the changing landscape of afterschool programs

by Kathryn Hynes and Felicia Sanders

In the past 15 years, the need for quality school-age child care has combined with concerns about children's academic performance, delinquency, and safety to create tremendous momentum around out-of-school time (OST) programming. Public funding for programs has simultaneously increased, bringing greater demand from policymakers and private funders for better information about whether, and when, OST programs are a cost-effective way to improve children's outcomes.

Though OST programs receive a lot of attention, it is often hard to find even basic information about the types of programs operating, the amount of exposure children have, and the remaining demand. This article provides a clear picture of the changing landscape of afterschool programs. We use a variety of well-respected nationally representative data sources—with information from parents and from school administrators—to document trends in three areas. First, we highlight trends in program availability and use, showing trends in the percentage of children attending OST programs and the percentage of schools offering programs. Where possible, we highlight trends for policy-relevant subgroups such as low-income children and African-American children. This information helps us understand children's exposure to OST programs. Second, we provide information about trends in the types of programs that are operating. We highlight the changes in the proportion of programs that are school-based, the varying focus of school-based programs, and variation in the hours these programs operate. This information helps us understand

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what children are experiencing when their parents report that they attend "an after-school program." Finally, we use a relatively new data source to contribute information about unmet need for programming.

As demands for quality information increase, ongoing connections among research, advocacy, and policy are essential. In addition to providing up-to-date information about trends in the OST field, the findings from this article—and sometimes the problems we encountered in finding useable information—have implications for two ongoing debates: program effectiveness and unmet need.

Advocates argue that OST programs can have positive impacts on academic, social, and physical well-being (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2009). Others argue that, while OST programs have the potential to achieve these goals, many programs are not reaching this potential (Granger, 2008). Much of the focus among advocates is now on quality improvement, and researchers are studying the circumstances in which certain kinds of OST programs are achieving specific goals for children with specific needs. As we analyzed our data sources to provide information on key topics such as the amount of exposure children have to academic programming, we found that providing this more detailed level of information requires a more nuanced terminology that is shared among parents, advocates, researchers, and policymakers. Today, the label "afterschool program" is used for programs with very different content, goals, and duration. Moving to more nuanced terminology would help researchers provide better information that would in turn help policymakers and advocates support and implement cost-effective programming.

Similarly, debates about unmet need for programming abound. Some argue that many more children would—or should, for development reasons—attend programs if they were affordable and accessible (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Others question broad claims of unmet need because programs are sometimes under-enrolled or have low attendance (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). The results we present in this article suggest that arguments about unmet need may be more effective if they focus on specific communities and neighborhoods where a clear need can be documented.

In this article, we first briefly review social and policy changes over the past few decades and the research on program availability and use, program content and duration, and unmet need for programming. Second, we describe the data sources used in our analyses and present our findings. We conclude with implications for research, advocacy, and policy.

Social Changes

In the past 15 years, significant social changes have affected the use, availability, and content of afterschool programs.

Afterschool as Childcare

Though afterschool programs have existed for almost 100 years (Halpern, 2002), their most recent resurgence was in response to changes in maternal employment. From 1960 to 2002, employment rates for married women with young children rose from less than 20 percent to over 60 percent. Rates of employment among unmarried mothers are even higher (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2006). These increases resulted in greater demand for non-maternal care.

Childcare funding has also increased. In the mid-1990s, Congress instituted reforms to the welfare system that led to a sharp increase in labor force participation by single mothers. To enable single mothers to work, Congress substantially increased funding for childcare subsidies; expenditures through the Child Care Development Fund increased from about $3.9 billion in 1997 to over $9.3 billion in 2005 (U.S. Committee on Ways and Means, 2008). Because 35 percent of this funding typically supports care for school-age children, increasing numbers of mothers could afford to send their children to afterschool programs.

Afterschool as Developmental and Academic Support

Schools, under pressure to improve student performance by spending more time on literacy and mathematics, have struggled to help children with social, emotional, and health issues (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005). Educators and social workers began viewing out-of-school time as an opportunity to provide additional support. Extended-service and community schools were created to centralize social services for low-income students and their families and to make academic and social services available during non-school hours (Dryfoos et al., 2005; Wallace Foundation, n.d.).

