

A photograph of three children in a grassy field holding a large green diamond-shaped kite. The kite has a purple sun with rays in the center. The child in the middle is a young girl with braids wearing a red t-shirt with a yellow flame design. The child on the right is a boy wearing a yellow t-shirt with a red lightning bolt design. The background shows green trees and a bright sky. A large orange diagonal shape is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Cost and Challenge: Expanding Access to Afterschool Programs in Dallas



AFTER  
*the* BELL  
ALLIANCE

A partnership led by Dallas Afterschool





## INSPIRE

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Inspire is working to build a better world by helping nonprofit organizations achieve breakthrough results. They bring strategic thinking and results-oriented analysis to the leaders of organizations dedicated to the education, development and well being of school aged children.

## AFTER THE BELL ALLIANCE

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The After the Bell Alliance is raising the awareness of local decision makers about the need for increased access to free and low-cost quality afterschool and summer programs in Dallas. We bring together stakeholders from different sectors to strategize, pilot, and advocate for the expansion of access to Out of School Time programs.

## METHODOLOGY

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The Inspire team research was guided by two questions: (1) What is the cost to double the number of available afterschool seats in Dallas; and (2) What best practices can be shared across program and facility types to reduce cost or improve quality?

The Inspire team identified and interviewed a cross section of local afterschool program providers. Twenty-two program providers were interviewed, representing a variety of programs facility types: schools, apartment complexes, community centers, and childcare centers. The team received and analyzed cost data for 23 local programs providers including 8 closed 21st Century Community Learning Centers.





# 6,000 HOUR LEARNING GAP



FAMILY READING TIME

**220**  
HOURS

WEEKEND DAY TRIPS

**245**  
HOURS

SUMMER CAMP

**1,080**  
HOURS

PRE-SCHOOL

**1,395**  
HOURS

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

**3,060**  
HOURS

Dallas has the highest childhood poverty rate of any city over 1 million people. By the time students reach the 6th grade, *middle class kids have likely spent 6,000 more hours learning than kids born into poverty.*

## FILLING A CRITICAL GAP

ExpandedED estimates there is a 6,000 hour gap in learning experiences between low-income and middle income students by the time they reach 5th grade. Nearly seventy percent of those learning experiences take place in structured afterschool and summer activities.

Afterschool and summer programs fill a critical gap for families who could not otherwise afford high quality enrichment opportunities for their children. In addition, Out of School Time programs provide other critical supports to low-income families, including child-care and evening and summer meals.

The After the Bell Alliance estimates there are currently only enough afterschool program seats to serve 12% of low-income students in Dallas.



## LOCAL AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM SCALE: PROVIDERS CONSIDER PROGRAM COST AND AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED STAFF AS KEY BARRIERS

### \$3/ Hour

The average cost for afterschool programming in Dallas is \$2.96 per hour per child. This equates to approximately \$1,600 annually for the typical three hour program length.

### \$25M

The projected cost to double the number of available afterschool seats in Dallas is \$25-30M. This would allow local free and low-cost program providers to serve nearly 25% of local low-income children.

### 85%

Staff expenses make up 85% of the budget for Dallas afterschool programs. The majority of the afterschool staff are part-time and earn \$9-11/hour. Some program directors are full-time and earn an average of \$12-15/hour.

### TALENT

Most organizations listed "finding quality staff" as a primary issue to scaling operations. Scheduling challenges and limited hours outrank ability to pay as key challenges behind staffing programs.



# Growth Challenge: Finding and Retaining Quality Staff



Frequent turnover is common among afterschool staff members because of low pay and part-time hours. In addition, much of the work is seasonal, with no guarantee that contracts will extend to a comparable summer opportunity after the school year ends. For these reasons, many afterschool part-time staff members view their positions as temporary roles while they look for full time opportunities.

It is difficult for any organization to deal with turnover, but it is especially challenging in afterschool programs where success largely hinges on quality relationships between adults and children. In addition, local afterschool program leaders have begun to shift towards a program model that emphasizes enriching and engaging programming.

The shift towards more engaging programming increases program quality, but it makes it even more difficult to recruit staff because they need specialized youth development skills. The professional development required for high quality programming also increases the importance of staff retention.

Currently, providers are utilizing a variety of pathways to recruit staff members. Many program leaders hire AmeriCorps volunteers, which provide a very low-cost staffing option.

Program leaders also hire current and retired teachers, college students, and others looking for part-time employment. Many afterschool program providers also utilize volunteers to supplement their staff.



# Growth Challenge: Program Cost and Funding Availability

Staff expenses make up 85% of the average afterschool program budget of Dallas programs surveyed. Supplies were the second largest expense (8%), food and transportation tied for third (3%), and facility cost made up 1% of the average budget.

Non-staff related expenses made up a small proportion of program budgets because program providers work hard to identify cost savings in other areas.

Generally, local afterschool program providers use donated facility space, receive free food through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and reduce transportation costs by hosting programs on school campuses or in apartment complexes where students live.

Providers are also keeping staff costs as low as possible. Typically, afterschool programs pay staff members low wages (\$9-11/hour) and offer majority part-time roles. Many programs also employ AmeriCorps volunteers who

receive a stipend that amounts to less than minimum wage.

While these cost saving measures reduce the cost of program staff, they also add to the high turnover rates common in the afterschool field. Turnover represents its own expense in both program budgets and ability to offer quality programming.

The Inspire analysis found the average cost per afterschool program hour was \$2.96 per student. This amounts to a projected expense of \$25-30M to double the number of available seats in local afterschool programs.

The higher estimate, \$30M, represents a staffing model where more full-time positions, higher wages, and other incentives are available. The support of expanded services of this magnitude would require new funding streams.



*Inspire's*

## RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

(1) Centralize recruitment and training of qualified employees for partner afterschool programs

- Develop partnerships needed to appropriately recruit interested and qualified candidates
- Design and execute basic training program for afterschool employees
- Provide substitute list of trained/interested candidates

(2) Facilitate relationship between DFW school districts and quality afterschool program providers

- Focus future afterschool funding and growth on in-school partnerships between school districts and existing non-profit afterschool providers

(3) Promote conversations between municipal buildings that offer available afterschool space and existing programs looking for growth

(4) Expand and distribute quality programming content available for afterschool programs







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