

DALLAS AFTERSCHOOL POLICY BRIEF

JANUARY 2025



The 2025 Dallas Afterschool Policy Brief is grounded in our strategic vision: a three-pronged approach of Amplifying Impact, Informing the Community, and Mobilizing Stakeholders to ensure access to high-quality out-of-school-time programming for all children.

WHO WE ARE

As the leading North Texas Out-of-School Time (OST) intermediary, Dallas Afterschool is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to level the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds by increasing the quality and availability of free and low-cost OST programs. We work with over 260 OST sites, 350 OST educators, and impact over 19,000 students annually across the region. For the past 17 years, we have informed community stakeholders, supported out-of-school time programs and their staff members, and coordinated community resources.

We envision a community with the resources and the will to provide impactful learning beyond the school day for all children.

Research: Research is at the heart of everything we do. Working with Afterschool Alliance, [bc]WORKSHOP, Child Poverty Action Lab (C-PAL), Inspire, and The Addy Foundation Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE), Dallas Afterschool publishes regular research reports, available at <https://dallasafterschool.org/afterschool-research>.

Afterschool Landscape Tool: We also help community leaders and elected officials understand where OST programs are needed most. Along with C-PAL and Texas Women's Foundation, we launched the Afterschool Landscape Tool, available at <https://childpovertyactionlab.github.io/dallas-afterschool/supply-demand.html>.

Afterschool Locator Tool: Parents in need of OST can easily locate programs near their home or work with our Afterschool Locator Tool powered by Texas Women's Foundation, available at <https://dallasafterschool.my.salesforce-sites.com/dapf/ProgramFinder>.



WHAT IS OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME?

Out-of-School-Time (OST) opportunities, such as **afterschool and summer programs**, extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports, **play a vital role in the growth and development of young individuals**, who spend more than 80% of their time learning outside of school hours.

How youth spend their time outside the classroom significantly impacts their social and emotional well-being, academic success, college and career readiness, and community safety, with research showing that OST programs enhance academic performance, promote social-emotional health, prepare students for future opportunities, and reduce risky behaviors.



ADDRESSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

By 8th grade, **children from low-income families have missed out on 6,000 hours of enrichment activities** compared to their middle-income peers.

In Texas, studies show that for every child enrolled in an afterschool program, three others are waiting for a spot. Across the state, over 600,000 children are left unsupervised after school.

WHY OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME MATTERS

OST PROMOTES YOUTH WELL-BEING

High-quality afterschool programs significantly benefit low-income youth in Dallas, supporting their academic, social, and emotional development. Studies show that these programs increase attendance, grades, and graduation rates.

85% of students in our partner programs showed **improved mental health** aptitudes

74% received **homework help**

76% participated in **STEM learning**

87% interacted with peers and **built social skills**

OST PROVIDES FOOD SECURITY

75% of low-income families report that meals are important in selecting a program.

In 2020, Texas averaged **83,853 snacks per day** for children participating in afterschool programming.



OST PROMOTES SAFE COMMUNITIES

Juvenile crime rates triple between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m., a time when children are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. **Out-of-school-time programs provide safe, structured environments** during these hours, fostering a sense of belonging and community connection.

83% of low-income parents believe access to afterschool **reduces the likelihood of risky behaviors among students.**



OST SUPPORTS WORKING FAMILIES

Afterschool programs provide crucial support and peace of mind for working parents **by offering safe, reliable care for their children**, which is critical for allowing parents to focus on their careers knowing their children are in a supportive environment.



- **84%** of parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that the program helps them **keep their job or work more hours**
- **83%** of parents agree that afterschool programs **provide working parents peace of mind**
- **85%** support **public funding for afterschool**

OST SUPPORTS THE TEXAS ECONOMY

- Texas loses \$1.8 billion annually in tax revenue from parents who choose not to work because of a lack of childcare.
- Texas loses around \$7.59 billion in productivity every year due to employee absences caused by lack of reliable childcare.

