85
Not sure	9.5%	22
Other	22.4%	52

Programs listed under “Other” included Boys/Girls Club, scouting, recreation centers, Destination Imagination, community programs, and non-profit programs.

Survey respondents also were asked to identify the challenges and/or areas needing improvement in afterschool/OST programs. The most commonly cited challenge was funding, followed by outreach/communication, qualified staff, adequate number of staff, transportation, parental involvement and support, and affordability. Some respondents also mentioned the need for greater diversity of program options, better hours of operation, more volunteers, and adequate facilities. Not surprisingly, some of the programs identified as having strengths – Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, scouting, 4H Club, school-based programs – were also cited as having challenges. One survey respondent described this contradiction well: “All programs have challenges...and all programs could be better.” Accordingly, the *types* of programs with challenges – listed in Table 3 below – mirror the *types* of programs that exhibited strengths, with school-based programs at the top of the list, followed by summer programs and licensed childcare.

TABLE 3: TYPE OF PROGRAM WITH CHALLENGES		
<i>What types of programs have challenges or need improvement? (n=208)</i>	Response %	Response #
School-based	59.1%	123
Summer	45.7%	95
Licensed childcare	29.3%	61
Faith-based	23.6%	49
Not sure	22.6%	47
Other	17.8%	37

Respondents were asked what might improve the quality of programs and were presented with a list of possible solutions – see Table 4 below. The highest rated solution mirrored the most commonly cited challenge: funding. A majority of survey respondents (65.3%) indicated that more resources are needed for program enhancement. Similarly, the next two highest rated answers – more knowledgeable staff and more communication/marketing – address two of the frequently mentioned challenges faced by many of the programs, namely, qualified staff and outreach and communication. The “Other” responses to what might improve program quality addressed some of the other challenges cited by survey respondents, including increased parental support and engagement, improved facilities, and coordination between programs and schools (including using a central database). Also mentioned under “Other” were quality standards, more programs for Pre-K students, and engagement with business. The individual role group survey results mirrored the results of all survey respondents.

TABLE 4: WHAT MIGHT IMPROVE QUALITY?		
<i>What might improve the quality of programs? (n=219)</i>	Response %	Response #
More knowledgeable staff	42.5%	93
More resources for program enhancement	65.3%	
Better transportation services	32.9%	72
Longer times offered each day	21.0%	46
Easier access to enroll in programs	19.2%	42
More communication and marketing	43.4%	95
Not sure	15.1%	33
Other	13.2%	29

Need for More Programs, Type and Location

Respondents were asked if their school, district or community needs more afterschool/OST programs. Out of 249 responses from *all* role groups, a majority – 51.4% (128) – answered yes, 28.9% (72) answered no, and 19.7% (49) indicated they were not sure. A number of comments to this question indicated that some communities have sufficient programs, although there might be gaps in service for certain age groups or school levels, and, again, reaching children and parents to participate is a challenge.

The majority of Program Providers (53.8%) answered no to this question about needing more programs. Comments indicated that current programs are sufficient and adequate. Also, 50% of State Policymakers answered no to this question. One respondent commented: “There is a need to make our current programs more effective.”

Respondents who indicated that more programs are needed were asked why and presented with a set of options – see Table 5 below. “Additional learning opportunities” was the highest rated reason, followed by “more safe activities for children after school.”

TABLE 5: WHY MORE PROGRAMS?		
<i>Why does your school/district/ community need more afterschool/OST programs? (n=123)</i>	Response %	Response #
More academic support for children	70.7%	87
More childcare options	36.6%	45
More extracurricular activities	59.3%	73
More sports activities	24.4%	30
More safe activities for children after school	77.2%	95
Additional learning opportunities for children	79.7%	98
To give children something to do after school	68.3%	84
Other	4.9%	6

In response to *where* are more programs needed, such as school, district, county or region, most respondents indicated either the district or the community (city/county). A smaller number felt that schools needed more programs and very few indicated a need statewide.

In response to *what type* of additional programs are needed, respondents cited all the examples given by the survey: academic enrichment, arts, sports, remediation programs, faith-based initiatives, mentoring, games, clubs – with particular emphasis on academic enrichment. Tutoring and ELL classes also were mentioned.