These initiatives were popular, and advocacy groups worked hard to increase the quantity and quality of OST opportunities. The interest in supporting academic achievement, providing opportunities for enrichment, and reducing risky behavior contributed to the federal government's 1997 implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, which provides children in at-risk communities with afterschool academic support and enrichment (U.S.

Department of Education, n.d.). Because the focus is on achievement, 21st CCLC programs enroll children whether their mothers work or not. Today the federal government spends approximately $1 billion per year on 21st CCLC programs.

Further highlighting the potential for OST programming to boost achievement, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) required consistently low-performing schools to offer supplemental educational services during out-of-school time. Through these programs, students receive tutoring before or after school from entities as various as for-profit groups, nonprofit organizations, and schools themselves, in locations ranging from schools to private organizations to their own homes. By the 2004–2005 school year, 19 percent of eligible students were receiving these supplemental education services (Davis, 2006; Fusarelli, 2007).

The most basic policy question is simply this: How much has program use increased over the past 15 years?

The Debates So Far

Program Availability and Use

The most basic policy question is simply this: How much has program use increased over the past 15 years? A commonly cited reference is a survey of school principals commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. The study showed that many schools had afterschool programs on site and that many of those programs had been set up in the past 0–5 years (Belden Russonello & Stewart, 2001). However, program *availability* and program *use* are not synonymous: A school's program may enroll only a small percentage of the students. Indeed, a nationally representative survey of parents indicated that, in 2005, only 20 percent of K–8 students attended afterschool programs at least once a week (Carver & Iruka, 2006).

Our research provides a clear picture of changes in afterschool program use and availability by combining reports from parents on children's use of afterschool programs with data from school administrators on the availability of school-based programs and the percentage of students who attend them. We also highlight trends in program use among low-income children and African-American children, groups that are often the focus of policy initiatives. This basic information about program availability and use is essential for more detailed discussions about children's exposure to programs and the extent of unmet need.

Program Goals and Content

As public funding for afterschool programs has increased, so has the pressure for programs to show significant effects on children's well-being. This pressure has led to debates about children's developmental needs during out-of-school time. Over the past 15 years, considerable focus has been on using OST programs to support academics among at-risk students, and many OST programs are now located in schools. However, some in the field have worried that afterschool programs will become too "school-like" and that children's physical, social, and emotional needs will not be met (Halpern, 2002). This debate about the appropriate balance of academics, play, and social support is apparent among researchers, advocates, and program staff (Halpern, 2002; Hynes, Smith, & Perkins, 2009).

Despite the centrality of this debate, little research has documented the magnitude of the shift toward academic programming. Our research uses data from parents to show changes in the proportion of children attending school-based versus community-based programs. We also use data from school administrators to show the growth in academically oriented afterschool programs. We supplement this information with a new data source that allows us to describe the number, type, and duration of programs that schools are running. Combining results from these data sources, we present a picture of the diversity of programs that operate under the label "afterschool." This diversity is probably good for children, allowing families to find programs that meet their needs. However, we will argue that using the same label for all these programs is leading to problems for policymakers, researchers, and advocates in their efforts to design, study, and advocate for quality, effective programs.

Unmet Need

"Unmet need" for afterschool programming has been defined in a variety of ways, including documenting the number of children in self-care, the number of parents who say they would send their child to an afterschool program if one was available, and the number of at-risk children who might benefit from a program (Afterschool Alliance, 2009; Halpern, 1999). Using these measures, advocates have argued that there is considerable unmet need for OST programs.

However, these claims have been challenged by researchers and policymakers (e.g., Bodilly & Beckett,

2005). The most damaging challenges have come from studies of program attendance. For instance, an evaluation of 21st CCLC programs showed that attendance was quite low even at these free school-based programs (James-Burdumy et al., 2005). The discrepancy between the perception of unmet need and the reality of open slots may stem from several issues, including differences in OST opportunities among communities (with few opportunities in some areas and competition among programs in others), difficulty engaging the hardest-to-reach students, and differences between what parents say they might do and what they actually do.

