THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

PARTICIPANT INPUT REPORT:

SUMMER AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

2023 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The mission of The Children's Trust (The Trust) is to partner with the community to plan, advocate for, and fund strategic investments through community partnerships. This work strives to improve the lives of children and families in Florida's Miami-Dade County. The Trust is currently expanding its reach within youth development, with 2023-24 funding awards increasing from $54 million to $76.7 million annually across 143 agencies that operate high-quality summer and after-school programs across Miami-Dade County. Funded programs span elementary, middle, and high school grade levels and cover 17,413 after-school and 18,595 summer camp slots.

The Trust has partnered with Q-Q Research Consultants (QQRC), a consulting firm located in Miami-Dade County, to conduct research and evaluation services that inform The Trust's ongoing work. The objectives of this research are to 1) assess the needs and interests of potential program participants to inform planning for future investments and 2) incorporate input from current service recipients to support providers' continuous learning and quality improvement. Current research activities focus on summer camps and after-school programs.

This Executive Summary report highlights findings from a community parent survey and focus groups with parents and youth. In addition to gauging on-average attitudes and experiences, this report also draws comparisons across different populations (i.e., by race/ethnicity, income level, and neighborhood of residence) to explore whether different facets of the community have different experiences and needs. Details on the methods and samples are provided in the appendix.

FINDINGS

Access to Summer and After-School Programs

Do parents know where to find information on summer and after-school programs?

Across grade levels, most survey respondents expressed that they knew where to find information on summer and after-school programs (see Figure 1). Parents and guardians of high school students, however, were more likely to disagree that they knew where to find this information.

- Black/African American parents across age groups and Hispanic/Latino parents of middle and high school students were less likely to report knowing where to find a program.

- Lower income respondents were less likely to report knowing where to find a program.

- Among parents of elementary school students, parents from the far south of Miami-Dade County were less likely to report knowing where to find a program.

During focus groups with Spanish-speaking parents, participants from half of the groups identified limited access to timely information as a key barrier to accessing summer programs. They described information about summer camps not being broadly disseminated and how parents/caregivers must rely on word of mouth or the organizations they are in contact with to be able to utilize the services.

Figure 1: Most parents strongly agree or agree that they know where to find information on summer and after-school programs.
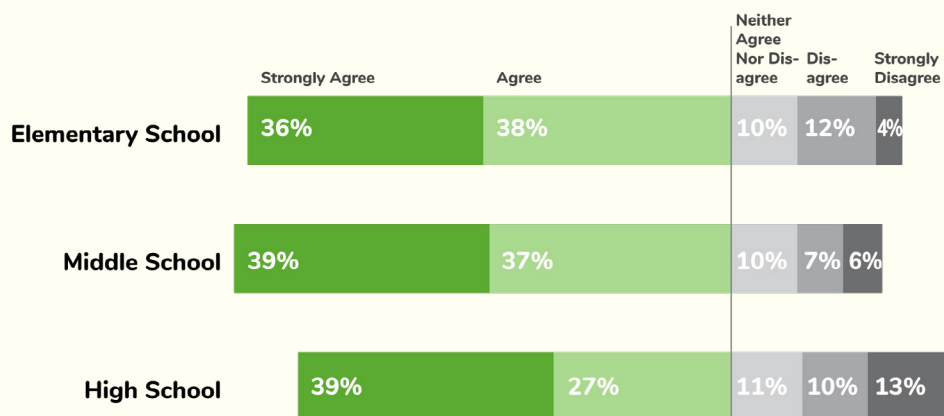
What information sources do parents consult when looking for summer and after-school programs?

The community survey asked parents and caregivers what sources of information they were most likely to consult when looking for a program for their child. Across grade levels, the most selected information sources were 1) family and friends, 2) a teacher or other education professional, 3) Google or other search engines, and 4) social media (see Figure 2). Parents of high schoolers were somewhat less likely to consult social media as compared to parents of younger children.

Other sources of information cited on the community survey included other programs and services (i.e., referrals), school websites, and community centers.

When examining whether different community populations tend to consult different information sources, a few noteworthy findings emerged:

- Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American respondents were more likely to get information on programs through family and friends. Focus group findings indicate that this may be both due to personal preference *and* necessity due to lacking information through other channels.

- As compared to other groups, White respondents were more likely to consult a pediatrician or other healthcare worker for information on programs.

- Non-White groups were more likely to report getting information from a directory or other publicly available list, particularly at the middle school level. Lower-income respondents were also more likely to consult a directory.

Figure 2: The majority of parents used family and friends as their primary information source, followed by education professionals and online search engines.

Elementary School

Source	Percent
Family and friends	64%
Education professional	59%
Search engine	54%
Social media	46%
Directory	36%
Healthcare worker	23%
Religious organization	17%
Other source	2%

Middle School

Source	Percent
Family and friends	64%
Education professional	61%
Search engine	55%
Social media	44%
Directory	39%
Healthcare worker	18%
Religious organization	14%
Other source	5%

High School

Source	Percent
Family and friends	67%
Search engine	59%
Education professional	57%
Social media	36%
Directory	35%
Religious organization	25%
Healthcare worker	13%
Other source	8%

Parent focus group participants were also asked to share their thoughts on advertising and how they learn about programs and services. Responses were aligned with those from the community survey. Participants most mentioned social media and networking. They frequently noted seeking information through the school system and mailed letters and/or distributed flyers. They also reported word of mouth, local avenues (newspapers/publications, community events, buses, bus benches, 311/211, and billboards), and places families and children frequent (doctors' offices and fast-food restaurants). Word-of-mouth was cited as the most important by Spanish-speaking participants.

"Now social media is such a big thing. I think social media will be a nice way. One of the main ways parents can find out is through Facebook, Google, and schools."

During focus groups, hard-to-reach youth participants primarily indicated online Internet searches, such as through Google, and social media, particularly TikTok, as means to seek out programming information. They also reported getting information through family and friends. Thus, social media and social networks are means of reaching a range of potential participants.

What program types are children and youth participating in?

Community survey respondents were asked what sorts of programs their children had participated in over the prior year. Around half of responding parents and guardians of elementary aged children reported participating in a summer camp or after-school program (see Figure 3). By high school, however, this number dropped substantially, particularly for after-school programs.

Historically disadvantaged groups were generally less likely to participate in summer and after-school programs.

- In the elementary school group, participation in **summer** programs was lowest for White and Haitian community members.

- For high school students, participation in **summer** programs was highest for White respondents, followed by Haitians. Participation was substantially lower for Hispanic/Latino high school students.

- Participation in **summer** programs was also associated with income, particularly at the elementary and high school levels. The lowest and highest income brackets were more likely to participate as compared to the middle-income ranges.

Figure 3: Participation in after-school care declines after middle school, but children of all ages are more or somewhat likely to participate in a summer camp.

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
After-school care	51%	55%	40%
Summer camp	50%	44%	27%
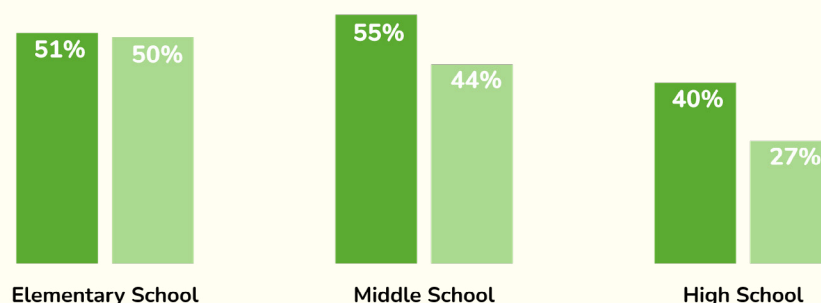
- Participation rates in **summer** programs were lowest in the far south region of Miami-Dade County.