CHALLENGES TO EXPANDING OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAMS

ACCESS AND QUALITY CHALLENGES

Across Texas, limited access to quality afterschool programs impacts economic growth, academic achievement, food security, and public safety. With the expiration of federal Covid relief funds: 57% of school superintendents report that they will need to reduce or eliminate out-of-school-time programs this year.

In Dallas County, which reflects trends in other high-population counties, free or low-cost afterschool programs can only accommodate 17% of the more than 100,000 low-income students.

Moreover, research shows that access alone is not enough—rigorous quality standards are essential. Of the 17,000 low-income students who do attend afterschool programs in Dallas County, nearly all are served by nonprofits, which, due to being free or low-cost, are exempt from state licensing requirements. As a result, anyone, regardless of training or background, can operate these programs from their apartment, church, or elsewhere without any outside training, assistance, or oversight. These gaps in access and quality limit the ability of afterschool programs to effectively close the opportunity gap for low-income students.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

The OST workforce faces an annual turnover rate of up to 70%, driven by part-time hours, low wages, limited benefits, and minimal growth opportunities. These challenges make it difficult to attract and retain skilled, committed individuals, ultimately restricting program capacity and leaving over 100,000 children in Dallas without a safe afterschool option. Research shows **87% of program leaders are concerned about staffing shortages** due to:

Staff Burnout

**Competing with
Wages of other
Industries**

**Inability to Offer
More Hours**

REFERENCES

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Texas Partnership for Out-of-School Time, A Future Reimagined

<https://www.txpost.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/TXPOST-2021-Legislative-Agenda.pdf>

Afterschool Alliance, Texas After 3PM

<https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/TX-AA3PM-2020-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Afterschool Alliance, America After 3PM

https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_National_Report.pdf

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Untapped Potential Report: Texas

<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/education/untapped-potential-report-texas>

Texas Association of Business, Addressing Texas' Childcare Needs is Critical to Our State's Economic Future

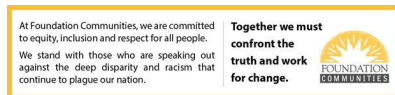
<https://www.txbiz.org/post/addressing-texas-childcare-needs-is-critical-to-our-state-s-economic-future>

Afterschool Alliance, Fall 2023 Program Provider Survey

<https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Wave-10-Program-Provider-Survey-Topline.pdf>



We would like to acknowledge the following community partners for their endorsement of our **2025 OST Policy Brief**:



FEDERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing in Out-of-School Time is a cost-effective approach to addressing educational gaps, reducing risky behaviors, and supporting the economic stability of working families. With targeted funding, multi-agency collaboration, and workforce support, Dallas Afterschool and policymakers can ensure that more North Texas youth have safe, enriching, and affordable opportunities outside school hours.

To guarantee that young people have access to out-of-school time programs, we propose the following policy recommendations to be considered by the following federal agencies: the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

AMPLIFY THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME WORKFORCE

Increase Federal and State Funding for Fair Compensation in OST Programs

Increase federal afterschool and summer funding through 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), as well as state level afterschool and summer funding, to ensure staff are paid a living wage, provided benefits including paid sick time, and are fairly compensated while serving the same or more students in need.

Promote Expenditures for Staff Wellbeing and Performance

Through mechanisms such as technical assistance and federal non-regulatory guidance (suggestions or advice from the federal government), state requests for proposals (requests from states to allow organizations to submit ideas or plans for projects), promote and enhance allowable expenditures for staff wellbeing to improve staff performance and positively impact their overall wellness.

Expand Professional Development for OST Staff

Across funding streams for afterschool and summer programming, allowable professional development and technical assistance expenses should include youth development, content specific programming, organizational capacity, licensing supports, and any other training needed by programs to help staff be successful in their positions.

FEDERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INFORM INVESTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN THE OST FIELD

Invest in Workforce Research to Strengthen OST Programs

Allocate resources for research aimed at identifying service gaps and developing strategies to attract and retain talent in the afterschool and summer learning workforce, considering both short-term roles and long-term career pathways.

Promote Research on the Impact of High-Quality Programming

Mobilize academic institutions to conduct and publish research that explores the connection between high-quality OST programming and improved student outcomes. This initiative could be supported by earmarking targeted grant funds from federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing in Out-of-School Time is a cost-effective approach to addressing educational gaps, reducing risky behaviors, and supporting the economic stability of working families.

