



# Wisconsin Afterschool Champions Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

Anyone can be a champion for afterschool and summer learning programs, but as a program leader, parent or youth ambassador, you're especially well placed to make the case for the benefits of out-of-school time programming. Advocating for afterschool is an important way to raise awareness for your program and the opportunities and benefits they provide to youth and to the community. Use the messages and materials below to identify and connect with families, decisionmakers, stakeholders and youth—and turn them into afterschool champions, too.

If you have questions about using this toolkit, please email: [wosta@marshfieldclinc.org](mailto:wosta@marshfieldclinc.org)

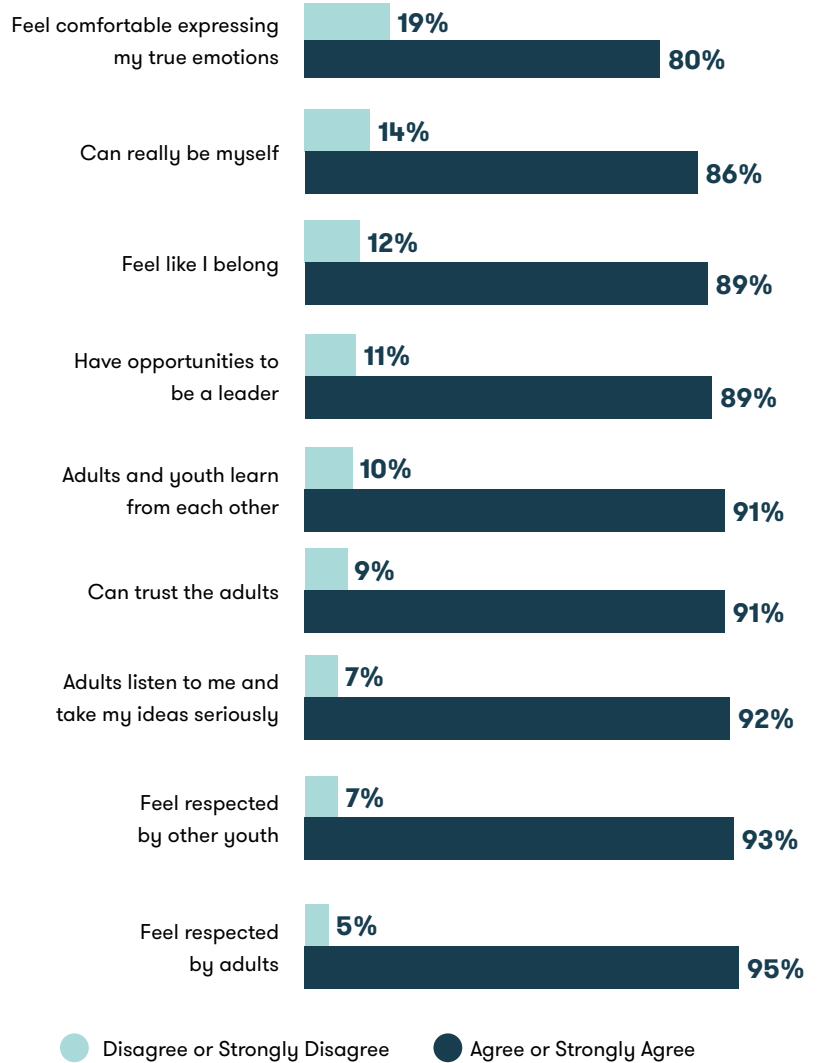


# GENERAL MESSAGES

## THE STATE OF AFTERSCHOOL IN WISCONSIN

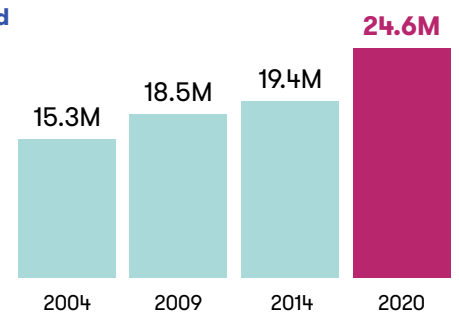
- Afterschool and summer learning programs help Wisconsin kids, families and communities thrive, but right now we don't have enough programs and the programs we do have don't have the capacity to support every child who wants to participate. For every child in an afterschool program in Wisconsin, two more are waiting to get in. Connect with us to learn about the out-of-school time programming we offer and how we're working to increase access for more students.
- More than 115,000 kids in Wisconsin benefit from afterschool and summer learning programs that help them do better in school, build life skills and explore careers—and more investment could expand those opportunities to thousands more. Connect with us to learn about the out-of-school time programming we offer and how it could benefit more kids through those funds.
- 96% of Wisconsin parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program, and out-of-school time programming is proven to support working parents who need a safe place for their kids to go after school. Afterschool and summer learning programs create opportunities and build healthy futures for kids, families and our state on the whole.
- Afterschool and summer learning programs are proven to equip kids for success in school, keep kids supervised and safe, and help communities thrive. Our kids, families and businesses depend on afterschool. We need your support to ensure these essential education programs are a priority for Wisconsin!
- Afterschool and summer learning programs keep young people safe and engage youth in enriching activities that help them build life skills and healthy relationships. But in Wisconsin, where the unmet demand for afterschool is high, we must expand program availability to meet the needs of kids and families today. Connect with us to learn about the out-of-school time programming we offer and how we're working to increase access for more students.