- Participation in **after-school** programs was generally lower for Haitian, Hispanic/Latino, and Black/African American populations as compared to White and Asian respondents. However, by reaching high school, Haitian participation increases to levels that surpass White counterparts.

- Respondents from the far south of the county, as well as Kendall/near south, were less likely to participate in **after-school** programs as compared to other areas.

Through focus groups, participants shared factors that motivate them to participate in summer and after-school programs. Many parents reported that they must work and that programs can be an affordable option that offers their children the activities, outings, and field trips they cannot afford .

What prevents children and youth from participating in summer and after-school programs?

Through the community survey, parents and guardians whose children were not participating in a summer or after-school program were asked why this was the case. Across age groups, affordability was one of the most selected reasons (see Figure 4 on next page). The convenience of locations was also commonly cited, particularly among elementary and high school parents and guardians. Timing and schedule challenges were another frequently cited concern, particularly for elementary school parents/guardians. Parents/guardians of elementary school children were also more likely to express concern over fit with values as compared to older children.

Other reasons provided on the community survey included lack of special education accommodations, lack of educational opportunities or help with homework, safety issues with other children, and questioning whether adults were sufficiently caring and professional. Many parents expressed that they preferred their child to spend time with the family.

Focus groups provided some insights into the challenges that some community members encounter when looking for summer and after-school activities. Parents most frequently responded with respect to the cost of, and funding for, programming. Participants mentioned limited availability of programs as well as waitlists and limited capacity. They also noted staffing levels and issues at some sites based on the personnel challenges organizations are currently facing.

As with the survey, transportation difficulties were also a common theme.

Spanish-speaking focus group participants mentioned similar concerns and also emphasized challenges with respect to timely and adequate information about programs. They described information about summer camps not being broadly disseminated and how parents/caregivers must rely on word of mouth or the organizations they are in contact with to be able to utilize services.

Figure 4: The two most common barriers to participation in summer and after-school programs are affordability and inconvenient locations.

Elementary School

Barrier	Percentage
Locations not convenient	53%
Affordability	50%
Timing/schedule	46%
Programs not what child enjoys	38%
Can't find program	34%
Child not interested	31%
Fit with values	22%
Not in preferred language	15%
Other reason	11%
Conflicting activities	n/a

Elementary School

Middle School

Barrier	Percentage
Affordability	42%
Can't find program	32%
Locations not convenient	31%
Child not interested	28%
Timing/schedule	23%
Programs not what child enjoys	22%
Conflicting activities	16%
Other reason	11%
Fit with values	7%
Not in preferred language	5%

Middle School

High School

Barrier	Percentage
Locations not convenient	50%
Affordability	50%
Can't find program	38%
Conflicting activities	37%
Child not interested	35%
Programs not what child enjoys	34%
Timing/schedule	34%
Other reason	11%
Fit with values	7%
Not in preferred language	4%

High School

"We do not have the means to pay for after-school care or summer camp for the kids. It's expensive, very expensive… and things have skyrocketed – rent, gas, everything. Multiple kids, that adds up. There's a waitlist. There is limited space also." (Spanish language focus group)

During focus groups, hard-to-reach youth were also asked about barriers to program participation. In response, they discussed transportation challenges as well as difficulties with trusting other people. This trust issue speaks to a need for relationship building in harder-to-reach communities.

"It's very challenging for certain people to be able to get around, they don't have any transportation. Transportation and no one being there to like, be able to take them where they need to go. They might have trust issues with people who are trying to help them." (Focus group with hard-to-reach youth)

Thus, qualitative data sources supported transportation/location and affordability as key barriers while also shedding light on barriers not apparent in the survey, such as trust, safety, and potential lack of educational supports.

Activities of Interest

What are the most important factors in selecting a SUMMER camp? What motivates families and children to participate?

Through the community survey, parents and guardians were asked to rate the importance of various summer camp activities. The most highly rated features included physical activity, a positive social environment, and learning life skills. At the high school level, post-secondary preparation was also highly rated.

Across grade levels, however, even the less selected activities were rated as '*must haves*' by more than a third of respondents, highlighting a need for varied programming.

Figure 5a: The majority of respondents thought all activities would be either 'must have' or 'nice to have', but physical activity, learning life skills, and a positive social environment were the top 'must haves' in an elementary age summer camp program.

	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Physical activity	58%	35%	7%
Learning life skills	57%	36%	7%
Positive social environment	55%	38%	6%
Arts and music	41%	51%	7%
STEM programs	40%	54%	7%
Swimming lessons	38%	52%	10%
School help	37%	56%	8%
Field trips	36%	53%	11%
Cultural and language programs	35%	56%	10%

Elementary School

Figure 5b: A majority of respondents thought all activities would be either 'must have' or 'nice to have', but a positive social environment, physical activity, and learning life skills where the top 'must haves' in a middle school summer camp program.

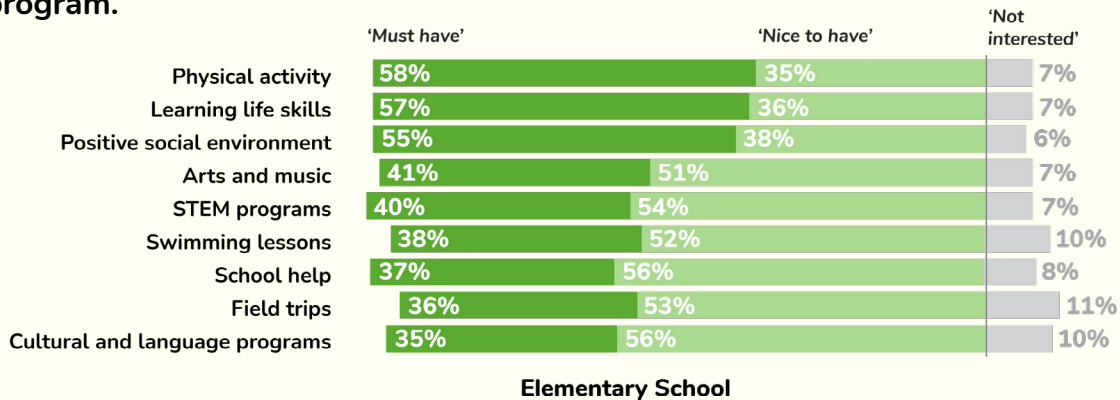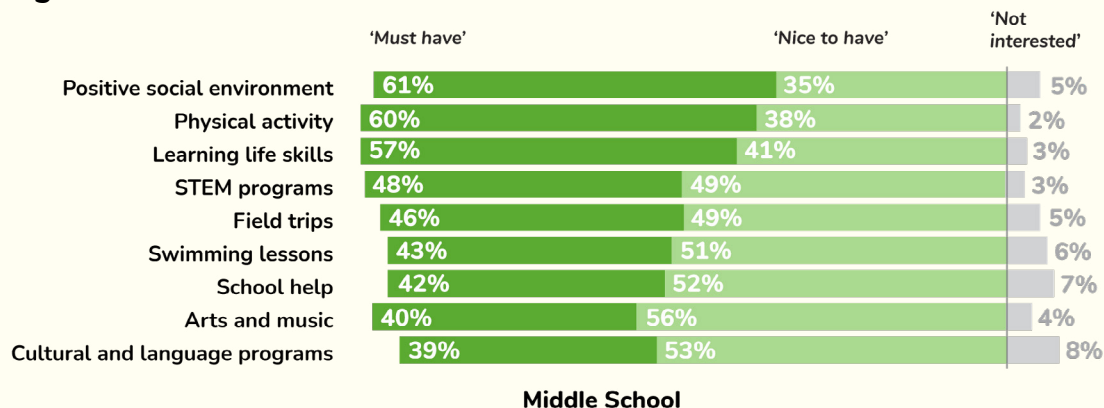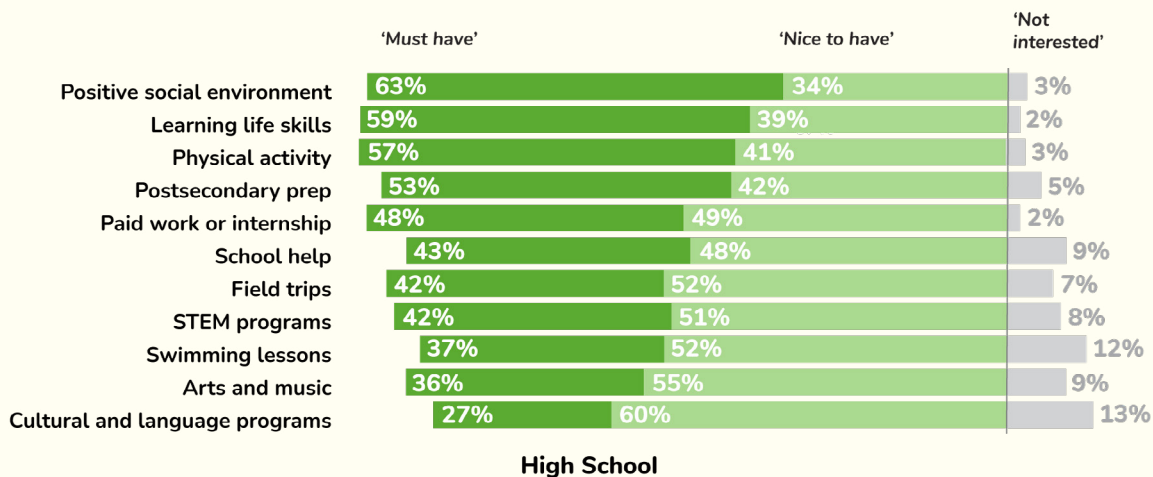|	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Positive social environment	61%	35%	5%
Physical activity	60%	38%	2%
Learning life skills	57%	41%	3%
STEM programs	48%	49%	3%
Field trips	46%	49%	5%
Swimming lessons	43%	51%	6%
School help	42%	52%	7%
Arts and music	40%	56%	4%
Cultural and language programs	39%	53%	8%

