



San Francisco Board of Education
Parent Advisory Council

**Report to the Board of Education:
Findings from Telephone Surveys on Access to Afterschool Programs**

May 26, 2009

This report describes the findings from telephone surveys conducted with parents of SFUSD students, to assess their needs for afterschool programs. It includes the PAC's initial recommendations and our next steps to develop policy recommendations for the Board of Education, to expand access to high-quality afterschool programs.

Background

For years the PAC has heard concerns about access to afterschool programs. In focus group conversations with hundreds of parents, we learned that families face many challenges in finding adequate afterschool care for their children:

- There is a **bewildering set of afterschool programs** across the district: some schools have more than one program on-site, and there are many off-campus programs
- During the enrollment process, **detailed information isn't available** about eligibility criteria or availability of space in afterschool programs – and parents struggle to choose schools without that information
- There is almost **no information** available in languages **other than English**
- Many families whose children aren't eligible for school-based ExCEL programs **cannot afford the private programs** on-site or off-campus
- Program **quality is uneven**, even among different programs at the same school site, and there are **no clear standards** for programs across the district
- There is **very little accountability** for how well afterschool programs serve the school communities.

Afterschool programs are very important to families, for different reasons:

- Most working **parents need a safe place** for their child to be after school
- Beyond keeping their children safe, many parents rely on afterschool programs to provide **academic support**, as well as art, sports, and other **enrichment activities** that aren't available during their school day
- Families whose **first language is other than English** emphasized the need for a program to **help their children with homework**
- Many parents noted that afterschool programs give their children an opportunity to **develop important friendships** across divisions in school-day classes – especially for children in Special Education and language programs.

Last year the PAC began to work with DCYF and the After-School For All advisory committee – which includes SFUSD staff, city agencies, after-school program providers, and community funders – to promote strategies to expand high-quality after-school programs in San Francisco. We realized that to inform this work we needed to learn more from families about their needs and priorities for afterschool programs. The PAC worked with DCYF, Afterschool For All and the Public Research Institute at SF State University to develop and fund the survey instrument.

On behalf of the SFUSD, the PRI conducted a random telephone survey, in English, Spanish, Cantonese & Mandarin, in the summer of 2008. The data was analyzed and summarized by PRI over the past winter. This report references PRI’s full report for more detail – it has been provided as a separate document, and is available on the PAC’s website at www.pacsf.org

Who We Heard From

Telephone surveys were completed with **1,096 families** of SFUSD students in **grades K-8**. For families with more than one child, they were asked to provide information about just one of their children. This was an extensive survey: the average interview time was 24 minutes.

Based on SFUSD demographic data, the **results were weighted to reflect the balance of the district’s student population**. The full report on the survey analyzes the responses by ethnicity, language, family income, and quadrants of the city. *(See pages 7-11 in the full report.)*

Participation in Afterschool Programs and Activities

The survey found that **63% of students participate in some kind** of activity after school. Some attend formal afterschool programs, while others participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, or lessons:

- **59% participate** in a formal **afterschool** program either on-site or off-campus
- **19%** participate in **more than one** activity (including extracurricular activities)
- **24%** don’t participate and **don’t want to**
- **13%** don’t participate **but want to** *(See pages 13-15 in full report.)*

Type of program, activity or care	Percent of all families surveyed	Average # of days per week	Average hours per week
Afterschool program at school	43%	4.2	10.9
Other activity (sports, clubs, lessons, etc.)	23%	2.1	3.5
Afterschool program away from school	16%	3.4	8.7
Other care	3%	3.4	8.6
Any type of after school activity	63%	4.2	11

Differences in Participation by Income, Ethnicity & Language

We found significant differences in participation across income, ethnicity and primary language. **White** children and **native English** speakers were **more likely** to participate in **school-based** afterschool programs, while **Chinese language** speakers had the **highest** participation in **off-campus** programs. **Latino children** were the **least likely to participate** in any afterschool activity, while **white children** were the **most likely**.