We use data from school administrators' reports of unmet need to contribute to this debate. These data indicate that some schools report needing more slots and funding, while other schools appear to have little need for additional OST programs. Advocates may be more successful—and policymakers more receptive—if claims about unmet need became more specific, focusing on particular communities or populations that have a clear need for additional programming. They may also be more effective if they can identify the type of programs that a particular community needs—for example, free academic programs, broad-based programs, or others (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005).

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Data Sources

While the OST field is quite broad, including a variety of structured and unstructured programs serving children ages 6–18, we focus this study on afterschool programs serving children ages 6–12. The data on afterschool programs for elementary school children are of far better quality than data for other types of OST programs, such as summer programs, or for youth ages 13–18.

Our analyses draw from several well-respected data sets that are collected by the U.S. Department of Education. All analyses are appropriately weighted to generate nationally representative estimates.

- The National Household Education Surveys (NHES, U.S. Department of Education, n.d. b) collect information from large, nationally representative samples of parents, including information on children's use of afterschool programs. We use data from 1995, 1999, 2001, and 2005 to highlight trends in program use and location.
- The Schools and Staffing Surveys (SSS) collect data on school programs and practices from large, nationally representative samples of school administrators. We use these data to document trends in the availability of school-based programs. Reports with the necessary statistics are available for 1987, 1990, and 1993 (National Center for Education Statistics). The SSS was fielded less consistently after 1993; we use an online data analysis tool for statistics from 2003.
- The 2008 survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d. c) provides information from over 1,600 public school administrators about the types of afterschool programs available in their schools. We use these data to provide information about the diversity of programs operating in schools and to examine unmet need for programs.

Findings

Program Availability

As the school principal survey indicates, school-based afterschool programs have become increasingly common over the past 20 years. Data from the Schools and Staffing Survey show that in public schools, program availability more than doubled between 1987 and 2003, as illustrated in Table 1. On-site programs are far more common in central city schools than in rural schools, and private schools are particularly likely to have on-site afterschool programs.

Due to the increasing prevalence of academically focused programs, in 2003 the Schools and Staffing Survey added a separate question about whether schools offered extended day academic assistance programs. In 2003, 62 percent of public schools in central city areas had these academic programs, as did 49 percent of public schools in rural areas. In contrast, fewer than 25 percent of private schools reported having such programs. This lower rate may reflect differences in the characteristics of children enrolled in private schools or the fact that private schools are not subject to the NCLB requirement for supplemental education.

By 2008, even more schools had OST programs on site. According to our analyses of the 2008 survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools (re-

Table 1. Percentage of Elementary Schools Reporting OST Programs

	EXTENDED DAY OR BEFORE- OR AFTERSCHOOL DAYCARE				EXTENDED DAY ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	1987	1990	1993	2003	2003
Central city	26.4%	36.9%	43.1%	51.5%	61.7%
Urban fringe	24.2%	35.1%	37.7%	49.2%	43.7%
Rural/small	9.2%	15.3%	19.0%	24.0%	48.7%
PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS					
Central city	50.7%	60.3%	N/A	84.1%	23.3%
Urban fringe	41.2%	52.7%	60.3%	65.1%	18.2%
Rural/small	17.9%	23.3%	24.4%	31.0%	17.0%

Source: Schools & Staffing Survey, 1987–1988 through 2003–2004. Results are from published reports (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992; 1993; 1996). Data for 2003 were calculated using NCES online analysis tools.

sults not shown in table), 75 percent of public elementary schools reported having some kind of afterschool program on-site. Schools without programs were more likely to be in rural areas and to serve white students. In contrast, large schools, urban schools, and schools with large poor and minority populations were more likely to have on-site afterschool programs. Many of these were academic instruction programs. If we exclude programs that consisted solely of academic instruction or tutoring, 60 percent of public elementary schools reported having at least one afterschool program on-site.