Middle School

Figure 5c: A majority of respondents thought all activities would be either 'must have' or 'nice to have', but a positive social environment, learning life skills, and physical activity were the top 'must haves' in a high school summer camp program.

	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Positive social environment	63%	34%	3%
Learning life skills	59%	39%	2%
Physical activity	57%	41%	3%
Postsecondary prep	53%	42%	5%
Paid work or internship	48%	49%	2%
School help	43%	48%	9%
Field trips	42%	52%	7%
STEM programs	42%	51%	8%
Swimming lessons	37%	52%	12%
Arts and music	36%	55%	9%
Cultural and language programs	27%	60%	13%

High School

Interest in varied program activities was also a theme in focus groups with parents. Their responses reflected that they want their children to learn, be exposed to different experiences and opportunities, and develop friendships. Participants hoped for safe and therapeutic environments that keep children engaged in fun activities and out of trouble.

An open-ended question on the community survey asked for other desirable features. Some more commonly mentioned by parents and caregivers were learning survival and wilderness skills, public service and volunteering, cooking, and military training.

Common themes from both open-ended survey questions and parent focus groups included:

- Safe and secure environments

- Mental health supports, including emotional and behavioral regulation

- Positive opportunities for socialization and a welcoming environment

- A variety of diverse learning experiences, including field trips in summer camps

- Academic preparation and development, including tutoring and college preparation

- Physical and recreational activities, arts

- Transportation and convenient locations

- Healthy food options

In all focus groups conducted with Spanish-speaking caregivers, participants also talked about the importance of offering varied and high-quality experiences that kept children/youth busy and engaged. All groups referred to field trips as engaging opportunities for children/youth to be exposed to environments and experiences that are not easily available to them at home.

"What we need most is help for the kids to be better prepared. They're learning, having fun, and getting therapy. My child will be safe, participate in activities, go on field trips and stay out of trouble. It allows you to go to work, and we know the children are in good hands. We need a break, too... I'm a single parent." (Focus group participant)

What are the most important factors in selecting an AFTER-SCHOOL program?

As with summer programs, parents and guardians rated a variety of after-school program activities as important through the community survey (see Figures 6a - 6c). Again, physical activity, a positive social environment, and learning life skills were highly rated across grade levels. School help also emerged as one of the top-rated activities, as well as STEM programs for middle school parents. At the high school level, post-secondary preparation was also highly rated.

Figure 6a: A positive social environment, learning life skills, and physical activity were the top **'must haves'** for an elementary after-school program.

	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Positive social environment	60%	36%	4%
Learning life skills	59%	37%	4%
Physical activity	56%	40%	4%
School help	51%	43%	6%
STEM programs	45%	51%	4%
Arts and music	42%	52%	6%
Cultural and language programs	38%	54%	8%

Elementary School

Figure 6b: A positive social environment, physical activity, and learning life skills were the top **'must haves'** for a middle school after-school program.

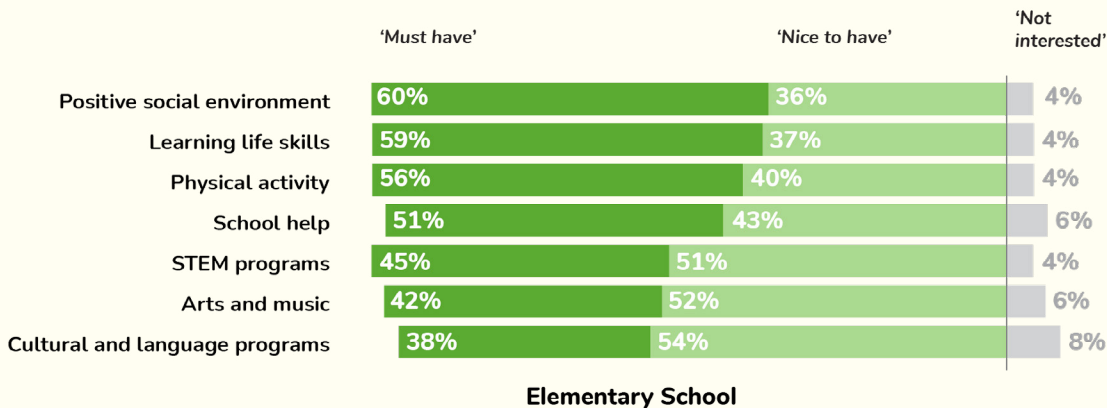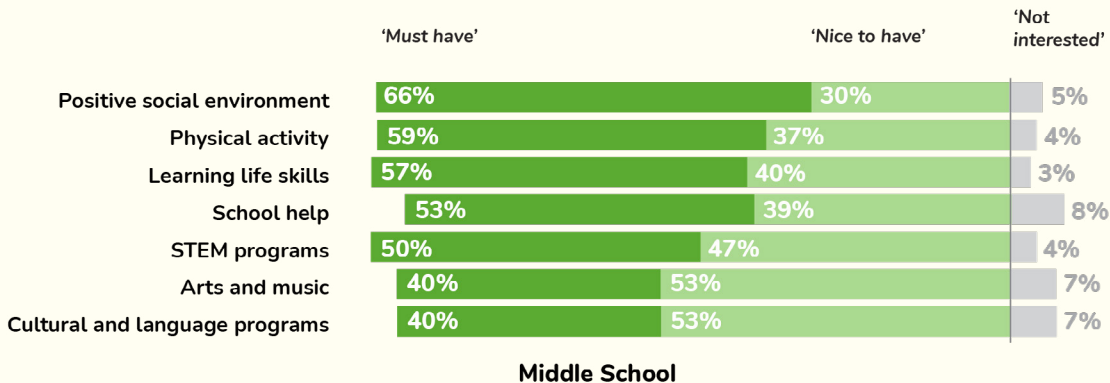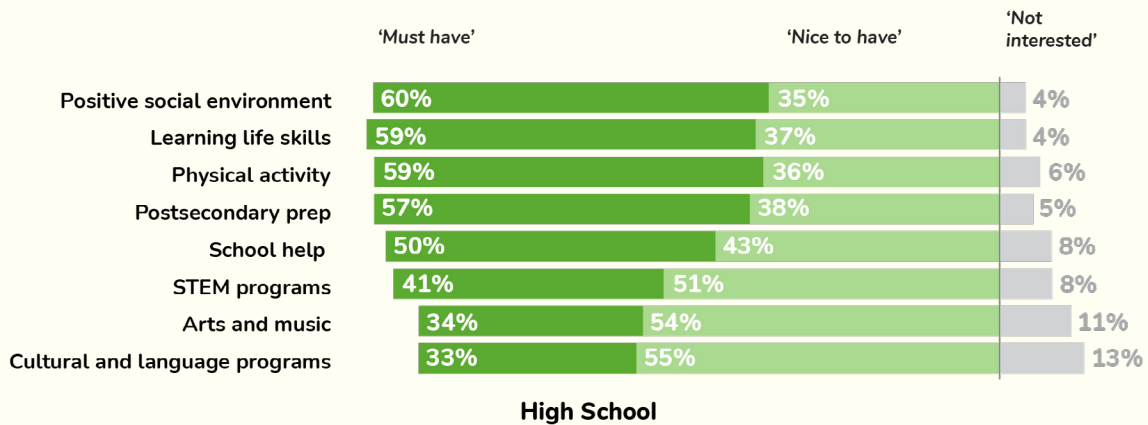|	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Positive social environment	66%	30%	5%
Physical activity	59%	37%	4%
Learning life skills	57%	40%	3%
School help	53%	39%	8%
STEM programs	50%	47%	4%
Arts and music	40%	53%	7%
Cultural and language programs	40%	53%	7%

