

More Quality Afterschool Programs Are Needed in Indianapolis

Afterschool programs can boost students' grades, develop their skills, and supplement education in the arts, music, and culture. While providing essential childcare for younger students, these programs can also help prevent juvenile crime, teen pregnancies, smoking, drinking, and drug use among adolescents. It is therefore not surprising that community, philanthropic, and government agencies have begun to pay close attention to afterschool programs.

In this issue brief, we review the importance of afterschool programs, analyze the availability of these programs in Indianapolis, and discuss the service needs in our community, especially in low-income, disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The significance of afterschool programs

When parents are not available and there is no adult supervision after school, younger children are not safe, and children of all ages are vulnerable to negative peer influence and criminal activities (Witte, 1997).

Unfortunately, this concern is especially serious for single-parent families. The heads of these households are often the

sole breadwinners, must work full time, and cannot spend time with their children after school. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 28 percent of U.S. families with children are headed by single parents, with the highest proportion in African American households. In 2002, about 48 percent of African American children under age 15 lived in single-mother households, and another 5 percent lived in single-father households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

Since single-parent families, especially female-headed households, are likely to live in poverty, their need for inexpensive afterschool childcare is pressing. In 2002, about 35 percent of children living in female-headed families had an annual family income under \$15,000, and another 30 percent had an annual family income between \$15,000 and \$29,999. Figure 1 on page 2 shows the percentages of families of each type by income level.

Although the need for afterschool care is most obvious for low-income, single-parent families, the need can also be acute for low-income, married couples with children. In 2002, about 62 percent of the nation's children under age 18 lived in two-

Afterschool Programs Deter Juvenile Crime

Afterschool programming can be a long-term measure of crime prevention. When the school bell rings, millions of children and teenagers go out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision. This is the time when violent crime soars. On school days, 3 to 6 p.m. are the peak hours for teenagers to commit crimes, be victims of crime, and be in or cause a car crash. These hours are also peak times for smoking, drinking, and drug use among adolescents. In Michigan, a study showed that teenagers not enrolled in afterschool programs were 50 percent more likely to have children during their high school years. Another study showed that neighborhoods without afterschool programs had 50 percent more vandalism and 37 percent more drug activity.

Source: Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay. (2003). *Afterschool education: Approaches to an emerging field*.



parent families in which both parents participated in the labor force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

The high proportion of children from low-income homes makes before and after school programs essential. The 2001 Before and After-School Care Programs and Activities Survey of the National Household Education Program reported that 20 percent of the children in kindergarten through 8th grade had regularly scheduled non-parental arrangements before school, and 50 percent had non-parental arrangements after school (Kleiner, Nolin, & Chapman, 2004). Inexpensive afterschool childcare is especially critical for low-income families because this service, on average, costs about 25 percent of their family income and can be a heavy financial burden (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Another reason why policymakers have paid more attention to afterschool programs is because a well-run program can reduce the chance of juvenile crime and enhance the academic performance of participating children (see box on page 1).

Afterschool programs can provide far more than aftercare—some programs include academic, recreational, and cultural activities to help students learn from an informal, active environment. A study about the Los Angeles afterschool program known as “BEST” showed that “higher levels of participation in LA’s BEST led to better subsequent school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement on standardized

tests of mathematics, reading and language arts.” (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000). Other programs have also demonstrated academic and social benefits for the participating children (Afterschool Alliance, 2005).