POLICY SUPPORT

The first question in this section asked respondents if they think statewide policies – from the Legislature, Governor or State Board of Education – are needed to support high-quality afterschool/OST programming. Out of 243 people who answered the question, 69.5% (169) responded yes and 30.5% (74) responded no. Results were similar among the specific role groups except Colleges and Universities who split 50-50 on the question, and the majority of State Policymakers (75%) do not feel statewide policies are needed to support afterschool/OST programs. Comments from policymakers on this question indicated that schools, districts and communities “should be allowed to create and manage their own programs.” On the other hand, comments from Program Providers – 88% of who answered yes to this question – indicated that policies are necessary to sustain funding for programs, and also “are an excellent way to embed lasting change.” Several comments on this question from all role groups praised the Wyoming Bridges Program, which was created through state policy. A number of people echoed the Program Providers on the need for policy to provide and sustain funding, and also to provide rigor and accountability. Other comments echoed the majority of policymakers, in that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work in every community in the state. Clearly survey respondents were on both sides of the need for policy to support programming, and those positions often reflected one’s place in the larger picture, i.e., parent, a practitioner, a leader, or decisionmaker.

Respondents were then asked if they think policies – state, district and/or community – present barriers to offering high-quality afterschool/OST programming, and if so, to identify the type of barrier from a list of options. Out of 242 responses, 68.2% said yes, policies do present barriers to high-quality programs; 9.9% said no; and 21.9% were not sure. The types of state, district and community barriers to high-quality programs, as rated by survey respondents, are presented in the next three tables.

TABLE 6: STATE POLICY BARRIERS		
<i>What types of STATE policies present barriers to high-quality afterschool/OST programs? (n=162)</i>	Response %	Response #
Funding	72.2%	117
Access to student data	16.7%	27
Employee contract rules	21.6%	35
Accountability rules	28.4%	46
Program licensing rules	17.3%	28
Program quality rules	22.2%	36
Program access rules	14.2%	23
Not sure	21.0%	34
Other	7.4%	12

Specific comments on this question reiterated many of the barriers listed in the table, as well as lack of sustained commitment from all stakeholders, federal and state compliance rules, and eligibility rules (for example, requiring at least 25% Free and Reduced Lunch students to qualify for some kinds of funding).

TABLE 7: DISTRICT POLICY BARRIERS		
<i>What types of DISTRICT policies present barriers to high-quality afterschool/OST programs? (n=153)</i>	Response %	Response #
Transportation	45.1%	69
Building use rules	34.6%	53
Teacher contract rules	28.8%	44
Access to student data	16.3%	25
Student/family access to participation in programs	37.3%	57
Not sure	25.5%	39
Other	8.5%	13

It is worth noting that several respondents on this question commented that their district does not pose barriers to programming. One barrier that was mentioned was communication and cooperation between and among schools and program providers.

TABLE 8: COMMUNITY POLICY BARRIERS		
<i>What types of COMMUNITY policies present barriers to high-quality afterschool/OST programs? (n=154)</i>	Response %	Response #
Funding	64.3%	99
Affordability	55.2%	85
Community/municipality support	35.1%	54
Lack of locations to host programs	40.3%	62
Lack of providers	48.7%	75
Families don't want or won't use	35.7%	55
Transportation	46.8%	72
Safety	15.6%	24
Not sure	7.1%	11
Other	3.9%	6

Specific comments on the Community policies question reiterated some of the barriers listed above. Also mentioned was a lack of qualified program providers. A couple of comments also discussed parental engagement and willingness to send their children to afterschool/OST programs. Many respondents throughout the survey – not just on these questions of barriers – noted that often the children who are most in need of programs – for remediation, socialization, positive behavior reinforcement, or academic enrichment –

do not participate, for various and often unknown reasons. This issue may be one of outreach and communication on the part of schools and/or program providers, and some respondents indicated it might also be a cultural issue.

ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The first question in this section asked how people in the community find out about afterschool/OST programs. Respondents were given a list of possible sources – see Table 9 below. Schools and districts are the major source of information about afterschool/OST programs.