Middle School

Figure 6c: A positive social environment, physical activity, and learning life skills were the top 'must haves' for a high school after-school program.

	'Must have'	'Nice to have'	'Not interested'
Positive social environment	60%	35%	4%
Learning life skills	59%	37%	4%
Physical activity	59%	36%	6%
Postsecondary prep	57%	38%	5%
School help	50%	43%	8%
STEM programs	41%	51%	8%
Arts and music	34%	54%	11%
Cultural and language programs	33%	55%	13%

High School

During focus groups and through the community survey, parent participants further described the features of after-school programs that were most important to them. They most frequently cited:

- Homework assistance and tutoring

- Mental health supports that foster self-awareness, problem-solving, and conflict resolution

- A mix of academics, tutoring, physical activity, and recreational fun

- Interaction and positive socialization with peers

- Developing communication, social, and life skills

- Learning about different cultures (particularly Haitian culture for Haitian children)

In focus groups with Spanish-speaking parents, when asked about the activities they considered to be most important for after-school programs, participants talked consistently about homework assistance. Several parents/caregivers stated that they do not have enough time after work to review their child's homework, have trouble understanding the content, or are unable to help their children complete their work due to the language barrier.

Thus, findings from the survey and parent focus groups converged around themes such as academic development, physical activity, supportive and welcoming social environments, development of life skills, and inclusion of a variety of themes and subjects.

What program features were most important to youth?

In youth focus groups, participants described a desire to learn things they do not learn in school. They reported a need to work on reading and math during after-school programming, reinforcing the need for school help that was also seen in the survey. Participants indicated that homework completion should occur before physical activities, recreation, and playtime.

In addition to school help, they also indicated they enjoyed recreational activities, such as games and movies. Participants also discussed spending time with their friends and being outside doing physical activities. They also described the usefulness of field trips and interesting activities that allow them to discover new things. Several also mentioned spending time with counselors.

Thus, youth preferences supported findings from the survey, pointing to a need for varied programming with some emphasis on areas such as school help, fostering a positive social environment, learning life skills, mental health, and physical activity.

Focus groups with hard-to-reach youth also explored what program features would be most interesting to them. Participants primarily indicated work, earning money, and volunteering. They emphasized job skills training and assistance with finding employment. Hard-to-reach participants also described interests in sports and gaming and a need for mental health counseling, life skills training, and assistance with schoolwork to support their future success.

Scheduling Needs

What are parents' and guardians' scheduling needs when it comes to SUMMER camps?

Parents and guardians were asked the number of weeks they would need for a summer program (see Figure 7). Across grade levels, the most common response was part of the summer (3-5 weeks), although about a third reported needing a program all summer (6+ weeks).

There were some important group differences in scheduling needs for summer camps.

- Non-White populations were much more likely to report needing a summer camp or program lasting all summer, a finding that was consistent across grade levels.

Figure 7: Across school ages, part of the summer (3-5 weeks) was the most common need for how many weeks A SUMMER CAMP should be.

Elementary School
- Not interested/Don't need 3%
- One to two weeks 16%
- All summer (6+ weeks) 34%
- Part of the summer (3-5 weeks) 47%

Middle School
- Not interested/Don't need 5%
- One to two weeks 12%
- All summer (6+ weeks) 34%
- Part of the summer (3-5 weeks) 49%

High School
- Not interested/Don't need 5%
- One to two weeks 14%
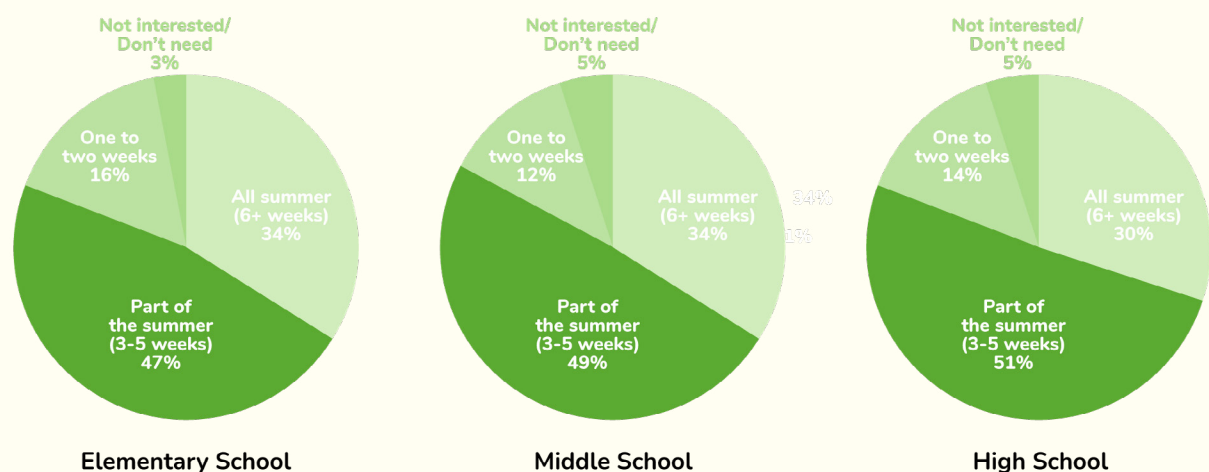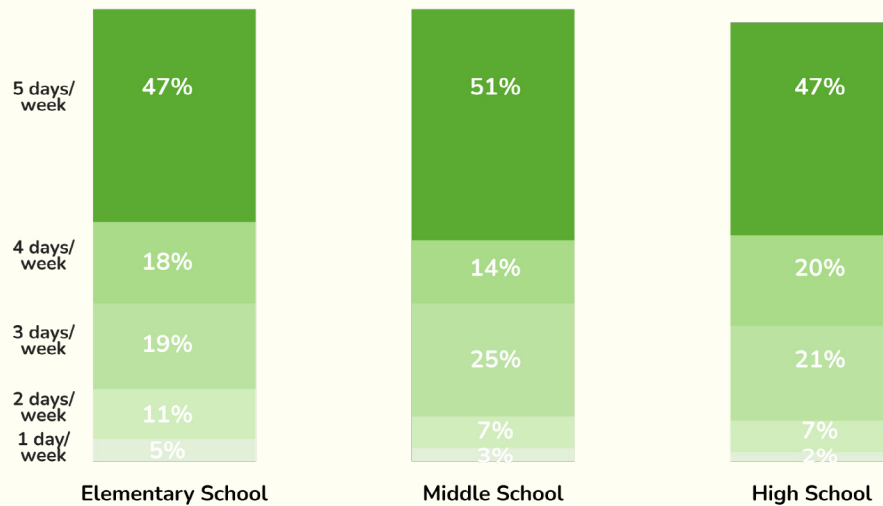- All summer (6+ weeks) 30%
- Part of the summer (3-5 weeks) 51%