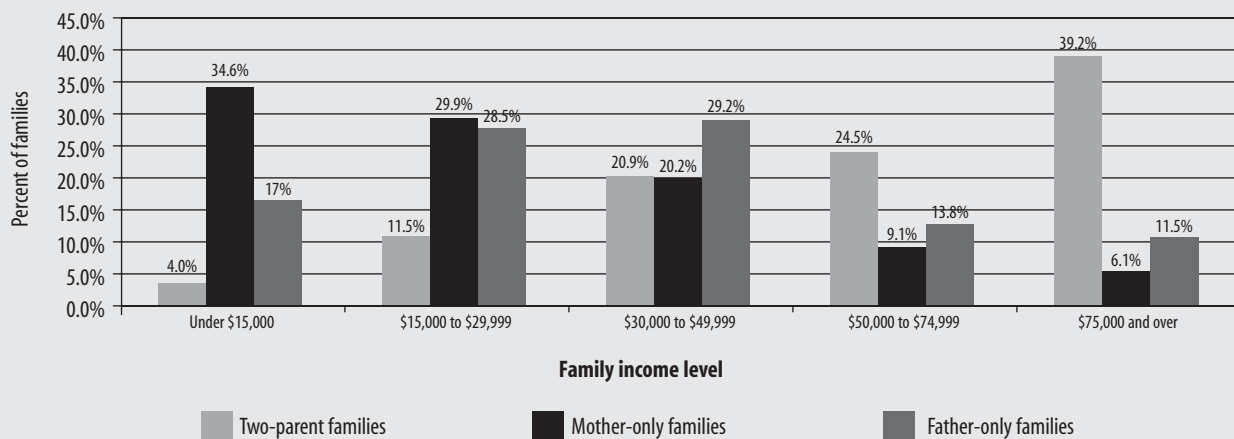
Status of afterschool programming in Indianapolis

In October 2005, we contacted members of the Afterschool Coalition of Indianapolis and administrators of Indianapolis public schools to identify the primary afterschool providers at each school. We then distributed surveys to 17 nonprofit, government, and private providers of afterschool programs in Indianapolis. All of them responded to our request for information.

Since the survey focused on the programs offered by elementary and middle schools, we did not collect data about all private and nonprofit afterschool providers available in Indianapolis. We also did not collect data on charter schools, private schools not associated with the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, or schools not operating during the 2005–2006 school year.

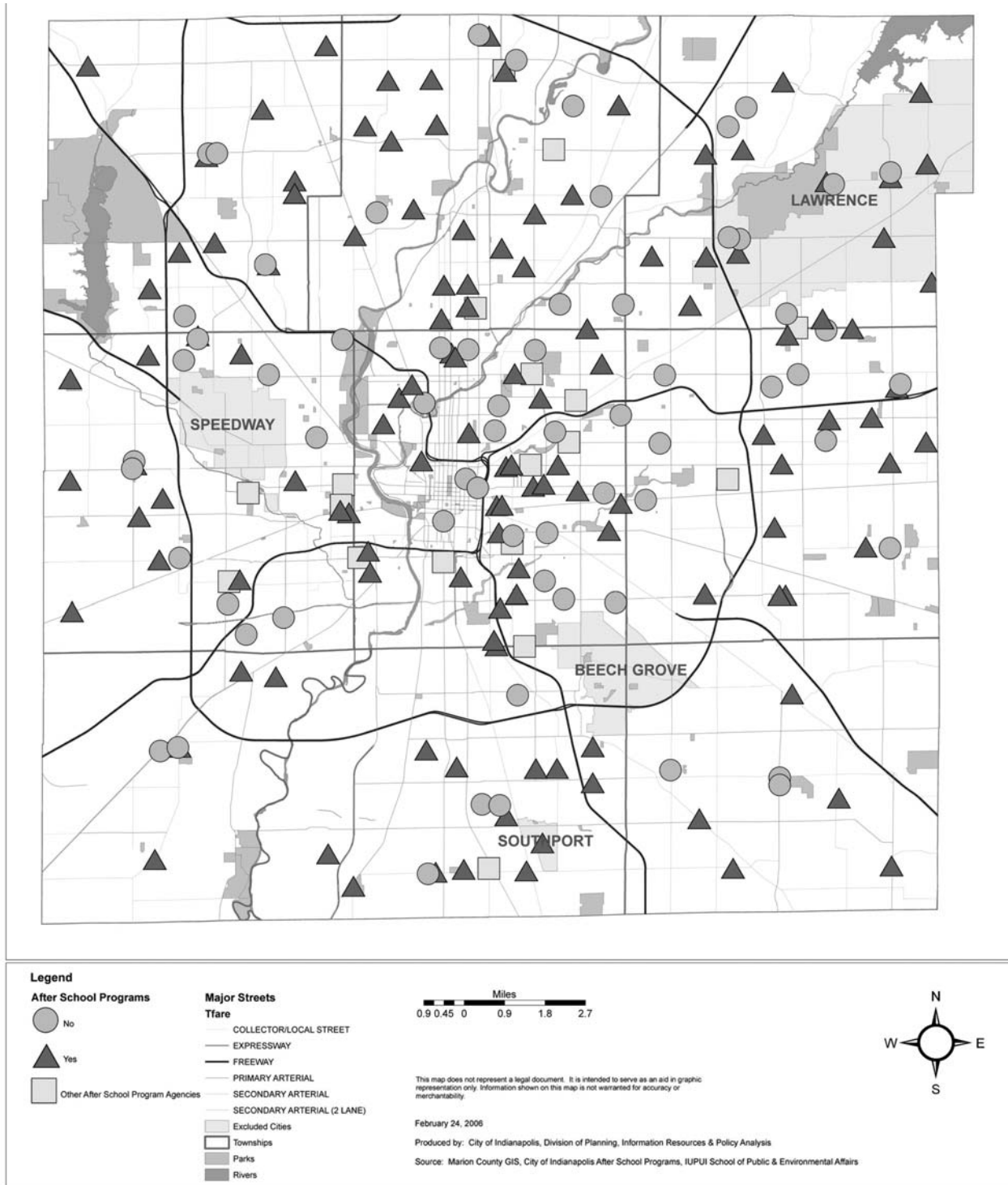
For socio-economic comparisons, we used the 2000 census block data to analyze the neighborhood characteristics of schools. We also used education statistics from the National Center on Education Statistics and the Indiana Department of Education to compare the academic performance of schools with or without afterschool programs.