## What Youth Say About Afterschool



## More Programs are Needed

Nearly **25 million** children are missing out  
 Unmet demand for programs has **grown 60%** since 2004

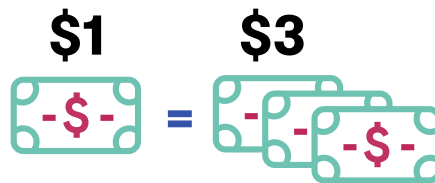


# AFTERSCHOOL AND HEALTHY FUTURES

- Afterschool and summer programs play an important role in supporting the healthy development of young people and are all the more critical today. Approximately 6 in 10 parents are more worried about their child’s emotional well-being today than they were before the pandemic, and missing out on social connections and friendships is a top concern for parents.
- Supporting health and wellness is an important aspect of out-of-school time programs, from providing youth access to nutritious meals and snacks to promoting healthy habits and engaging students in safe, fun physical activity. Afterschool program staff work with students, families, schools and other community partners, helping to provide the positive settings, relationships, and experiences that are the foundational building blocks for young people’s healthy development.
- Juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs and alcohol spike in the hours of 3:00 to 6:00 pm. Afterschool and summer learning programs help children make smart decisions and avoid risky behaviors.



## Afterschool as a Community Health Strategy



Every **\$1** invested in afterschool programs saves taxpayers at least **\$3** by:

- ↑ improving kids’ school performance
- ↑ increasing their earning potential
- ↓ reducing crime and welfare costs

## AFTERSCHOOL AND LEARNING

- Out-of-school time programs help children learn, grow and realize their full potential. Afterschool and summer learning programs inspire children to learn by giving them engaging, hands-on and fun projects, and opportunities to express themselves creatively.
- Out-of-school time programs spark interest in school so students attend school more often, get better grades, and are more likely to graduate.
- Teachers report that students in afterschool programs show more interest in learning, behave better, and complete their homework assignments.
- Regular participation in afterschool programs provides new learning opportunities and helps boost students’ reading and math performance and grades.
- While all youth benefit from quality out-of-school time programs, young people from families with low incomes benefit most—and the benefits last. Students who regularly attend continue to improve their academic performance and see meaningful results into young adulthood.