TABLE 9: HOW DO PEOPLE FIND OUT ABOUT PROGRAMS?		
<i>How do people in your community find out about afterschool/OST programs? (n=239)</i>	Response %	Response #
School/District	82.0%	196
Publications/newspaper	66.5%	159
Childcare Finder (Resource Referral)	14.6%	54
Church	25.5%	61
Not sure	18.4%	44

Respondent comments listed a number of other sources as well, including word of mouth, telephone, radio advertisements, fundraiser events, flyers, newsletters, community bulletin boards, parent networks, recreation centers, and friends.

Next, respondents were asked if there is adequate access to afterschool/OST programming in their area. Out of 240 responses, 50% (120 people) said yes, 28.8% (69) said no, and 21.7% (52) were not sure. Respondents described a number of barriers to and problems with access:

- Funding and affordability
- Adequate staffing
- Not enough spaces for students
- Transportation
- Communication/outreach
- Language
- Parental engagement
- Hours that are convenient and coordinated with schools and other programs
- Sufficient number of facilities

Respondents were asked if afterschool/OST programs are affordable. Out of 240 responses the majority (61.7%) indicated yes, 13.3% said no, and 27.1% indicated they were not sure. In their comments respondents indicated that “affordability” is a complex issue. Some programs are free and some are not. Some are free to participants but not to the providers.

Some programs are not affordable to all families – many communities have high poverty rates. In many cases a mix of state and local funding along with parents paying fees make programs affordable for children to participate.

An equal number of respondents felt that affordability/cost both is and is not a barrier to families taking advantage of afterschool/OST programs. Out of 238 total respondents, 43.3% (103 individuals) indicated yes, affordability/cost is a barrier; 43.7% (104) indicated no, it is not; 13.9% indicated they were not sure. Respondent's comments reiterated that many programs are, in fact, free so families do not have to pay for their children to participate. Some programs also provide meals as well as scholarships or financial aid. On the other hand, because some communities have high poverty rates, some afterschool programs are simply not affordable for some families. In addition, some respondents noted that some families may not know about available resources to help cover the costs of programs.

ADVOCACY/FUNDING

The first question in this section asked: What information would you need to advocate for and support afterschool and out-of-school-time programming in your community or in the state? Out of 194 people who answered the question, 116, or 59.7%, indicated they were not sure. A majority of the remaining 78 respondents indicated that data and specific details about the programs are the most needed information. A number of respondents cited the need to know general facts about particular programs: goals and activities; number of children served; costs; location; hours; staff/personnel; and age groups/grade levels to be served.

Several respondents indicated a need for more in-depth data such as the program design and evaluation plan; outcome measures and/or assessments that indicate the effectiveness of the program; and information on how the program is funded, how dollars are spent, and how many children benefit from those dollars.

A third area of needed data cited by some survey respondents was research and analysis, as described below:

- Identification of children in the community who would benefit
- Determination of legitimacy and relevancy of programs and evaluation that identified needs are met
- Satisfaction surveys and feedback from program providers, parents and schools on barriers/challenges
- Measure of participants' academic performance as result of participating in the program
- Measure of participants' social and personal behavior as result of participating in the program.

A couple of respondents also suggested that the juvenile justice division is an important stakeholder for determining the needs for programs and identifying children to be served. Many respondents indicated they would want to have personal knowledge of a program in order to support it. Finally, many respondents commented that they already are advocates and supporters of afterschool/OST programming.

Respondents were asked where they think support for afterschool/OST should come from, and were given a list of options. See Table 10 below. The majority of respondents – 76% – indicated that support should come from the state. In the “Other” category respondents suggested that funding could come from parents, recreation districts, private donors, community coalitions, faith-based organizations, and grants. Quite a few of the “Other” respondents also suggested that all sources should share the responsibility to fund and support programs that benefit children, families and communities. Two respondents expressed it well: “It takes a whole community” and “Communities should work together.”