Figure 1. Children’s economic situation by family structure, United States, 2002



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2003.

Figure 2. Geographical location of afterschool programs in Indianapolis



Note: Special thanks to Robert Glenn of the city of Indianapolis who helped create this map.



Our survey results show that in 2005, out of 169 elementary and secondary schools in Indianapolis, 123 offered an afterschool program that was officially recommended and offered to students. The average daily attendance at these programs was about 56 students. Figure 2 on page 3 shows the geographical location of these programs in Indianapolis.

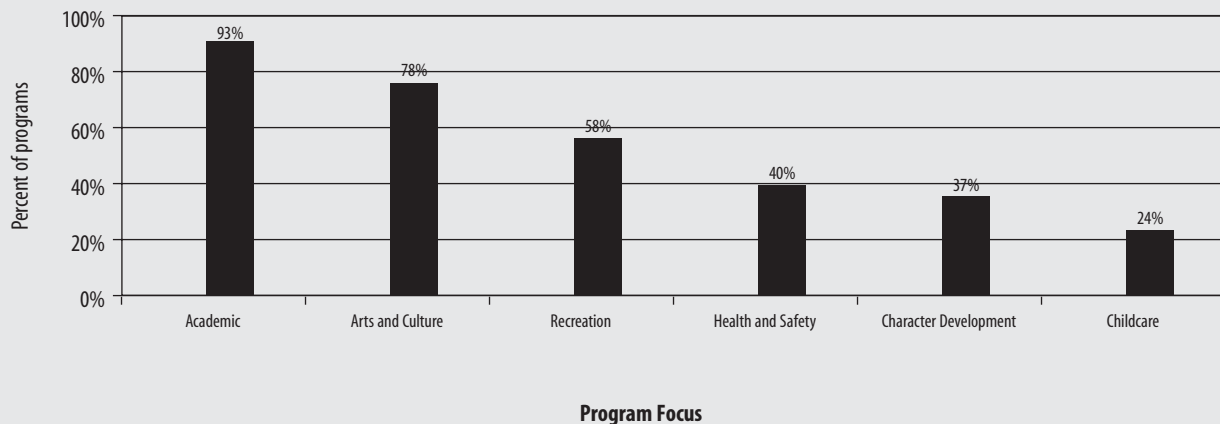
Most afterschool programs are not run by the school districts themselves. Instead, they are provided by the city department of parks and recreation, nonprofit organizations, private companies, or a partnership among these entities. Table 1 lists the major providers and the number of programs they manage in Indianapolis.