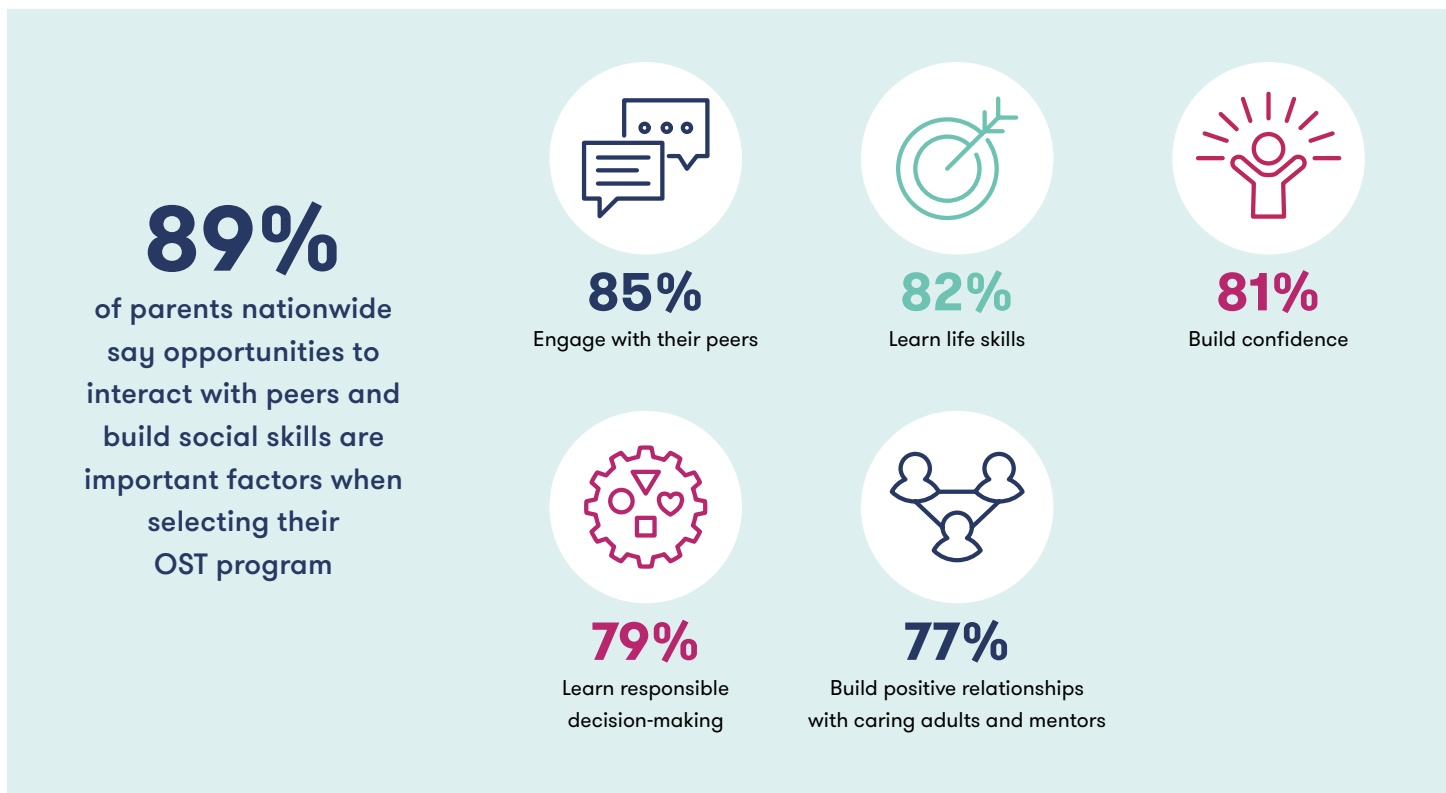


# AFTERSCHOOL AND FAMILIES

- Nearly 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised. They don't have to worry about where their kids are or what they are doing after school lets out.
- 80% of parents agree that afterschool programs allow children to build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors. Caregivers are able to focus on providing for their families rather than worrying about their children's supervision.
- Wisconsin kids spend about 34 hours a week in school, and their parents work an average of 40 hours a week. Afterschool programs close the child care gap by providing a safe place for youth to go when schools let out and parents are still working.
- 85% of Wisconsin parents support public funding for afterschool.

All of the data in the messages are from the following sources, where you can also access more data about afterschool and summer learning.

- America After 3PM
- Wisconsin After 3PM
- Evidence Base for Afterschool and Summer
- Afterschool in Wisconsin



# WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS?

The sustainability of your afterschool program depends on outreach and relationship-building with a variety of leaders who can help you build new connections in your community and expand your support. It takes time, effort, and a team to build meaningful collaborations—there is no need to go it alone.