Higher participation in afterschool activities:

- In **any** afterschool activity: White children (73% vs. 63% overall)
- In **on-site** afterschool program: White children (49% vs. 43% overall)
- In **extra-curricular** activities: White children (41% vs. 23% overall)

Lower overall participation in **any** afterschool activity:

- Children in low-income families (58% vs. 63% overall)
- Latino children (56%)
- Spanish-speaking children (52%)
- Households with more than two adults (52%)

Higher participation in **off-site** afterschool programs:

- Children who speak a Chinese language (20% vs. 16% overall)
- African American children (19%)

(See pages 15-16 in full report.)

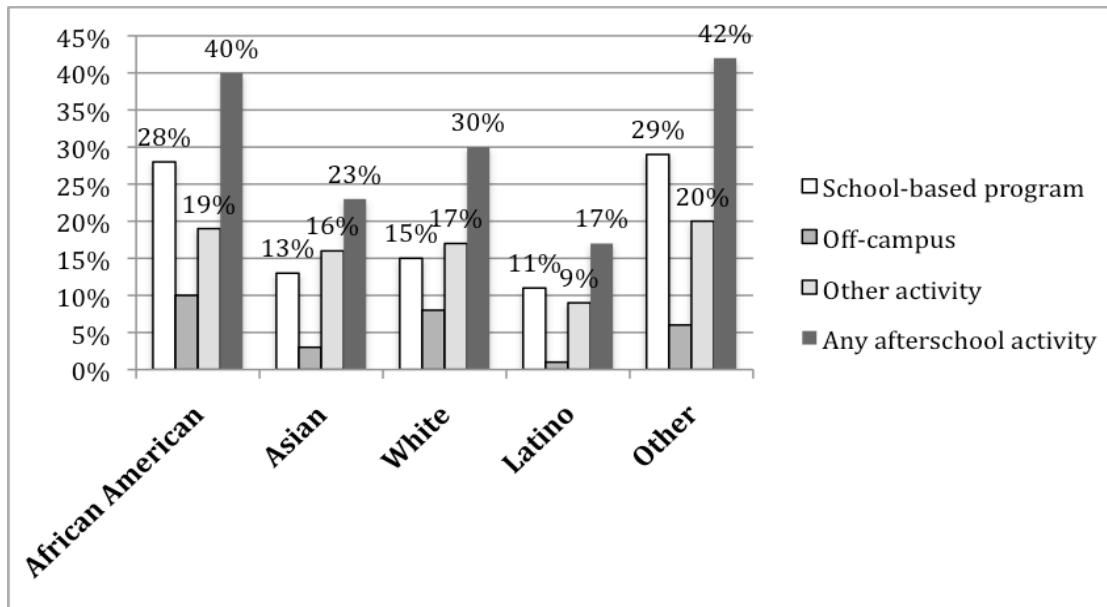
Unmet Needs for Afterschool Program

We found that **27%** of families had **unmet needs** for an afterschool program or activity:

- **14%** are currently participating (largely in school-based and extracurricular activities) and **would like more participation.**
- **13%** are not currently participating but **would like to participate**
- **17%** would specifically like to participate in an **on-site program.**
- Among those who had **tried unsuccessfully** to enroll their child in a program, **72%** wished to participate in a **school-site** program.

Among families with unmet needs, **there are significant differences by ethnicity.**

- **42%** of families reporting “**other**” ethnicity had **unmet needs** for afterschool activities, and 29% desire a school-based program
- **40%** of **African American** children **need an afterschool activity**, including 28% who desire a school-based program



(See pages 19-20 in full report.)

Difficulty Finding a Program

Nearly 77% families reported difficulty finding an afterschool program or activity that meets their needs. Here too there are differences across ethnicity as well as the children’s grade level:

- **80% of African American and Asian families** reported difficulty finding a program
- **67% of white families** reported difficulty
- **83% of families** with students **grades K-2** reported difficulty
- Families of students in **middle school** reported the **least difficulty** – **although 70%** did.

(See pages 37-38 in full report.)

About Paying Fees for Programs

The survey asked a few questions about program fees. We found that **41% of parents** reported they **pay a fee** to participate in afterschool activities. We also found that **72% of parents are willing** to make a donation to afterschool programs, although the amount they can pay differs. Lower-income families can afford less, but are still willing to contribute.