Table 1: Providers of afterschool programs in Indianapolis, 2005–2006 school year

Provider	Number of Programs Managed by Provider
Archdiocese	6
Archdiocese/AYS	1
AYS (formerly At-Your-School Child Services)	17
AYS and Concord Neighborhood Center	1
Boys and Girls Club	6
Boys and Girls Club and Warren Township	1
Boys and Girls Club/Concord Neighborhood Center	1
Brookside Park	1
Concord Community Center	4
Garden City Christian Church	1
Indianapolis Parks and Recreation	7
Indianapolis Parks and Recreation and Concord Community Center	1
Indianapolis Parks and Recreation and Mary Rigg Community Center	2
John Boner Center	1
Little Gov Day Care	1
Loving Care	19
Mary Rigg Community Center	1
Mary Rigg Community Center/Hawthorne Community Center	1
Pike Township and Loving Care	2
Supplementary Educational Services	1
Urban YMCA	4
Urban YMCA and Concord Neighborhood Center	3
Warren Township	10
YMCA	30
YMCA and Concord Neighborhood Center	1
Total	123

Figure 3. Program focus of afterschool programs in Indianapolis, 2005



Note: Many providers identified more than one program focus.



Our survey also asked providers about their program focus. As Figure 3 shows, about 93 percent of the programs focus on academics, and 78 percent reported that arts and culture were also a major focus. Other common focus areas include recreation (58 percent), health and safety (40 percent), and character development (37 percent). Childcare receives the least emphasis among these programs (24 percent).

Needs in disadvantaged neighborhoods are great

Our survey results show that afterschool programs in Indianapolis are more concentrated in relatively more affluent, White neighborhoods.

One characteristic of low-income neighborhoods is a high percentage of students who qualify for a free lunch program at school. We found that the average percentage of students qualifying for free lunch programs in schools without an official afterschool program was about 70 percent, compared with 52 percent in schools with a program.

Schools without an official afterschool program also have a higher proportion of minorities. The average minority student proportion in schools without a program is about 71 percent, compared with 55 percent for those with a program. Moreover, in neighborhoods without an official program, about 43 percent of the households are minority-occupied, compared with 20 percent in neighborhoods with a program.

Our data also show that schools with afterschool programs are those with higher academic achievements. In schools with programs, 68 percent of the students passed the ISTEP tests, compared with only 59 percent in schools with no official program. However, this does not imply a causal relationship between academic performance and the presence of an official afterschool program—many factors affect academic achievement. But it does confirm that schools with high levels of poverty and poor academic achievement tend to lack afterschool programming.

One noteworthy sponsor is the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center which offers grants to public schools in low-income neighborhoods to help them establish afterschool programs. In 2005 in Indianapolis, 26 afterschool programs were supported by these grants. These programs were run by a variety of organizations, including the city of Indianapolis, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, AYS (At Your School), and Hawthorne Community Center.

These grants play an important role in bridging the resource gap so that low-income students have a better chance to attend high quality afterschool programs.

In 2005, for the schools with an official afterschool program sponsored by 21st Century grant funding, 66 percent of the students received free or reduced-price lunches, and 67 percent were minority students. By comparison, these statistics were 48 percent and 51 percent, respectively, for schools with programs that were not funded by 21st Century grants.

Neighborhoods surrounding the schools with 21st Century support were also poorer; only 61 percent of the housing units were owner-occupied, compared with 77 percent in neighborhoods with programs that were not funded by 21st Century grants.





Thoughts for policymakers

Our analysis suggests several policy implications.

First, there is a clear need to expand afterschool programming in Indianapolis schools, especially in low-income, minority neighborhoods. Many schools may provide informal afterschool activities, but not many have a systematic afterschool program that addresses the academic needs of students, and even when they have such a program, not many children participate in it. Our survey shows that in 2005, only about 14 percent of elementary and secondary school students in Indianapolis participated in an official afterschool program provided by their schools. Since many programs are fee-based, providers have less financial incentive to establish programs in neighborhoods where residents are less able to pay for services. As a result, neighborhoods with the most acute need for programs are often the least likely to receive them.

While some government and philanthropic organizations help support afterschool programs in poor areas, there is still a great need for this support in Indianapolis. Many more quality

programs are needed to address the service gap between affluent and poor neighborhoods.