TABLE 10: WHERE SHOULD PROGRAM SUPPORT COME FROM?		
<i>Where do you think support for afterschool/OST programs should come from?</i> (n=229)	Response %	Response #
Cities/Counties	61.1	140
State funds (education, juvenile justice, health and human services, other)	76.0%	174
Federal funds (education, juvenile justice, health and human services, other)	59.4%	136
Foundations	52.0%	119
Business Community	46.7%	104
Realignment of current funding	30.1%	69
Investment of new funds	21.8%	50
Other	13%	30

In that vein, respondents were asked if they had ideas on how *current funding* should be coordinated to support afterschool/OST programs. Out of 159 people who answered the question, the majority (66%) did not have any ideas. Among a number of suggestions that were made, the primary recommendation was “more interagency coordination, collaboration, and cooperation.” Also, quite a few respondents noted that the Wyoming Bridges is an excellent example of interagency collaboration and should be expanded for all children. Other respondents suggested that specific agencies or entities to be in charge of coordinating efforts and funding, for example, Department of Health, Education and Family Services, Title I, community-based organizations and/or coalitions, or recreation districts. Many people were against having the state or federal government oversee coordination. One final suggestion was to ensure that grants require a community component that will foster collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders.

Respondents were then asked if they have ideas for *new sources* of funding to support

afterschool/OST programs. Out of 156 responses, 67.3% (105) did not have any ideas. The remaining 51 respondents suggested a variety of sources, including parents, businesses, grants, endowments, philanthropy, fundraisers, ARRA funds, and increased taxes on alcohol. Comments on this question also reiterated the need for collaboration among stakeholders – communities, schools and districts, and the state. One suggestion was to put students to work on a supervised project that would generate some dollars, and another respondent suggested re-appropriating dollars from prisons to youth programs, the idea being to invest in young people at an early age to keep them off a pathway toward crime and/or welfare.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Respondents were asked if they are familiar with the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance (WYAA), and if so, to indicate what they know about it. Out of 237 responses from all role groups, only 37.4% (89 people) were aware of WYAA; 62.6% (149) were not. Among the 66 comments received on what people know about WYAA, about half of the respondents knew very little, only the name and that it has something to do with afterschool programming. The other half were more knowledgeable about WYAA’s role as advocate, resource, and supporter of afterschool/OST programs and training.

Responses to this question varied when broken down by role group. Unsurprisingly, 80.8% of program providers were familiar with WYAA, but only 19.4% of K-12 teachers were. Results from all role groups are presented in Table 11 below.

TABLE 11: FAMILIAR WITH WYOMING AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE				
<i>Have you heard of or are you familiar with the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance</i>	YES Response %	YES Response #	NO Response %	NO Response #
All Role Groups (n=237)	37.4%	89	62.6%	149
College & University	50.0%	8	50.0%	8
Funders	50.0%	2	50.0%	2
K-12 Principals	45.5%	15	54.5%	18
K-12 Teachers	19.4%	12	80.6%	50
Other	38.6%	22	61.4%	35
Parent	14.7%	5	85.3%	29
Program Provider	80.8%	21	19.2%	5
State Agency	53.8%	7	46.2%	6
State Policymaker	41.7%	5	58.3%	7

Finally, respondents were given one last opportunity to share any additional comments or opinions about afterschool and out- of-school-time programs in Wyoming. Seventy-three individuals offered comments and suggestions. The majority of these were positive about afterschool/OST programs, citing the benefits of such programs for communities and reiterating that programs do make a difference for children, families and communities. Comments also discussed the discrepancies between programs across the state and the

need for sustained funding. Many communities do not have enough options, or the most-needed types of programs are not available in certain communities. While there were a couple of negative and cynical comments about poor parenting and “a statewide non-profit looking for a problem to solve their answers,” there were some more thoughtful concerns expressed about the realities of American families today and the cultural changes taking place. Many if not most families need both parents to be working in order to make a home and provide for the family, so afterschool programs for children are not just an option but also a necessity for many people. And beyond that, these programs are and can be much more than simple childcare. The numerous programs available in the state of Wyoming seek to provide high-quality academic and social opportunities to young people – to expand or improve learning, to introduce or sharpen skills, and to engage or deepen social relationships and attachments. Certainly the survey results have indicated that the quality and breadth of programs in the state are not uniform, and that efforts must be made at all levels – school, district, community, and state – to achieve statewide consistency and cooperation. Equally important is the role of parents and families, not only to participate in programs but also to support and advocate them as important contributors to children’s lives and livelihoods.