Figure 8: Across school ages, 5 days per week was the most common number of days respondents needed summer camps .

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
5 days/week	47%	51%	47%
4 days/week	18%	14%	20%
3 days/week	19%	25%	21%
2 days/week	11%	7%	7%
1 day/week	5%	3%	2%

- Lower income respondents were also more likely to need a summer-long camp or program.

- Respondents from the far south of Miami-Dade were more likely to need a program for the full summer.

Survey respondents who reported needing a summer program were also asked how many days per week they would need it. Across age groups, the most common answer was 5 days per week, with about half of respondents selecting this option (see Figure 8).
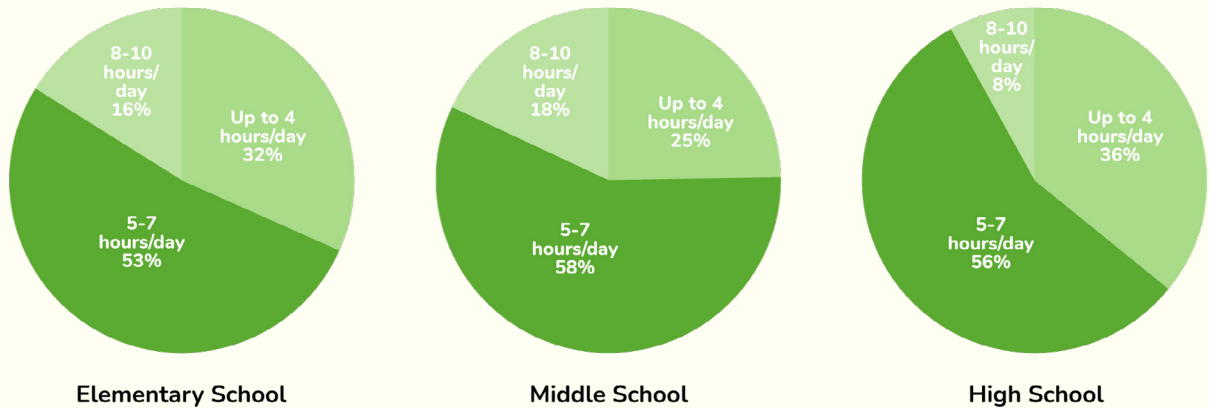
- Non-White respondents were more likely to report needing a summer camp or program covering 5 days per week.

- Both lower- and higher-income respondents needed a summer program covering 5 days, as compared to the middle-income range.

- Residents of the far south and Kendall/ near south were more likely to need a 5-day program as compared to other neighborhoods.

When asked about the number of hours per day they would need a summer program, the most common answer for all grade levels was 5-7 hours per day(see Figure 9 on the next page).

Although 8-10 hours per day was the least selected option, non-White populations were more likely to need such a program. The need for summer programs covering these extended hours was also highest among the lower- and higher-income groups, as compared to the middle-income range. These findings were consistent across age groups.

Figure 9: The majority of respondents felt that 5-7 hours per day was ideal for summer camps.

Elementary School	Middle School	High School

Elementary School:
- Up to 4 hours/day 32%
- 5-7 hours/day 53%
- 8-10 hours/day 16%

Middle School:
- Up to 4 hours/day 25%
- 5-7 hours/day 58%
- 8-10 hours/day 18%

High School:
- Up to 4 hours/day 36%
- 5-7 hours/day 56%
- 8-10 hours/day 8%

What are parents' and guardians' scheduling needs when it comes to AFTER-SCHOOL programs?

When asked how many days per week they would need an after-school program, the most common answer for all age groups was 5 days per week, and the second most common answer was 3 days per week (see Figure 10).

Across grade levels, non-White populations were more likely, by a large margin, to need a program lasting five days per week.

Respondents who reported that they needed an after-school program were also asked about the hours they need covered. For all three groups, most parents and guardians reported needing a program that lasts either until 4 pm or earlier or until 5 pm. Substantial proportions also needed a program lasting until 6 pm (see Figure 11 on next page).

Figure 10: Across school ages, the majority of respondents agreed that 5 days per week was ideal for after-school programs.

Elementary School:
- 1 day/week: 4%
- 2 day/week: 15%
- 3 day/week: 22%
- 4 day/week: 12%
- 5 day/week: 44%
- Not interested/Don't need: 4%

Middle School:
- 1 day/week: 4%
- 2 day/week: 11%
- 3 day/week: 26%
- 4 day/week: 12%
- 5 day/week: 40%
- Not interested/Don't need: 7%

High School:
- 1 day/week: 1%
- 2 day/week: 11%
- 3 day/week: 26%
- 4 day/week: 16%
- 5 day/week: 38%
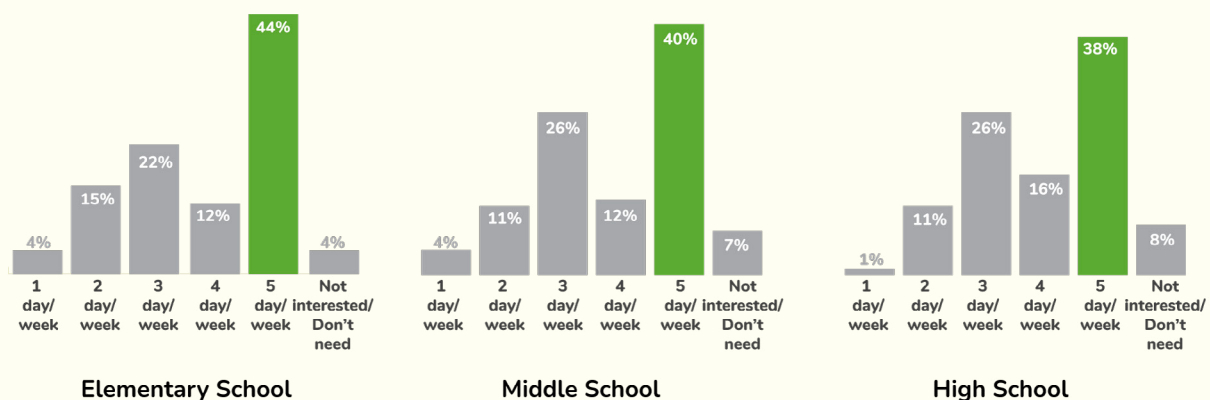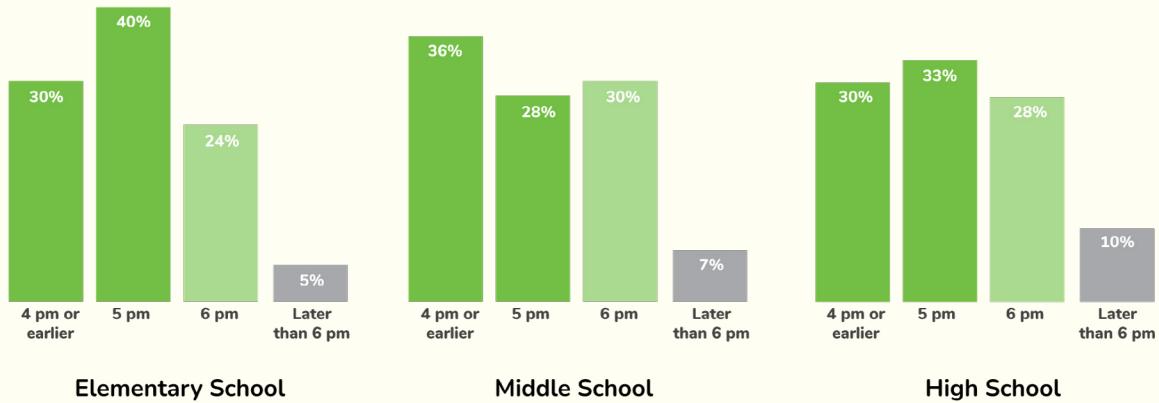- Not interested/Don't need: 8%