Although 21st Century grants have made a substantial difference, philanthropic efforts to establish programs in poor neighborhoods would help avoid the high reliance on government resources that can make programs vulnerable to budget uncertainties and changes in government administration.

Second, it is apparent that a few providers, such as the Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation and the YMCA, provide a good mix of academic, cultural, and recreational activities. These programs often offer academic tutoring for students who fail to meet certain academic standards in school. In addition, many of their centers provide science, music, and arts programs for students. These efforts are valuable when public schools are fiscally stressed and face growing pressure to shift resources to preparation for standardized tests. If afterschool programs supplement education in the arts, music, and culture, they will give some students a chance to acquire a more comprehensive education.





Third, public school administrators can foster programs by finding ways to support and partner with afterschool program providers. Schools can help afterschool program providers leverage their resources to offer better programs by sharing school facilities and space, encouraging teachers to volunteer in the programs, and promoting greater parental participation.

Fourth, decision-makers can take steps to evaluate programs and support a statewide effort to recognize or certify high-quality programs and providers. While it seems that many private and nonprofit providers are providing beneficial afterschool programs, there is no guarantee that a private provider who enters the market will sponsor quality programs. An effective afterschool program must do more than simply keep children in a safe place for a few hours. A statewide certification program would create healthy competition among providers and help parents obtain more reliable and useful information about their program choices.

Finally, information sharing among providers and local communities about best practices and innovative methods to run afterschool programs should be encouraged. These alliances help providers learn from one another and share the most cost-effective techniques to help children learn. Formation of local coalitions of afterschool providers, an effort similar to the Afterschool Coalition of Indianapolis (ACI), is a model that other Indiana communities can consider.

Created by Mayor Bart Peterson in 2001 and assisted by “Bridges to Success” and United Way, ACI is a network of providers and community organizations in Indianapolis with a goal to share information and resources and encourage professionalism among afterschool program providers. ACI also helps organizations seek external funding and develop and share curriculum ideas with providers to enrich the quality of programs in Indianapolis. It is an effective model of inter-organizational collaboration that can be replicated in other Indiana communities so that providers can pool resources and community talents.

To keep our children off the streets after school and help them prepare for future economic challenges, more public funding and philanthropic investment are needed to support afterschool programs in Indianapolis and other Indiana communities.

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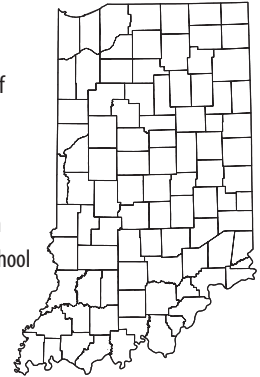


Indiana's Future: Identifying Choices and Supporting Action to Improve Communities

This project, funded by an award of general support from Lilly Endowment, Inc., builds on the Center's research to increase understanding of Indiana. The Center's goal is to understand the people, economics, problems, and opportunities in Indiana, and to help decision-makers understand the impact of policy decisions. The Center also works to mobilize energy to accomplish these goals.

The research in this issue brief shows that afterschool programs are needed in our community to provide safety for young children, especially in stressed neighborhoods. But though safety is essential, it is only one of the potential benefits of these programs. For example, effective afterschool programs for teenagers can actually improve graduation rates and reduce drug use, crime, and teen pregnancy. For this reason, the Center is pleased to sponsor this issue brief that resulted from the work of two graduate students under the guidance of Professor Alfred Ho.

The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment is part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. An electronic copy of this document and other information about community issues can be accessed via the Center Web site (www.urbancenter.iupui.edu). For more information, visit the Center Web site or contact the Center at 317-261-3000.



State of Indiana

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Authors: **Tiffany Murray** and **Rina Patel**, graduate students, School of Public & Environmental Affairs, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. **Alfred Tat-Kei Ho**, faculty fellow, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, and associate professor, School of Public & Environmental Affairs. **Editor:** **Marilyn Michael Yurk**, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment.



CENTER FOR URBAN POLICY
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

334 North Senate Avenue, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46204-1708
www.urbancenter.iupui.edu

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