Some stakeholders and decision makers you should think about including in your advocacy include:

- School principals
- Parks & Recreation directors
- School superintendents
- Mayors or city council members
- Social Services directors
- State and congressional legislators
- Police chiefs

Each stakeholder can help you access different support that’s integral to the success of your program, so it’s important to cast a wide net with your advocacy.

Use [this worksheet](#) to help you identify afterschool stakeholders in your community and potential new funding sources to support your afterschool program.

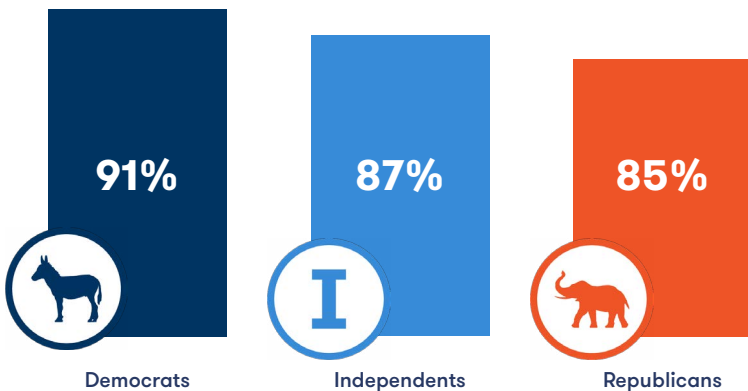
## Communities support afterschool programs

Parents want afterschool programs funded

# 87%

of parents favor public funding of afterschool programs to expand opportunities for kids in underserved communities

## Support is strong and bipartisan





## HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Now that you've identified who you want to reach, it's time to take action. Here are a few strategies that you can explore:

### Hold an "Advocacy Minute" at the beginning of a training, workshop, or speech

- Before a training or event, share one or more of the graphics on the next page. Ask the participants to consider how they could educate or share the information with stakeholders. Encourage them to plan for opportunities to champion afterschool.

### Send an email to decisionmakers

- Use this [template email](#) to communicate with champions and decisionmakers about the value of your program. It can be tailored with program-specific data or stories.

### Be a champion for your program on social media

- Use the social posts and graphics below to post on social platforms about the value of your program, and encourage others to share your posts.

### Organize a letter writing session

- Writing to your legislator can be difficult if you are doing it on your own. Gather a group of friends, community members, and/or colleagues to come together and write letters to your legislators together. You can bounce ideas off one another, proofread each other's letters and provide support.

### Conduct a program site visit

- Learn how to successfully set up and execute a site visit for stakeholders or decision makers by using this Afterschool Alliance resource. This site visit resource uses a Congressperson as an example but it can be modified to invite any stakeholder or decisionmaker in your community.

### Register yourself and your friends to vote

- Participating in local, state and federal elections is a crucial form of advocacy.
- Make sure you and the people you know are registered to vote in time for the next election in your area.
- You can register to vote in Wisconsin [here](#).

# SOCIAL POSTS AND GRAPHICS

In Wisconsin, **115,487** students are enrolled in afterschool, and **267,601** are waiting for an available program.

The infographic features two categories: 'Enrolled' with an illustration of a girl jumping over a hurdle, and 'Waiting' with an illustration of two children standing side-by-side.

For every child enrolled in afterschool in WI, 2 more are waiting to get in. Let’s invest in these programs and expand out-of-school time opportunities for youth across our state.

In Wisconsin, **afterschool is prevention.**

Expand out-of-school time opportunities and **build a healthy future for all Wisconsin youth.**

Afterschool helps Wisconsin thrive! Out-of-school time programs are proven to promote healthy futures for our youth—so let’s ensure these vital programs get the funding they need to support WI kids.

**Helping Wisconsin Thrive**  
[Program Name]

[Program Name] is an afterschool and summer learning program serving ## kids in the XX community. It provides STEM programming, arts and music education, and social and emotional learning.