Figure 11: While the majority of respondents across school ages agreed that 4 or 5 pm would be ideal times for after-school programs to end, close to 30% indicated needing after-school programming to last until 6 pm.

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
4 pm or earlier	30%	36%	30%
5 pm	40%	28%	33%
6 pm	24%	30%	28%
Later than 6 pm	5%	7%	10%

Additional Programmatic Improvements

Ideas for additional program improvements were gathered through the community survey and focus groups. In addition to addressing barriers and including topics mentioned above, several additional themes were apparent. These themes were generally consistent across grade levels and for both summer and after-school programs.

One commonly mentioned improvement was increasing safety and security at program sites. In a similar vein, many survey respondents mentioned the need for caring and professional staff. In addition, many expressed a need for mental health, counseling, and psychological services. Another commonly cited area for improvement was inclusivity for children and youth with special needs. Parents and guardians of children with developmental delays, autism spectrum disorder, and ADHD expressed that existing programs were not able to address their children's unique needs.

Flexibility was another important theme in survey responses. Numerous survey respondents recommended more diverse programming with more choice and variety of activities that can be tailored around the child's interests. Several also mentioned that existing programs tend to require a commitment that becomes problematic. In some cases, they would prefer more flexibility rather than an "all-in" requirement.

Summer Camps

An open-ended survey question requested that parents provide suggestions as to how summer programs might be improved. Outdoor activities were a common theme. Having picnics, camping, barbequing, and fishing were all mentioned over 100 times and were by far the most popular answers given. Swimming was also a common answer, both for fun as well as lessons. Physical activities, in general, were popular, with many participants mentioning either sports as a broad category or specific activities like basketball, football, baseball, tennis, swimming, dance, running, climbing, and types of martial arts (e.g., karate, Tae Kwon Do), and more. Incorporating more physical activity overall was mentioned by many participants as a way to improve summer camps.

There were many different suggestions for skill-building activities like cooking, singing, etiquette, crafting and art, and music. One survey participant wrote:

"I would love to see more programs in fine art, like drawing and painting. Art programs are totally unaffordable for the average family."

One theme that was perhaps less prevalent in the survey but important nonetheless was that of parents wanting more activities and programs geared towards or available to their special needs children. Several participants noted having children with autism, ADHD, or other special needs and requested programs that be inclusive to them. As put by one participant: "Adapted but inclusive programs for children with special needs."

Spanish-speaking focus group participants emphasized the importance of social and emotional skills and how programs could support children and youth in identifying, exploring, and building on their skills and interests. They also spoke about programs to develop academic skills and support children and youth in school success.

Youth participants in focus groups frequently described learning new things, field trips, arts and crafts, recreation, and free time among their favorite activities. Participants indicated they would like to take more weekday and weekend trips and engage in more hands-on activities, particularly science-related projects and experiments. Participants expressed the importance of recreation, "brain breaks," and "cool down" time.

"When you are offered something that is tailored to you and tailored to something you want to do in the future, that's what is most attractive about the summer program."

After-School Programs

As with summer programming, an open-ended survey item allowed respondents to share thoughts on improving after-school programs. Overall, the most common theme was lessening class and homework load to give children more time to play and de-stress and time for extracurricular activities. That said, other participants also thought the opposite: the after-care programs should be more about academics and finishing homework.

Safety was also a common concern with this question. Some participants responded with answers that revolved around safety, whether simply increasing the safety of the programs in general or being more specific. One survey respondent wrote:

"Do a good job of protecting children's safety, while not allowing after-school services to become a formality. There should be targets, there should be supervision, there should be quantifiable indicators."

Affordability was another somewhat common theme in the open-ended survey item, with some participants mentioning the lack of affordability of some after-care programs. Respondents pointed out that many parents may not have the financial means to pay for after-care programs. One survey participant wrote:

"...they charge a lot of money to parents, and some can't afford to pay."

Another common thread seen throughout the responses was that of physical activity. Many respondents gave answers regarding physical activity of some kind. Some participants mentioned sports, either in general or specific sports like football, soccer, and basketball, while others mentioned physical exercise, physique training, and outdoor activities, among others.

A further theme that was lesser seen but still somewhat prevalent was that of increasing extracurricular activities and the diversity of those activities. Some specific activities mentioned by survey respondents were coding, foreign languages, horseback riding, music, theater, drawing, painting, and generally cultivating hobbies.

During parent focus groups, participants were asked about recommended program improvements. Primarily, participants mentioned two issues: food and mental health supports.

Youth participants in focus groups described some activities they enjoyed and improvements they would like to see. Participants discussed enjoying the ability to be with and talk to their friends and counselors. Participants also reported enjoying being outside and doing some physical activities. As with parents, youth reported that the food needs to be improved, and they would like vending machines. Participants also indicated that facilities needed to be cleaner and that they would like more field trips (including in after-school care), overnight trips, arts and crafts, coding, and better sports equipment. Participants noted that there needs to be more respect among youth, less bossing, less fighting, and less noise.

"Kids are complaining that the food is cold. They don't get a lot of choice either. Then they are not eating. I think it would be nice to have a psychologist or therapist. Mental health checks for kids. Have a mental health therapist. Therapists do help."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Broadening Reach: In general, summer and after-school programs need to focus on reaching families in greatest need who were less likely to know where to find information and participate. This includes lower income families, Black/African Americans, Haitians, Hispanic/Latinx for middle and high school grades, and families living in the far south and Kendall/ near south.

Addressing Inclusion: Based upon parent input, Trust-funded summer and after-school programs should continue to require inclusion of children with disabilities and offer support tailored to students with special needs, as well as prioritize strengthening support even more for children and youth with significant accommodation needs. For example, encourage summer and after-school programs to tap into the available Trust program inclusion funding that has the purpose of meeting such needs.

Addressing Transportation Barriers: Find innovative ways to mitigate transportation issues by supporting participant transportation needs if applicable. This was a common barrier to participating in summer and after-school programs, notably in the far south region. Options may include offering transportation directly to and from the program, providing discounted or free public transportation passes, or creating carpooling lists.

Attention to Location: Although the number of Trust-funded programs in priority areas with more children living in poverty was expanded in the 2023-24 funding awards, The Trust should continue its vigilance around community needs and be sure to offer programs in many convenient, accessible locations, or locations closer to higher-need populations, to continue to improve access.