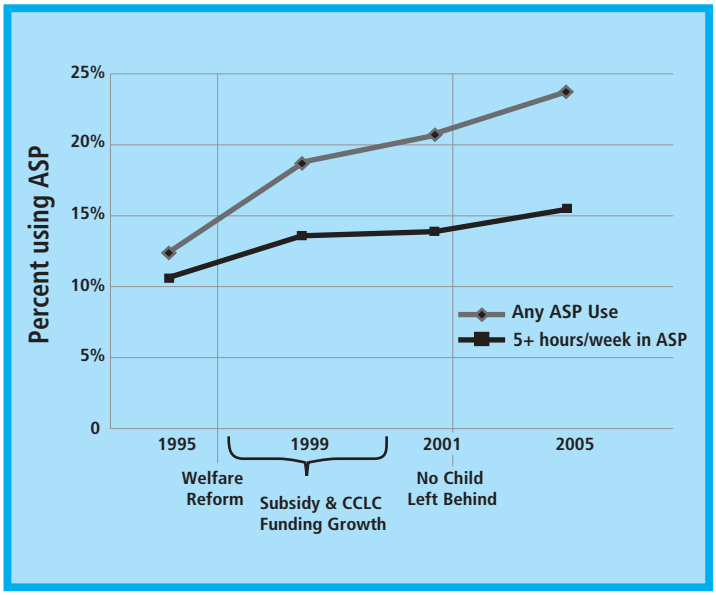
Program Use

While the majority of *schools* now offer programs, most *children* do not attend afterschool programs. Based on parent reports from the National Household Education Surveys, in 1995 about 12 percent of children ages 6–9 regularly attended an afterschool program; by 2005 approximately 24 percent of young children regularly attended a program, as shown in Figure 1. For children ages 10–12, data are available only from 1999 to 2005. The percentage of these older children in afterschool programs remained fairly steady, at 17 percent in 1999 and 19 percent in 2005.

How do we reconcile these statistics about children's use of programs with the large proportion of schools that have programs? The simplest reason is that school-based programs enroll only a small percentage of the school's students. Rough calculations from the 2008 survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools indicate that, among elementary schools with afterschool programs, only about 19 percent of the school's students were enrolled in the programs. If we include academic/tutoring programs, schools with programs enrolled roughly 24 percent of their students.

Another reason that growth in the percentage of schools with programs seems larger than growth in the percentage of children attending is that most of the growth in afterschool program use occurred in shown in Table 2. According to the National Household Education Surveys, in 1995, about half of the children ages 6–9 in afterschool programs went to community-based programs. The other half attended school-based programs, with 6 percent of children in each kind of program. In 2005, enrollment in community-based programs was about the same, at 8 percent, but 16 percent of children ages 6–9 were enrolled in school-based programs. Data from the 2005 National Household Education Survey indicate that this heavy reliance on

Figure 1. Use of afterschool programs, children ages 6–9



Source: 1995–2005 National Household Education Surveys

Table 2. Use of School-based *vs.* Community-based Programs

	CHILDREN 6–9		CHILDREN 10–12
	1995	2005	2005
Child enrolled in afterschool program *at his/her own school*	6%	16%	13%
Child enrolled in afterschool program *at another location*	6%	8%	5%
Child not enrolled in afterschool program	88%	76%	82%

Source: 1995 & 2005 National Household Education Surveys

school-based programs is also apparent for children ages 10–12. Though school-based programs do not appear to be *replacing* community-based programs, a clear majority of children who regularly attend programs now do so at their own schools.

From these data, we conclude that most schools are now in the business of providing or hosting afterschool programs, but the percentage of children enrolled in these programs remains modest. Indeed, statistics on the percentage of children who regularly attend a program may lead us to overestimate children's exposure to afterschool environments, because many children attend programs for a very small number of hours per week. Figure 1 shows that, in 1995, parents reported that most of the children who regularly attended afterschool programs did so for at least five hours per week. Over the following decade, the percentage of young children attending programs grew rapidly, but the percentage attending for more than five hours per week grew more modestly. In 2005, only 16 percent of children ages 6–9 and 10 percent of children ages 10–12 attended programs for five or more hours per week.

Researchers can improve our understanding of program exposure by collecting information about the reasons children attend for only a few hours—for example, because parents want to avoid childcare costs, because the program is open only for a few hours, or because children prefer to do other things. But limited exposure raises an important question about the amount of exposure that is necessary for programs to affect children's outcomes. In some cases, attending a program for a few hours per week may be developmentally beneficial and worth the investment, while in other cases this limited exposure may have minimal impact and be an inefficient use of resources.