At [program name], we serve ## children and help them learn and grow in a safe and engaging environment. Learn more about the programs we offer: [link to site]

96% of Wisconsin parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program.

The donut chart is a circular graphic with a teal border and a light blue center, with the number '96%' prominently displayed in the center.


WI parents agree that afterschool has a positive impact on their children’s lives and their own. Let’s expand out-of-school time programs to support WI youth and their families!

**Afterschool is an investment in youth, families and our state.**

Support out-of-school time opportunities to **help Wisconsin thrive.**

From supporting working parents to improving academic outcomes, afterschool and summer learning programs play a vital role in our community. Let’s make sure that every child who wants to participate in out-of-school time programs has the opportunity to!

# ONE PAGERS



**WOSTA**  
Wisconsin Out of School Time Alliance

## The Value of School District-Operated Afterschool Programs

Why is an afterschool program the right fit for your school and community? More and more schools are discovering the value of afterschool programs not only to the school, but also children, families, and communities.

**Values to School**

- Improve academic outcomes
- Improve school attendance
- Support development of social well-being
- Increase student enrollment and retention

**Value to Youth**

- Gain self-control and confidence
- Explore careers and gain workforce skills
- Build healthy relationships with peers and adults

**Values to Families**

- Provide safe places for children of working parents
- Strengthen link with the school
- Recreational and enrichment opportunities

**Value to Community**

- Help employers retain staff and productivity
- Support local economy
- Reduce juvenile crime both as victim and perpetrator

## Addressing Mental Well-Being through Afterschool Programs

Afterschool and summer programs play an important role in supporting the healthy development of young people and are all the more critical today.

**The Challenge**

Experts, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have declared children's mental health "a national emergency," citing rising rates of teen suicide and mental health concerns that worsened throughout the pandemic. Young people are experiencing more anxiety, depression, anger, loss, health, and aggression.

**Afterschool is a Solution**

Data like these feel overwhelming but a powerful network of afterschool and summer learning programs across Wisconsin stand ready to help. These local programs serve as a fundamental setting for healthy development and learning. They are staffed by caring mentors who are trained to help young people feel connected and develop important life skills like coping with stress and using their voice. Programs provide a safe, supportive space for growth that includes consistent support for families, and connections to social services and other community resources.

**Program Spotlight**

With one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the state, Marshfield Clinic Health System, in partnership with the Wisconsin Afterschool Network, trains young adults to be mental health leaders to work alongside staff at afterschool and summer programs. The mental health leaders learn how to develop mental health lessons for kids and teach staff how to better deal with behavioral challenges.

Janis Johnson, an AmeriCorps member, serves full-time in one of 10 La Crosse YMCA locations on any given day, she starts by reading the diagnosis of each group of kids before leading them through team-building games, songs or breathing exercises. She evaluates how program staff interact with kids and respond to behavior issues to offer "tips" to improve.

"On any given day, the kids go through coping skills," Johnson said. "No matter what you're going through, it's always going to take a break, to play with a friend, to take a deep breath."

Tracy, 9, is a big fan of "Ms. Janis," as she's known to kids. Tracy went to her middle-school club after school.


When summer comes, Johnson gives Tracy a bag of pink beads and string to make beaded necklaces, which Tracy likes to rub and fidget with when agitated. Tracy also gets to play for the team in the club. When she strikes the jar and the colorful space dance in swirls of red, Tracy said it makes her feel like all the bad thoughts are going away.

**Intergovernmental support:**

- Caring and supportive mentors
- Safe spaces where students build confidence and feel a sense of belonging
- Opportunities to work collaboratively, problem solve, and think critically

**In turn, these supports help kids:**

- Gain self-control and confidence
- Develop strong social skills
- Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults
- Improve work habits and grades
- Improve school day attendance and behavior
- Reduce risky behaviors such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use