Reducing Cost Barriers: The Trust policy strongly encourages program providers not to charge parent fees. When these fees are charged, they are expected to be minimal and reasonable. As a result, providers could work towards lowering program prices or ensure sliding scales and scholarships for summer camps and after-school programs to make them more accessible, as providers set their agency policies around parent fees. The Trust grant application process requires providers to disclose if they intend to charge parent fees and justify the reasoning for them. In the new funding cycle, funded programs will be required to report the parent fees collected to The Trust to ensure that said fees are directly supporting the services provided.

Strategizing General Outreach: Utilize outreach strategies aligned with parents' most frequently used sources of information. Programs should ensure they have excellent word-of-mouth from past participants. The Trust should continue public awareness campaigns to raise general awareness and promotion of summer and after-school programs. Programs should make sure to get their information distributed at nearby schools, ensure the program appears in Google searches through search engine optimization, and make sure to keep program information current in the 211 Helpline and other directory listings.

Utilizing Social Media: Other ideas suggested by parents and youth include leveraging popular social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram to create content that would inform youth in more engaging ways. This may involve partnering directly with youth to create meaningful content and engage peers.

Engaging Youth Interests: Trust-funded summer and after-school programs must offer a positive and welcoming social environment with caring staff who engage children and youth. Activities should be of interest to and motivate students of different grade levels to want to participate. In general, Trust-funded programs should incorporate life skills, physical activity, school, and homework help (for after-school programs), and postsecondary prep (for high school youth). The approach to activities should allow for varied enrichment activities for participants, with flexibility and youth choice. Programs should incorporate field trip experiences, as well as mental health and wellness supports.

Examples of potential programming of interest to elementary and middle school-aged youth include physical and outdoor activities, such as sports or nature immersion, that also serve as opportunities to socialize with peers. This programming area is critical to prioritize, considering elementary school is the largest funding area for youth development. Examples of potential programming of interest to high school youth include job skills training, work education, help to find employment, volunteer opportunities, homework assistance, and preparation for postsecondary education.

Addressing Needs of Hard-to-Reach Youth: To address the needs of hard-to-reach youth, collaborate with individuals currently specializing in life skills development to ensure that the life skills presented in programming are relevant and desired by children and youth.

Incorporating Mental Health Needs: Youth development programs should continue to prioritize diverse mental health services to satisfy different needs, including psychological therapies, meditation, and mental health education.

The Trust should capitalize on and strengthen existing partnerships with community mental health partners and coalitions to enhance mental health support for youth in their programs, increase awareness of resources, and advocate for expanded services.

Accounting for Scheduling Challenges: A common reason mentioned across ages for not participating in summer and after-school programming was issues with timing and scheduling of the programs offered. The Trust's most recent Request for Proposals (RFP) for Youth Development required providers to operate programs during times and days of the week that best fit the scheduling needs of parents, as noted in the community parent survey. Funded programs should continue to meet various scheduling needs of parents in terms of duration, frequency, and daily hours. Parents continue to need flexible times for pick-up from programs to accommodate different-than-standard hours. More specifically, offer after-school programming until 5:00 or 6:00 pm.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

QQRC took a mixed-method approach to meet the key evaluation objectives regarding Trust-funded summer and after-school programming. Quantitative data were captured from a community survey across 3,477 respondents. Qualitative data were obtained from a total of 27 focus groups conducted with 190 community parents, caregivers, and youth to learn about current strengths and areas of need for youth summer and after-school programming. These focus groups allow for both the contextualization of the survey results and hearing the voices of youth, as the survey requires participants to be 18 years of age or older.

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was designed through a collaboration between QQRC and staff from The Trust. Together, the team developed the survey to focus on experiences, attitudes, needs, and preferences in four priority areas:

- **Early Childcare and Education:** Childcare arrangements and preschool programs for infants and young children before starting kindergarten.

- **Parenting:** Classes, programs, and support services geared toward helping parents and caregivers to better meet the needs of children in their care.

- **School Health:** School-based health services, including nursing and auxiliary services such as mental health and dental check-ups.

- **Youth Development:** Summer and after-school activities to support learning, well-being, and healthy development for children and youth.

The needs of families and children vary according to the child's age. For example, the health needs of adolescents differ from those of young children. For this reason, the survey was designed to offer modified questions depending on the age of the respondent's child(ren). At the start of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had any children 1) from birth to age four, 2) from age 5 to 10 years old, 3) from 11 to 13 years old, or 4) from 14 to 18 years old. Throughout the report, we refer to these groups as preschool, elementary, middle, and high school ages. Respondents were also asked whether they or their partner were expecting a child at the time of taking the survey.

- All survey respondents who said they or a partner were expecting a child when completing the survey were shown a survey block containing items specific to the experience of expecting parents, such as parenting needs, plans, and preferences for early childcare.

- Those who indicated having a child or children in just one of the age groups were shown a set of survey items designed for that age group (i.e., preschool, elementary, middle, or high school).

- For those who indicated that they had children in multiple age groups, the survey randomly assigned them to a set of survey items corresponding to one of the age groups selected. Instructions asked them to consider their experiences with the child in that particular age group.

The survey was developed and hosted on the Qualtrics platform. It was available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

Survey Sampling Procedure

The research team used a stratified convenience sampling approach with quotas by Miami-Dade County ZIP codes in order to approximate a representative sample. Quotas were calculated by ZIP code based on data from the United States Census to ensure that the final sample would be geographically representative of the county. The Trust collaborated with community partners to conduct outreach, and fliers with QR codes were posted in community locations. Research partners at QQRC conducted biweekly analyses of sample demographics to guide survey recruitment efforts and ensure that the final sample was as representative as possible.

Survey Analytic Sample

The final analytic sample (n = 3,477) drops responses from those who completed less than half the survey. Also dropped were 1) anyone who started the survey but indicated that they did not live in Miami-Dade County for at least half the year, and 2) those that started the survey but indicated that they either did not have a child or were not expecting at the time of participating. The final sample drops cases that Qualtrics flagged as possible bots as determined by a ReCaptcha score below 0.5.

As noted above, survey respondents were assigned to blocks of items according to the ages of children in their household. The following table shows the number and percentage of respondents who completed each block. Respondents who were both expecting and already had one or more children completed two survey blocks. For this reason, total numbers sum to more than the final sample size. It is worth noting that there were fewer respondents for the middle and high school age groups.

Table 1: Number of Survey Respondents for Each Age Bracket

Survey block	Number of responses	Percentage
Expecting parents	579	17%
Preschool age (from birth to about 4 years old)	1,294	37%
Elementary school age (about 5 to 10 years old)	1,325	38%
Middle school age (about 11 to 13 years old)	414	12%
High school age (about 14 to 18 years old)	340	10%

The final sample was well-aligned with targets set by ZIP code and also roughly matched the demographic composition of Miami-Dade County, with one notable exception. Hispanic and Latino/a groups were underrepresented. To address this, a survey sample weight was generated to increase the relative importance of Hispanic and Latino/a participants in analyses. This survey weight was created with a raking procedure using the anesrake package[1] in the R statistical program.

The following table provides information on the demographic composition of the final sample.

