

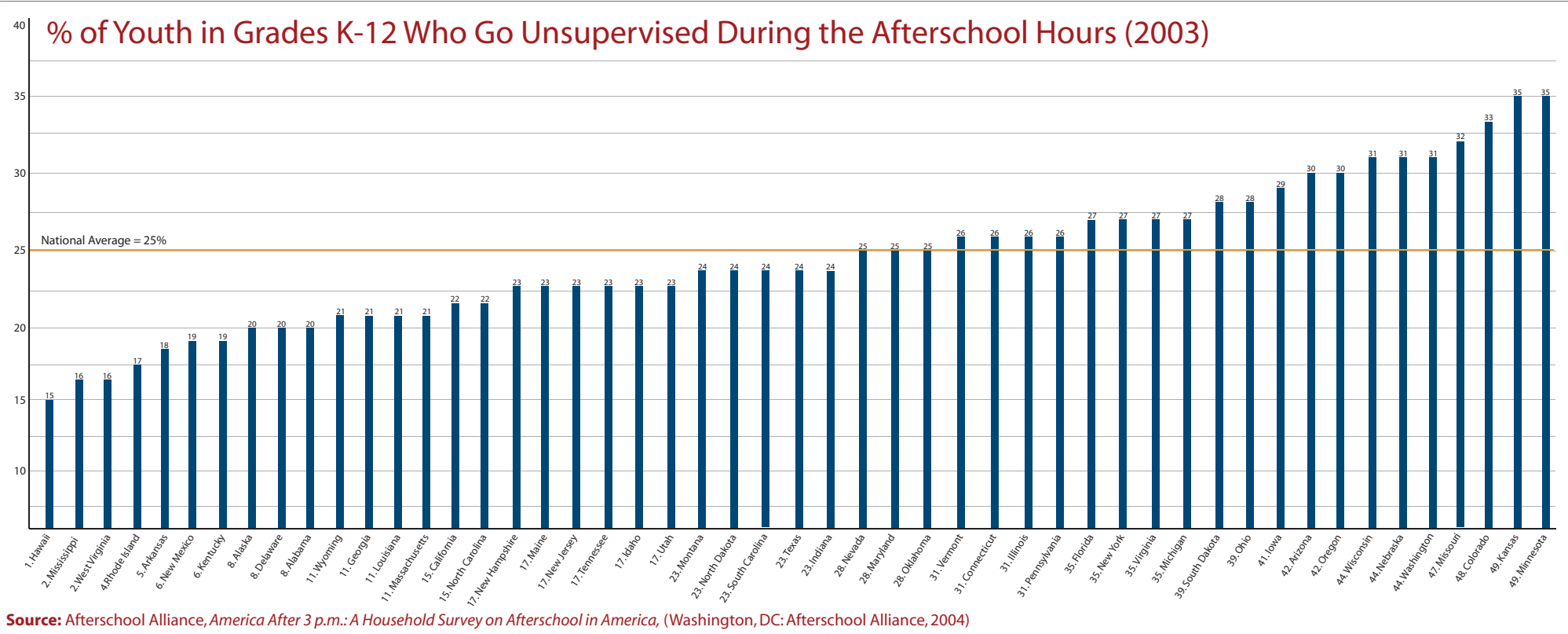
# Education: The State We're In

## More youth go unsupervised than participate in after-school programs

For most American students, school accounts for only about a fifth of the day.<sup>1</sup> When they are not in the classroom, some youth have the opportunity to participate in a myriad of after-school programs run by their public or private schools, YM/YWCAs, religious groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other organizations. Participants benefit from the mentorship, academic support, and social or athletic opportunities that such programming provides. In addition, a structured activity may serve as a protective barrier against substance abuse, crime, violence, and other dangers children may face if left unsupervised. These activities are particularly important given the growing number of families in which both parents work outside the home.

Yet, in 46 states, more K-12 students go unsupervised during after-school hours than participate in after-school programs. Oftentimes, this gap is dramatic. In Minnesota, for example, 35% of youth are unsupervised, while only 8% are in after-school programs. In New York, the 27% of unsupervised youth compare with 15% in after-school programs. While lack of supervision is most prevalent among high-school students, many younger children are also responsible for their own afternoon care. Thirty-four percent of the students who reported caring for themselves were in grades 6-8. Eleven percent were in grades 1-5. The After-School Corporation (TASC) found in a study of New York City students that nearly 50% of the students in TASC-funded programs had spent at least one and often more than three afternoons each week without an adult present prior to enrollment.<sup>2</sup>

Nationwide, only 11% of students in grades K-12 currently participate in after-school programs; by contrast, 25% of youth in this age group are responsible for their own afternoon care.<sup>3</sup> A recent study, entitled “America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America,” has shown that while participation varies by state, the overwhelming dearth of extracurricular programming is a nationwide phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> While Utah has the lowest participation rate, with just 5% of K-12 students involved in after-school programs, only Alaska and Hawaii exceed 20%. In total, 14 states have less than 10% of their K-12 student populations participating in programs after school.



Source: Afterschool Alliance, America After 3 p.m.: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America, (Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, 2004)

Those students in after-school programs attend for varying amounts of time. Students in Alabama spend an average of 3.8 afternoons per week in after-school programs for about 2.1 hours. By contrast, Wyoming participants attend programs an average of just 2.5 times a week for about 1.7 hours. Students in most states spend between 6 and 10 hours per week in programs.