**Afterschool Alliance** | JUNE 2024

## This is Afterschool in Wisconsin

In Madison, Wisconsin, CEO of Tomorrow—which works to inspire youth to unlock their entrepreneurial gifts while doing good through social entrepreneurship—was awarded \$6,000 in American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARPP ESSER) funds as part of the state's ESSER Out of School Time grant. With the funds, CEO of Tomorrow started a new program at Southside Elementary School, where 42 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders learned how to start and run a business by creating and selling gummy bears. The program, which ran two hours Monday through Friday for eight weeks, also incorporated math and reading supports, lessons around financial literacy, physical activity, and fun activities such as scavenger hunts and an end-of-the-year pizza party. The program partnered with community organizations, including the Marshfield Animal Sanctuary and Dog on Call, an animal therapy organization, to help the students gain a better understanding of animal welfare, and a portion of the money students earned was donated back to school in the form of needed supplies such as snacks or playground equipment. Overall, CEO of Tomorrow was able to serve 80+ students, with students saving an 18% and 20% increase in math testing scores during two different semesters.

However, as families and communities will face essential supports—if action is not taken. In Wisconsin, for every child in an afterschool program, 3 more would participate if a program were available. And a national fall 2023 survey of afterschool program providers found that nearly 3% are concerned about their program's long-term funding and future. Afterschool and summer programs across Wisconsin are accelerating students' growth, supporting students' well-being, and helping working families. To keep their doors open, these programs need additional investments at the local, state, and federal levels.

**86%** of Wisconsin parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program

**IMPROVING SCHOOL-DAY ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

A 2023 U.S. Department of Education report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs)—local before-, after-, and summer learning programs that serve more than 1.2 million students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools—found that:

- 81%** students in a program demonstrated an improvement in their engagement in classroom
- 80%** students who were chronically absent before the program year improved their school-day attendance

**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ACCELERATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC GROWTH AND SUPPORT THEIR WELL-BEING**

Wisconsin students in afterschool programs are:

- Getting homework help (51%)
- Engaging in STEM learning opportunities (57%)
- Working on their reading and writing skills (55%)
- Interacting with their peers and building social skills (58%)
- Taking part in physical activities (67%)
- Building confidence (79%)

## The Value of School District-Operated Afterschool Programs

## Addressing Mental Well-Being through Afterschool Programs

## This is Afterschool in Wisconsin 2024

## Afterschool is Prevention

Wisconsin Needs Youth Prevention Programs: Opioid Settlement Funds Can Help

**The Opportunity**

Communities struggling with the opioid epidemic must invest in both treatment and prevention strategies to support long-term recovery. Wisconsin should consider afterschool and summer programs as it determines (or continues to determine) how to [address the epidemic](#) and connect families to local healthcare and mental health resources.

**Afterschool is a Smart Investment**

Afterschool and summer programs are a lifeline to Wisconsin's kids and families, including in communities that are struggling with opioid and other substance use. These programs are proven to keep kids safe, engaged, and connected. They help working caregivers keep their jobs and connect families to local healthcare and mental health resources.

**Wisconsin Youth Need More Afterschool**

Afterschool programs need more funding to meet the need and demand among Wisconsin families.

- For every Wisconsin youth enrolled in afterschool, 2 more are waiting for a spot
- 140,000 youth are alone and unsupervised between 3 to 6 p.m.—after schools let out, when youth are more at risk and juvenile crime peaks
- 73% of parents agree afterschool programs keep youth out of trouble
- 3.8% of high schoolers indicated having used any illegal drug besides marijuana in the past 12 months. 28% of high schoolers indicated having used marijuana at any point in their lifetime.

**Connect with Us!**

Wisconsin Out of School Time Alliance is working with leaders across the state to expand access to afterschool and summer programs. Working together, we can keep our kids and communities safe.

Randy Neve, Network Lead  
[randy@wostawisconsin.org](mailto:randy@wostawisconsin.org)

**WOSTA**  
Wisconsin Out of School Time Alliance

## From a Time of Risk to a Time of Opportunity

### This is Afterschool

The hours after the last school bell rings and before parents typically return home from work is a time of endless opportunities and potential for young people. It can be a time of learning and growth, when kids explore new topics in fields like science, technology, engineering, and math; discover new interests; and develop their communication, teamwork, and leadership skills alongside supportive mentors. It can also be a time of risk, as an October 2023 report by Fight Crime Involves in Kids, a membership organization of more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and other law enforcement leaders, found:

**9 in 10 adults agree that afterschool programs are important to their community**

Although juvenile crime has dramatically decreased in the past decade, From Risk to Opportunity Programs Group Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks determined that nationally, the hours between 2 p.m. and 6 a.m. are the peak time for juvenile crime.