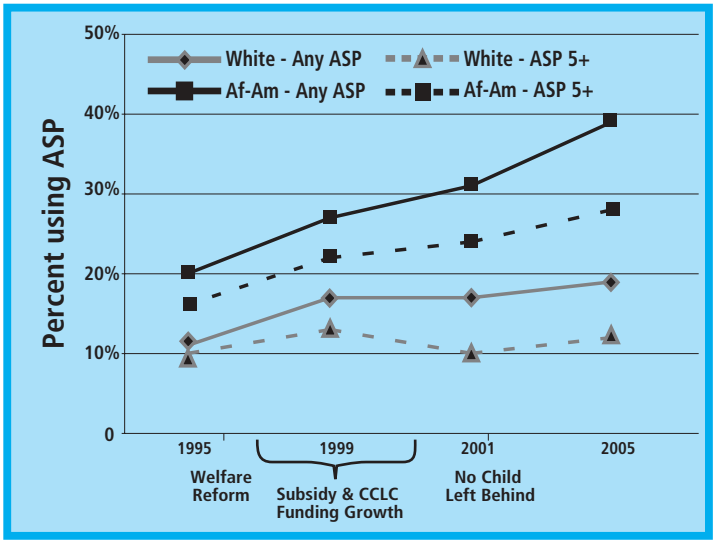
Program Use among Subgroups

Public funding for programs has often targeted low-income children and children who are presumed to need developmental support. In an earlier report, we documented changes in the use of afterschool programs among low-income children (Hynes & Doyle, 2009). In 1995, children from families with higher incomes were more likely than poor children to attend afterschool programs. However, public funding for programs increased substantially over the following decade; by 2005, the gap had closed considerably.

Because of the focus on OST as a way to support academic achievement, we also use the National Household Education Surveys to examine race differences in afterschool program use. As Figure 2 shows, African-American children are twice as likely as white children to attend programs. Indeed, while program use remains modest among white children, in 2005 nearly 40 percent of African-American children ages 6–9 regularly attended an afterschool program. The race gap is even larger among children exposed to programs for five or more hours per week.

Reasons for these race differences are unclear. African-American children are more likely than white children to live in single-parent families, to access childcare subsidies, and to live in urban areas; all of these factors are associated with afterschool program use. However, in an earlier study, we found that these factors do not explain the large race differences in program use (Hynes &

Figure 2. Race differences in afterschool program use, children ages 6–9



Source: 1995–2005 National Household Education Surveys

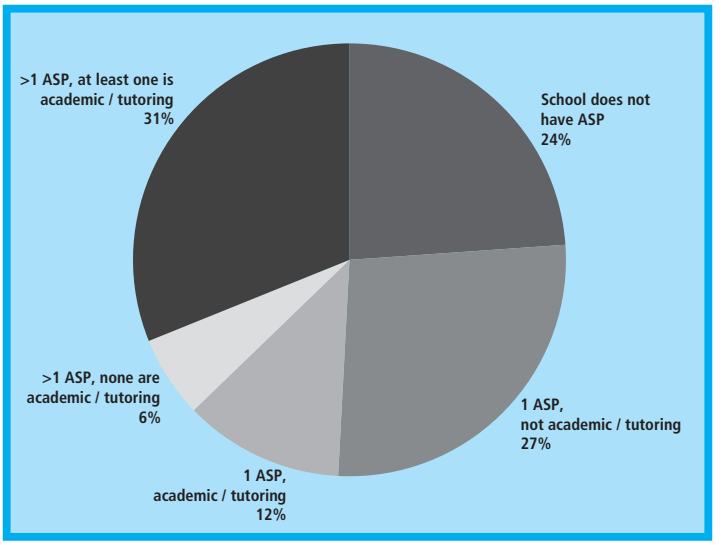
Sanders, 2009). Given the persistence of racial achievement gaps in this country, more research is clearly necessary on the reasons for race differences in afterschool program use and the effects of differences on children's outcomes.