Table 2: Final Survey Demographics

Variable	Category	Number	Percent
Gender	Female	2,453	71%
	Male	847	24%
	Prefer not to say	40	1%
	Non-binary or third gender	9	<1%
	Self-describe	3	<1%
	Not answered	125	4%
Race/Ethnicity	White (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian)	1,333	38%
	Hispanic/Latino-a-x	1,212	35%
	Black/African American (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian)	505	15%
	Haitian	134	4%
	Asian	58	2%
	Prefer not to say	77	2%
	Other	32	1%
	Not answered	126	4%
Parent Age	18-29	651	19%
	30-39	1,723	50%
	40-49	822	24%
	50-64	146	4%
	65+	14	<1%
	Not answered	121	3%
Parent Educational Attainment	Less than high school	88	3%
	High school diploma or GED	498	14%
	Some college	1,016	29%
	Associate degree	577	17%
	Bachelor's degree	788	23%
	Graduate degree	382	11%
	Not answered	128	4%

1   Pasek, J. (2022). Package 'anesrake'.Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from:
https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/anesrake/anesrake.pdf

Variable	Category	Number	Percent
Household Income	Less than $25,000	531	15%
	$25,000 to less than $50,000	1,035	30%
	$50,000 to less than $75,000	929	27%
	$75,000 or more	566	16%
	Prefer not to say	279	8%
	Not answered	137	4%
Caregiver role	Mother	2,511	72%
	Father	768	23%
	Grandmother	42	1%
	Grandfather	5	<1%
	Stepmother	15	<1%
	Stepfather	13	<1%
	Foster mother	11	<1%
	Foster father	3	<1%

Survey Analytic Approach

All analyses were conducted using the R Program for Statistical Computing.[2] Descriptive statistics were calculated for all categorical and ordinal items. The percentage of respondents selecting each response option was adjusted using the survey weight described above. This survey weight was included when generating frequency tables using the questionr package[3] for R.

Statistical tests were conducted to determine whether item responses varied significantly by 1) income category, 2) race/ethnicity, and 3) neighborhood of residence. A neighborhood variable was created based on ZIP codes. In the case that the respondents reported a ZIP code associated with a post office box, the location of the post office was used. The neighborhoods were Far South, Kendall/Near South, Beaches, Northeast, and Northwest. Statistical significance was determined using a more conservative threshold of $\alpha = 0.001$. Given the large sample size, it is possible for group differences to be statistically significant but small in magnitude. This report includes only those findings that are 1) statistically significant, 2) practically significant in that differences are large enough in magnitude to be meaningful, and 3) actionable in that The Trusts' activities can potentially use this information to inform their future work. Analyses used Chi-square and Fishers exact tests as implemented in the finalfit package[4] for R.

Open-ended, qualitative survey items were analyzed using an inductive coding approach. The research team reviewed responses to identify key themes and calculated the frequency of responses according to those themes. The most cited themes are described in this report.

2   R Core Team (2018). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austrua. URL: https://www.R-project.org/

3   Barnier, J., Briatte, F., & Larmarange, J. (2023). Package 'questionr'. Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from: https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/questionr/questionr.pdf

4   Harrison, E., Drake, T., & Ots, R. (2023). Package 'finalfit'. Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from: https://cran.uni-muenster.de/web/packages/finalfit/finalfit.pdf

FOCUS GROUPS

27 focus groups were conducted by facilitators from QQRC on the topic of summer and after-school programs in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole. Of these, 101 parents, 61 general youth that have or were currently using summer and after-school programming funded by The Trust, and 28 hard-to-reach youth participated. The participating organizations and respondents were identified by The Trust. Recordings of focus group conversations were transcribed to faithfully represent the information and perspectives shared by participants. These recordings were then analyzed and subjected to an inductive coding process that identified key themes mentioned by participants.

Hard-to-reach youth were selected because there are currently few Trust-funded services exclusively focused on this population. Therefore, including their perspectives in this evaluation will inform program development on the types of services and outreach that may be most effective for youth within this category.

Fathers were selected because The Trust recognizes that mothers tend to engage more frequently in activities like focus groups. As a result, mothers' voices are often elevated and inform decision-making. Therefore, The Trust and QQRC wanted to ensure that fathers had a space where they could feel safe to share their perspectives and, in turn, contribute to the data used to inform future funding strategies.

Haitian-Creole and Spanish-Speaking Parents were selected to ensure that (1) the demographics reflected the cultures primarily present in the Miami-Dade County, FL region, (2) to ensure that language was not a barrier to participation but rather an opportunity for inclusion, and (3) to enhance the findings with different cultural perspectives as culture can drastically change the perceptions on current needs, strengths, and areas for development.

Parents of Children with Disabilities were specifically recruited to ensure the findings were reflective of their perspectives and experiences. The Trust has a strong emphasis on youth development programs being inclusive of children and youth of all abilities such that all have the opportunity for full participation.

Focus Group Demographics

Following are demographic details for focus group participants.

General Youth

All grade levels were represented in youth focus groups, with the majority enrolled in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Many youths identified as African American (non-white, non-Hispanic), and the next largest group identified as Hispanic.

Table 3: Demographic Information of General Youth Focus Group Participants

Grade (N = 60)		
	Kindergarten	2% (n = 1)
	First	3% (n = 2)
	Second	2% (n = 1)
	Third	3% (n = 2)
	Fourth	13% (n = 8)
	Fifth	16% (n = 10)

Demographic Items		Percent
Grade (N = 60)	Sixth	23% (n = 14)
	Seventh	5% (n = 3)
	Eighth	9% (n = 5)
	Ninth	7% (n = 4)
	Tenth	3% (n = 2)
	Eleventh	5% (n = 3)
	Twelfth	7% (n = 4)
	Graduated	2% (n = 1)
Gender (N = 61)	Female	64% (n = 39)
	Male	36% (n = 22)
Race/Ethnicity (N = 61)	Hispanic	33% (n = 20)
	Haitian	11% (n = 7)
	Black/African American (non-white, non-Hispanic)	46% (n = 28)
	Asian	2% (n = 1)
	Other	8% (n = 5)

Hard-to-Reach (HTR) Youth

The majority of hard-to-reach youth were in seventh or eighth grade. Most hard-to-reach youth identified as Hispanic or Black/African American (non-white, non-Hispanic), and more identified as female than male.

Table 4: Demographic Information of Hard-to-Reach Youth Focus Group Participants

Grade (N = 27)	Seventh	48% (n = 13)
	Eighth	37% (n = 10)
	Tenth	7% (n = 2)
	Twelfth	7% (n = 2)

Demographic Items		Percent
Gender (N = 28)	Female	57% (n = 16)
	Male	32% (n = 9)
	Gender Not Represented	7% (n = 2)
	Prefer Not to Say	7% (n = 1)
Race/Ethnicity (N = 28)	Hispanic	32% (n = 9)
	Haitian	7% (n = 2)
	Black/African American (non-white, non-Hispanic)	32% (n = 9)
	Other	11% (n = 3)
	Prefer Not to Say	18% (n = 5)

Parents

Although both parents and caregivers participated in focus groups, participants are referred to as "parents" to remain succinct throughout the report. Most parents participating in focus groups were between the ages of 35 and 50, with the majority describing their parenting role as "Mother." Most parents identified as Hispanic and identified varying education levels, including HS Diploma/GED, Some College, Associate, Bachelor's, and Graduate education.

Table 5: Demographic Information of Parent Focus Group Participants

Parent Age (N = 97)	Less than 18	3% (n = 3)
	18-34	16% (n = 15)
	35-50	69% (n = 67)
	Above 50	12% (n = 12)
Parenting Role (N = 101)	Father	19% (n = 19)
	Mother	73% (n = 74)
	Foster Mother	2% (n = 2)
	Stepfather	1% (n = 1)
	Grandfather	2% (n = 2)
	Grandmother	2% (n = 2)
	Other	1% (n = 1)

Demographic Items		Percent
Race/Ethnicity (N = 97)	Hispanic	78% (n = 76)
	Non-Hispanic White	4% (n = 4)
	Haitian	2% (n = 2)
	Black/African American (non-white, non-Hispanic)	11% (n = 11)
	Other	1% (n = 1)
	Prefer Not to Say	3% (n = 3)

Focus Group Analytical Approach

Qualitative analyses were conducted separately from the quantitative data to ensure that emergent themes were not biased by survey findings. Once themes were identified, QQRC triangulated the quantitative with qualitative results to see trends in strengths and areas of need in current summer and after-school programming. Similar to the quantitative findings, qualitative data was also compared by participant category to see if any themes differed.

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