

**EVALUATION OF NEW JERSEY AFTER 3  
TRENTON AFTERSCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS:  
A Citywide Initiative to Improve Student Outcomes  
and Meet the Needs of Parents**

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## Summary

New Jersey After 3 (NJ After 3) is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to expand and improve afterschool opportunities for New Jersey's youth. NJ After 3 supports youth-service providers that deliver afterschool services based on NJ After 3's program model. In 2009, NJ After 3 and Trenton Public Schools launched the Trenton Afterschool Partnership (TAP) initiative, which provides Trenton children and families access to an affordable, safe, and engaging learning environment for youth in the afterschool hours at all 21 schools in the district. The Trenton Afterschool Partnership is the first such citywide initiative in New Jersey and the first time that the NJ After 3 model has been extended to the high school level.

Under an agreement with NJ After 3, Policy Studies Associates, Inc. conducted a one-year evaluation of the Trenton Afterschool Partnership. Overall, participation in the program was very high and participants and parents alike reported high levels of satisfaction. Specifically, evaluators found that in the 2009-10 school year, the first year of the TAP initiative, NJ After 3 programs in Trenton had high levels of attendance, enrollment, and retention.

- **The average citywide attendance rate was 80 percent.** Elementary participants had the highest attendance rate, at 87 percent. The attendance rates of NJ After 3 TAP participants compare favorably well with the attendance rates of similar programs in other cities, for example, New York City.
- **2,398 Trenton Public Schools students participated in NJ After 3 TAP during the 2009-10 school year,** nearly one quarter of all students in the district.
- **Eighty-five percent of youth who had enrolled in the program by November remained in the program through the end of May.** Most schools maintained or increased their enrollment numbers during the school year. Six schools increased enrollment by more than 25 percent, suggesting increasing demand for the program.
- **The program served large numbers of children from low-income families.** Fifty-four percent of NJ After 3 TAP participants were known to be eligible for free- or reduced-price meals. The eligibility status of 31 percent of participants was unknown. However, given the high proportion of youth in the district who were known to be eligible for the program and the large proportion of youth in TAP who were known to be eligible, many of the students of unknown status were likely to be from low-income families as well.

NJ After 3 data show that **NJ After 3 TAP participants spent an average of 49 percent of program time on academic activities. Twenty-six percent of time was spent on health and fitness activities, and 25 percent of time was spent on other non-academic enrichment activities.** Youth participants in NJ After 3 TAP reported high levels of exposure to engaging program activities, positive relationships with staff and peers, opportunities to lead, and feelings of attachment to the program. Participants also reported high perceptions of academic benefit associated with the program.

- **Eighty-five percent of youth reported that the program helped them finish their homework all or most of the time.** Ninety-seven percent of youth said that the program helped them finish their homework at least some of the time. Ninety-five percent or more of participants also reported that the program gave them the chance to do a lot of new things, that they felt safe in the program, they felt like they were doing well in the program, they had a lot of friends in the program, and they got along with other students in the program at least some of the time.
- **Youth who spent more time on homework assistance and other academic activities while in the program reported experiencing more academic benefit from participating in the program.** Youth in programs with an average of 133 hours or more spent in academic activities reported greater academic benefit from NJ After 3 TAP, compared with youth in programs where less time was spent on academic programming.

Parents who responded to the survey reported very high levels of satisfaction with NJ After 3 TAP. Large majorities agreed that the program provided benefits for their children while also helping to meet parents' own needs.

- **Ninety-seven percent of parents said that the program was important to them.** Ninety-eight percent of parents said the program was important to their child.
- **Eighty-nine percent of parents rated their child's program as "excellent" or "very good."**
- **Eighty-nine percent of parents indicated that safety was a "big reason" for enrolling their child in the program.** Eighty-four percent of parents also indicated that affordability, academic benefit, and exposure to new activities were "big reasons" to enroll their child in the program.
- **Ninety percent of working parents said that the afterschool program made it easier for them to keep their job.** Parents who reported working more hours were more likely to report that the program was very important to them. They were also more likely to report that the availability of the program allowed them to miss less work and work more hours.
- Parents strongly believed that their child had benefited from participation in NJ After 3 TAP. **Ninety-three percent of parents agreed that their child was doing better in school because of enrollment in the afterschool program and that their child was safer in the out-of-school hours.** Ninety-two percent of parents agreed that their child was able to participate in activities that they would not be able to do outside of the program.