Program Content

Though the OST field is well aware that afterschool programs differ widely in their goals and that academic programming has increased, data have not been available to quantify these trends. Data on program goals are essential in efforts to use nationally representative data to understand the effects of various kinds of programs on children's development. The best data on the content of afterschool programs come from the 2008 Survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools. Rather than simply asking whether schools have "an afterschool program," the survey asked school administrators whether they had various kinds of programs: fee-based extended day, academic/tutoring, 21st CCLC, and "other" types of broad-based programs. Our analyses of these data indicate that schools were running a variety of programs. Forty-three percent had academic/tutoring programs; 10 percent ran a 21st CCLC program; some schools ran both. Thus approximately half of all public schools were running at least one program with an explicitly academic focus. Schools also ran programs that may or may not have included academic content: 46 percent ran fee-based extended day programs, and 16 percent reported having broad-based programs focused on such topics as culture, arts, or social skills. Because we do not know how many of these fee-based programs and "other" programs focused explicitly on academics, we cannot estimate the proportion of schools with academically focused afterschool programs. Also, because this survey excludes programs in private schools and community-based organizations, we cannot estimate the proportion of children attending academically focused afterschool programs.

However, the 2008 Survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools does show that many schools are offering more than one OST program, as shown in Figure 3. If schools offered only one afterschool program, it was typically fee-based afterschool childcare. However, 37 percent of schools reported operating more than one type of program, typically offering both an academic/tutoring program and at least one more broadly-based program.

Figure 3. Availability and types of programs in schools

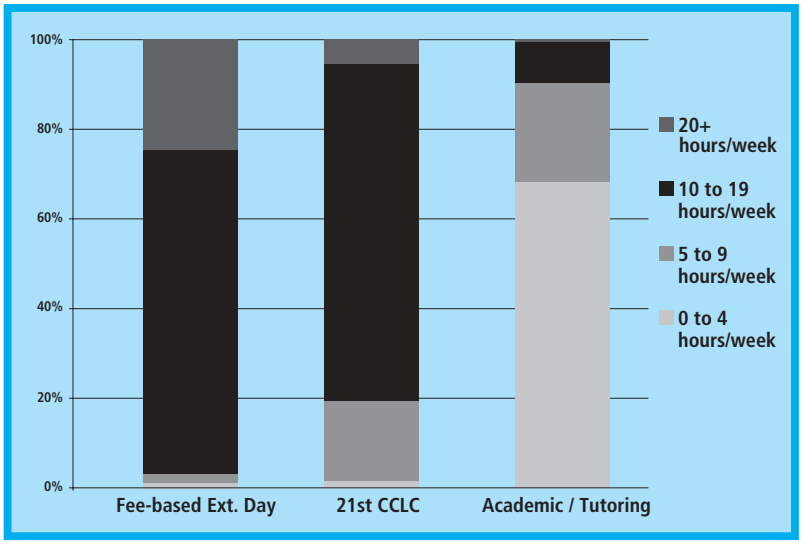


Source: 2008 U.S. Department of Education Survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools

Unfortunately, parent surveys about children's afterschool program use do not ask questions that really allow us to understand the extent of academic programming. In 2005, the NHES asked parents about the activities in which their children spent the most time during their afterschool program. One of the choices was "Homework / educational / reading / writing." This choice was reported as a major activity for 76 percent of children ages 6–12 who attended school-based programs regularly and 62 percent of children who attended community-based programs regularly. While these seem to be substantial percentages, it is unclear how many of these programs are simply providing some time for children to do homework, which should have different developmental effects than programs that are actively engaging in academic instruction. To be able to use these large data sets to estimate program impacts, we need more detailed information about the goals of the programs that children are attending.