In the U.S., for every 3 young people in an afterschool program that improves learning, provides enrichment activities, and keeps them safe, there are 2 more who are waiting to get in. Public support for afterschool is high, with 9 in 10 adults agreeing that afterschool programs are important to their community, but there are not enough programs today to meet the needs of all children and families. The new Fight Crime Involves in Kids data is further evidence of the need to do more to help ensure that all youth are able to take advantage of the benefits and supports that afterschool programs provide.

**Juvenile Crime in Wisconsin**

Analyzing data obtained from Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting database, Fight Crime Involves in Kids report, From Risk to Opportunity Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks, determined that 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. is the peak time for juvenile crime in Wisconsin during school days, with approximately half of all crimes taking place during this time period. 24% of crimes occurred between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and 24% of crimes occurred between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. However, it is worthwhile to note that in some instances, law enforcement agencies may code a criminal activity as minor or mitigate it the exact time of the offense is unknown or unclear. Looking at the hourly crime rate breakdown in Wisconsin, noon has the highest recorded offenses at 7%.

In Wisconsin, 75% of parents agree that afterschool programs help give parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work and 62% agree that afterschool programs help to keep kids safe and out of trouble. Yet, for every student in an afterschool program, 2 more need to participate if a program were available.

With 265,364 students in Wisconsin waiting to get into an afterschool program, increased investment in afterschool programs is needed.

**The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime in Wisconsin**

**Quality Afterschool Programs:**

- Offer a mix of academic, enrichment, and social activities
- Are supervised by trained staff
- Are safe and secure
- Are accessible to all youth
- Are affordable

**Juvenile Crime by Time of Day**

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | 2 p.m. - 6 p.m. | 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. | 10 p.m. - 12 a.m.



**STEM in Wisconsin**

Access to afterschool and summer programs is not equal in Wisconsin, especially in rural and low-income communities. More than 200,000 children would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them.

Wisconsin business leaders cannot find the STEM talent they need to stay competitive (they) due to a lack of student achievement in math.

And while math performance has slightly improved since 2003, progress has stalled. Students of color are the furthest behind in math performance, with only 18% of fourth, fifth, grade students being proficient or above in math in comparison to 62% of white students.

**STEM Reach in Wisconsin Afterschool & Summer**

534 PROGRAMS	653 EDUCATORS	11,383 YOUTH	5,699 GIRLS
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**85%** YOUTH FROM LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS  
**90%** RURAL YOUTH  
**90%** BIPOC YOUTH

**STEM in Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Out of School Time Alliance (WOSTA) is transforming pathways into engineering, the sciences, and advanced manufacturing. WOSTA is working towards equal opportunities to keep children engaged and learning STEM in the out-of-school time hours across the state.

Together women and people of color make up over 50% of Wisconsin's population, however, they are much less likely to earn STEM degrees or become STEM professionals, especially in computer science and engineering. WOSTA is working to close these gaps.

Rural schools and less affluent communities struggle with limited funding, hindering their ability to invest in robust STEM programming and combat barriers youth face such as cost, transportation, and availability. These inequalities significantly impact youth's ability to cultivate interests in STEM learning, education, and careers.

Through an extensive network of partners, professional development, and conferences, the WOSTA is on the forefront of expanding STEM learning throughout the state. As a champion for afterschool and summer learning, WOSTA successfully advocated to include \$20M in the state biennial budget for out-of-school time programs serving middle and high school youth statewide.

As part of STEM Next's national initiative, the Millie Girl Moonshot, WOSTA is working to expand access to STEM opportunities. WOSTA is building the capacity of afterschool and summer programs to engage all youth in STEM across Wisconsin.

## Afterschool is Prevention

## From a Time of Risk to a Time of Opportunity

## STEM in Wisconsin