With targeted funding, multi-agency collaboration, and workforce support, Dallas Afterschool and Policymakers can ensure that more North Texas youth have safe, enriching, and affordable opportunities outside school hours.

To guarantee that young people have access to out-of-school time programs, we propose the following policy recommendations to be considered by the State of Texas agencies: Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

AMPLIFY THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME WORKFORCE

Support Access to Child Care for Low-Income OST Educators

Enable OST programs to recruit and retain skilled staff by helping low-income educators access high-quality child care for their own children through the State of Texas's Child Care Services program.

Invest in Research to Strengthen the OST Workforce

Fund research to identify service gaps and develop targeted strategies to increase the appeal of the afterschool and summer learning workforce, supporting both new and existing workforce members in short-term and long-term career pathways.

Expand Professional Development for OST Staff

Create funding streams for afterschool and summer funding, allowable professional development and technical assistance should include youth development, content specific programming, organizational capacity, licensing supports, and any other training needed by programs to help staff be successful in their positions.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INFORM INVESTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN THE OST FIELD

Increase Public Access to OST Program Information

Ensure that all licensed and exempt out-of-school-time (OST) programs are publicly listed, providing parents with clear information on available options for their children.

Fund Research on OST Program Impact

Support funding for research and evaluation initiatives to assess the effects of OST programs on student outcomes and long-term success, guiding future investments into high quality programs.

MOBILIZE AGENCIES TO EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS

Amend the 21CCLC Grant Evaluation Criteria

Consider the historical access to funding when evaluating and awarding grants through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Establish a Multi-Agency Initiative to Advance OST Quality & Safety Standards

Support the creation of a multi-agency initiative that includes the ELO Council and the legislative and executive branches to explore existing standards for quality OST programming.

Encourage State-Level Investments

Advocate for sustained state funding to expand afterschool programs and reduce reliance on temporary federal funding.

LOCAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing in Out-of-School Time is a cost-effective approach to addressing educational gaps, reducing risky behaviors, and supporting the economic stability of working families. With targeted funding, multi-agency collaboration, and workforce support, Dallas Afterschool and Policymakers can ensure that more North Texas youth have safe, enriching, and affordable opportunities outside school hours.

To guarantee that young people have access to out-of-school time programs, we propose the following policy recommendations to be considered by local governing agencies: Dallas County, the City of Dallas, and the Dallas Independent School District (DISD).

AMPLIFY THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME WORKFORCE

Establish Dedicated Youth Workforce Funds

Create funds specifically for afterschool and summer programs to support the professional development of OST workers in content specific programming, organizational capacity, and any other training needed by programs to help staff be successful in their positions.

Establish and Fully Fund a Registered Youth Apprenticeship Model

Through collaboration with the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the City of Dallas should develop a registered youth apprenticeship program for individuals interested in careers within afterschool and youth programming. This model will offer prospective and current afterschool staff access to paid, structured, and supported career development opportunities.

INFORM INVESTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN THE OST FIELD

Identify New Funding Sources for OST and Early Childhood Providers

With the expiration of federal ARPA funding in 2024, the City should seek new federal funding streams to sustain microgrants and quality improvement support for OST and Early Childhood providers, ideally through partnerships with intermediary agencies in these fields.

LOCAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

MOBILIZE AGENCIES TO EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS

Explore a Ballot Measure to Support Youth Programs

Explore the option of a ballot measure to create a steady, dedicated funding source for programs serving young people, including OST programs.

Encourage Partnerships for Accessible Afterschool Programs

Dallas Independent School District should collaborate with high-quality afterschool providers to expand access to free or low-cost afterschool programs.

Expand Funding for Youth-Serving Programs

Increase the availability of funding across various City of Dallas departments to support youth-serving program providers.

Enhance Transportation for Afterschool and Summer Programs

Extend DISD bus service to offer reliable transportation at the end of the afterschool day and throughout the summer, benefiting students attending approved and community-based OST programs.