- **White and Asian** families are more likely to be paying fees for programs.
- The **average amount** families pay per week is **\$62.58**, but **ranges** from about \$1 - \$363.
- While only 20% of families paid for school-site programs, the average weekly fee for **site-based programs** was the highest, at **\$64.17**.
- 57% of those paying fees are for **grades K-2**
- 38% have children in grades 3-5

(See pages 24-28 in full report.)

What's Important to Families

Parents were asked to rate the importance of nineteen characteristics of afterschool programs, on a 4-point scale (from “not at all important” to “very important”).

Top three characteristics for families who **participate in an afterschool program**:

- Child's interest or enjoyment
- Adequate number of staff
- Child has a caring relationship with staff

Top three characteristics for families who **don't participate**:

- Child's interest or enjoyment
- Adequate number of staff
- **Hours when child could attend**

Language, ethnicity and family income are associated with differences in the relative importance of program characteristics: **African American, low-income**, and parents who **don't speak English** rated **help with homework** and **academic support** as higher priorities than other families did.

(See pages 30-34 in full report.)

Importance of Afterschool Program in Choosing a School

Parents with children at **on-site** afterschool programs were asked about the relationship between those programs and their decision to enroll in a specific school. We found that the **availability & quality** of these programs were **very important** factors in choosing a school.

- **81%** reported that program **availability** was very important
- **75%** reported that program **quality or reputation** was very important

(See page 29 in full report.)

Issues Beyond This Survey

The PAC first learned of parent concerns about access to afterschool programs when we set out to discuss issues of student enrollment and school assignment. Likewise, when we spoke with families more in depth about their needs for afterschool programs, we found links between these issues and other issues across the district.

Between the community conversations and these telephone surveys, the PAC has learned that concerns about afterschool programs are linked with issues of student assignment, communication, and transportation.

Student Assignment

In the PAC's community conversations and this extensive telephone survey, we found that:

- Parents want to know about afterschool programs **as they look at schools** and as part of the enrollment process.
- They want SFUSD applications to **include an application** to on-site afterschool programs.
- They need to **know before school starts** whether their child has afterschool care.

Communication and Technology

When asked how they prefer to receive information about their children's programs,

- 42% of parents said by giving the child information to bring home
- 36% by mail
- **12% by posting on a website & only 3% by email.**

While the district is placing priority on updating its technology infrastructure, including web-based communications, it's clear that **most parents rely on other ways to communicate.**

There were significant **differences** in responses **among language groups**: English speakers were more likely than Spanish or Cantonese speakers to prefer getting information through websites or email. While this might seem obvious, we have found **widespread gaps in communication** and **access to basic information** about programs available for children.

Transportation

Parents cited relatively few concerns about transportation, but these concerns were most often noted as **a reason parents have not tried to enroll their child** in a program, or a reason they **stopped participating** in a program. As the district looks to cut transportation expenses, these issues must be looked at carefully.

(See pages 23 & 39-40 in full report.)

Immediate Recommendations

The PAC recognizes that we need to delve more deeply into the information gathered through this research – especially to learn more about differences in program participation and unmet needs among different socioeconomic, language and ethnic groups. We do have some immediate, practical recommendations for the SFUSD to improve access to afterschool programs for families across the district:

- Provide much more **detailed information about afterschool programs** – including ExCEL eligibility criteria & program openings – in school **site materials** & the **enrollment guide**

- **Practice better communication** with families – including written materials and staff who can communicate in languages other than English
- Increase district and principal **accountability** for on-site afterschool **program quality** and **accessibility**
- **Continue collaboration & planning** with the Afterschool For All Advisory Council.

Next Steps for the PAC

The PAC's next steps on this project are to:

- Look at school-site balanced scorecards to learn more about what's working and what's needed to increase access and improve site-based afterschool programs
- Participate in Afterschool For All advisory council initiatives including financing, program quality, and work-force development
- Develop policy recommendations for the SFUSD to **expand access to high-quality afterschool programs.**