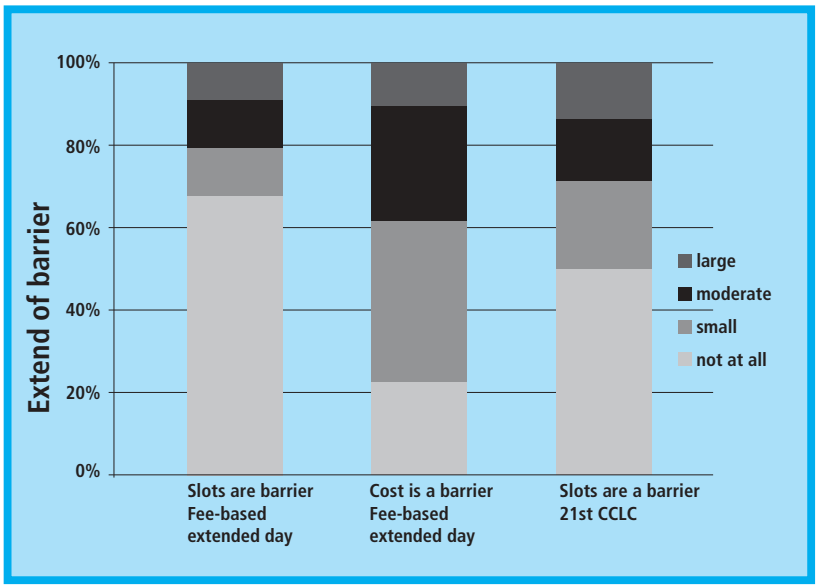
Despite this limitation, parent surveys do provide evidence that children are increasingly attending afterschool programs for developmental reasons, not just for childcare. If afterschool programs were solely for childcare, we would expect children whose parents work to use programs more than children with at least one parent at home. According to data from the National Household Education Surveys, in 1995 that was the case: 21 percent of children ages 6–9 with employed single parents attended afterschool programs, compared to only 9 percent of children with single parents who were not employed. By 2005, however, this gap had closed substantially: 34 percent of children with employed sin-

Figure 4. Operating hours of different types of afterschool programs



Source: 2008 U.S. Department of Education Survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools

Figure 5. School reports of barriers to participation*



**Among schools that run afterschool programs. Source: 2008 U.S. Department of Education Survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools*

gle parents attended programs regularly, compared to 29 percent of children with single parents who were not employed (Hynes & Doyle, 2009). Thus, the use of programs for developmental purposes is clearly increasing, though the content of the programs and their developmental goals cannot be deciphered clearly enough from these surveys.

The use of afterschool programs for developmental purposes—particularly the rise in academic/tutoring programs—may be related to parents' reports that children attend programs for fewer than five hours per week. Our analyses of the 2008 survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools show that schools' academic/tutoring programs were qualitatively different from their other afterschool programs. Most importantly, they operated for far fewer hours than other types of afterschool programs, as shown in Figure 4. Only 1–2 percent of fee-based extended day programs and 21st CCLC programs were open for fewer than five hours per week, compared to 68 percent of the academic/tutoring programs.

Unfortunately, while we know that these short-hour tutoring programs exist, we cannot tell from parent surveys how many of the children attending afterschool programs for fewer than five hours per week are attending these tutoring programs and how many are attending other types of programs but choosing to attend for a small number of hours. To provide the kind of detail that policymakers are seeking about the circumstances in which particular kinds of afterschool programs are cost effective in achieving particular outcomes, a more nuanced terminology is needed that can distinguish among different types of programs.

Unmet Need for Programs

The policy and advocacy communities need to understand the extent of unmet need for programming in order to develop compelling arguments for additional programs. Because most of the growth has been in school-based programs, the 2008 survey on Afterschool Programs in Public Elementary Schools provides a sense of the unmet need for afterschool programs. School administrators were asked to report how much either cost or insufficient slots were barriers to student participation in programs in their schools. These questions were answered only by school administrators who both have a school-based program and actually run the program, so these data do not cover school-based programs run by community organizations (53 percent of the fee-based programs in schools) or schools that don't offer afterschool programs.

As Figure 5 shows, most schools that run fee-based extended day programs reported that insufficient slots

were not a barrier to participation. Only 21 percent reported that insufficient slots were a moderate or large barrier. These responses may indicate that schools have the ability to expand the number of fee-based slots to meet demand. In addition, 62 percent of schools with fee-based extended day programs reported that costs were not at all or were only a small barrier to participation. These data from schools that run fee-based programs challenge broad claims of unmet need.