After-school programs can cater to a variety of needs and interests. Some focus explicitly on literacy. Studies show that this extra language support helps non-native English

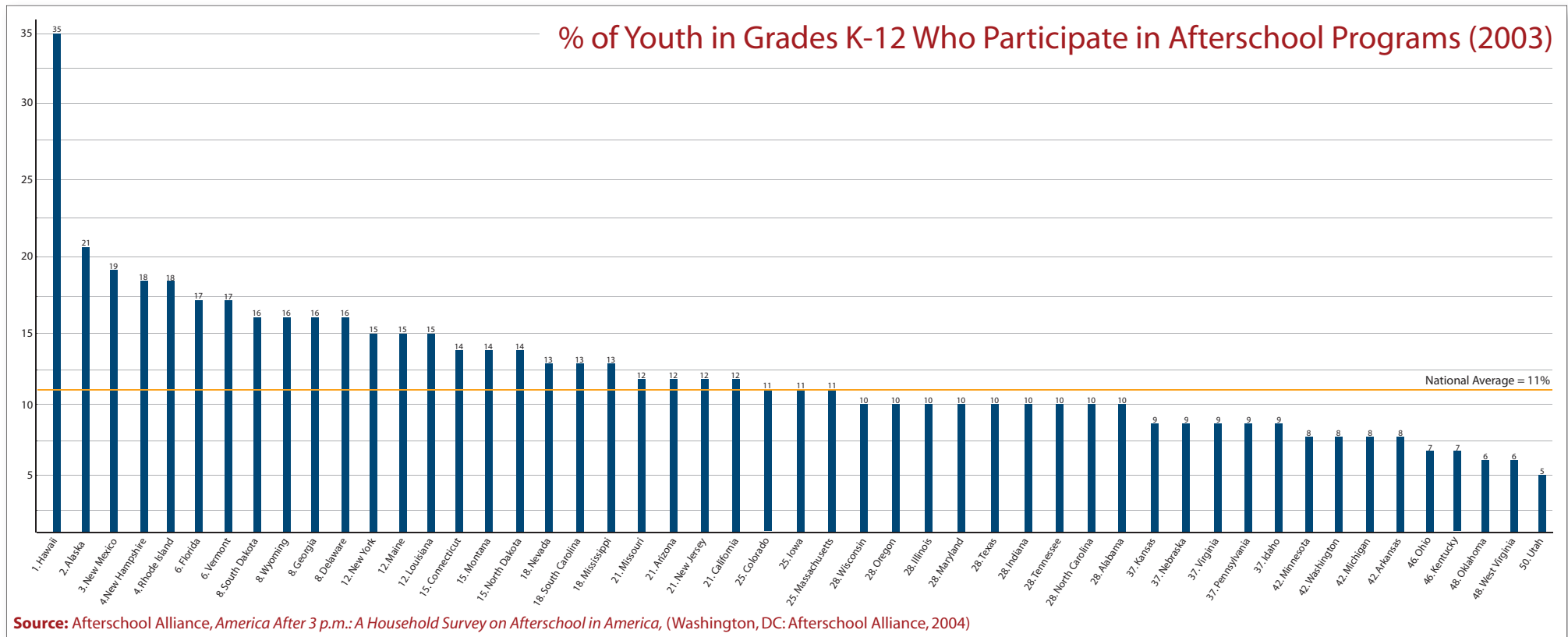
speakers adopt English as their primary language, and can also help low-income children improve their reading proficiency. Other programs incorporate service-learning and educate students, particularly those in middle and high school, about career options.<sup>5</sup>

Students who participate in after-school programs are often more academically engaged and perform at a higher level than their peers. An Ohio study demonstrated that fourth grade after-school participants tended to score above the proficiency level in reading.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, TASC found that two-year

participants outscored non-participants in math. It also found that both middle and high school aged participants attended school more regularly than their non-participant peers.<sup>7</sup>

*Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future: A National Task Force on Public Education* addresses this issue by calling for after-school programming to be made more widely accessible.

- Shoshana Lew



<sup>1</sup> Beth M. Miller, *Critical Hours, Afterschool Programs and Educational Success*, (Brookline: Nellie Mae Educational Foundation, 2003). See: [http://www.nmeafd.org/uimages/documents/Critical\\_Hours\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.nmeafd.org/uimages/documents/Critical_Hours_Summary.pdf).  
<sup>2</sup> The After-School Corporation, *Quality, Scale and Effectiveness in After-School Programs*, (New York: The After-School Corporation, 2005). See: <http://www.tascorp.org/publications/catalog/qseas>.  
<sup>3</sup> Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 p.m.: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America*, (Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, 2004). See: [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press\\_archives/america\\_3pm/Key\\_Findings.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press_archives/america_3pm/Key_Findings.pdf)  
<sup>4</sup> This study was conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit organization, with a grant from the JCPenny Afterschool Fund.  
<sup>5</sup> Ann Yost, "City of Firsts: Turning Classrooms Upside Down. In *Making Afterschool Count* (Michigan, The Mott Foundation, 1999). See: <http://www.mott.org/publications/pdf/mascv2n3.pdf>.  
<sup>6</sup> Andrea Warren, "Literacy and Afterschool: a Perfect Fit," in *Making Afterschool Count* (Michigan: The Mott Foundation, 2001). See: <http://www.mott.org/publications/pdf/mascv4n1.pdf>.  
<sup>7</sup> The After-School Corporation, *Quality, Scale and Effectiveness in After-School Programs*, (New York: The After-School Corporation, 2005). See: <http://www.tascorp.org/publications/catalog/qseas>.