However, there were clear exceptions. Further analyses indicate that urban schools were more likely than schools in other locations to report insufficient slots and cost barriers. High-poverty schools were actually less likely than low-poverty schools to report insufficient slots, but, not surprisingly, they were more likely to report that costs were a barrier.

School administrators who had 21st CCLC programs were asked whether insufficient slots were a barrier to participation. Because 21st CCLC programs are publicly funded and free to participants, this question reflects, to some extent, demand for free programming. Only 29 percent of school administrators with 21st CCLC programs indicated that limited slots were a moderate or large barrier to participation. Large schools, urban schools, and schools with large minority populations were most likely to indicate unmet need for slots, even when they had a 21st CCLC program.

One of the main limitations of these data is that they cannot describe demand for programs among schools that do not currently offer them. For instance, it is unclear whether schools that do not run fee-based programs choose not to run them because of limited demand or whether there is unmet need for programs at these schools. School administrators indicate that many schools with programs are meeting their students' needs. Therefore, while some schools still report unmet need for programs, claims about unmet need may be more effective if they focused on specific communities and on unmet need for specific kinds of programs.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Advocacy

The results presented in this article show that the availability of school-based afterschool programs has increased rapidly over the past 15 years. Both community-based and school-based programs are still available, but today a clear majority of children attend school-based programs. Schools offer a range of programs, from short-hour tutoring programs to longer-hour programs that provide childcare, enrichment, or both. While most schools are now in the business of running or hosting at least one afterschool program, we should be careful not to overestimate children's exposure to programs: most children do not attend programs, and some attend for fewer than five hours per week.

While many of the observed trends were expected, we were surprised by the large and persistent race gap in afterschool program use. African-American children use afterschool programs far more than their white counterparts, making these programs an important developmental context for these children. Research to date has not been able to explain why African-American children are attending at higher rates than their white counterparts. In addition, we do not know whether the goals, content, and quality of the programs that African-American children attend are the same or different from programs that white children attend. We also do not know whether these diverging OST experiences are reducing (or increasing) racial inequality. Further research on this topic is essential, as is careful practice and policymaking. Advocates and policymakers need to clearly recognize that policies influencing program quality and funding disproportionately influence African-American children.

More nuanced terminology would help researchers, policymakers, and advocates identify, implement, and support programs that can improve children's outcomes in a cost-effective way.

Using a mix of data sources, we were able to provide nationally representative information on a variety of policy-relevant topics. However, we became acutely aware that more nuanced terminology to describe the wide variety of programs being offered would greatly improve the field's ability to move forward in research, advocacy, and policy. Two dimensions seem particularly important to capture:

- Program goals: the primary content and expected developmental outcomes of the program
- Program duration: the number of hours per week and weeks per year the program is available, as well as the number of hours per week and weeks per year a given child actually attends the program

More nuanced terminology would help researchers, policymakers, and advocates identify, implement, and support programs that can improve children's outcomes

in a cost-effective way. This terminology would help us answer questions such as these: Are children experiencing greater gains in academic achievement when they attend short-hour tutoring programs or longer-hour programs that integrate academics with enrichment? Are children less likely to become obese if they attend short but intensive athletic activities after school, or do broad-based afterschool programs also prevent obesity because children in programs are less likely to sit in front of the television eating snacks? How much academic programming after school is developmentally helpful and how much is too much?

Greater specificity would also help the field move beyond debates about unmet need for programs. For example, a community may have plenty of fee-based afterschool care but lack the short-hour academic tutoring its children need, or vice versa. Our results show that on one hand, many schools are running programs, and many of these schools report little unmet need for additional slots. On the other hand, some schools that run programs still report unmet need, and the data did not assess unmet need in schools that do not have or run specific kinds of programs. These mixed results support the idea that arguments about need should focus on specific geographic areas that have documented unmet need for particular kinds of programs (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005).

This more nuanced terminology should be developed collaboratively and used consistently. It would allow researchers to collect better data from parents and school administrators about the types of programs children are using and about remaining unmet need. With better data, researchers, advocates, practitioners, and policymakers could study program effectiveness, hone quality improvement efforts, and promote the right kinds of programs for communities' varying needs.

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