

## The Afterschool Supper Program: An Oregon Case Study

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This case study examines the efficacy of the Child and Adult Care Food Program's Afterschool Supper Program in Oregon from the perspective of those who utilize the program at sponsor, site and enrichment program level. While not comprehensive, this study finds the Supper Program to be an important component for the success and sustainability of afterschool programs. However, the success of the Supper Program is integrally tied to the availability, vitality and quality of afterschool programming. It is also dependant on the infrastructural capacity of existing and/or potential sponsors and programming staff to provide and serve meals at afterschool programs. The conclusion of this case study provides recommendations for improving and expanding the Supper Program in Oregon.



*The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship, a project of the Congressional Hunger Center, is a unique leadership development opportunity for motivated individuals seeking to make a difference in the struggle to eliminate hunger and poverty. Eileen Hyde spent the first half of her fellowship working on this case study and other projects at the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force.*

# Introduction

Since 2000, Congress has allowed eight states to conduct afterschool supper programs for youth up to age 18 through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). These states are Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. While the official name of the program that runs in these aforementioned states is the Afterschool At-Risk Meals and Snacks Program, many advocates and program operators know it as the Supper Program. To avoid ambiguity, this document will refer to it simply as the Supper Program.

The intention of this case study is to begin analyzing how the Supper Program has operated in Oregon since its inception in 2001. Therefore, the case study sought the perspectives of those implementing and administering the Supper Program at the community level. This analysis reflects the opinions of program operators, such as afterschool meal site coordinators and sponsors, who know first hand how the Supper Program operates. This paper outlines their reasoning for including suppers with their afterschool programming. This case study also incorporates feedback from the Department of Education, the state agency administering the Supper Program and Oregon Afterschool for Kids, a statewide nonprofit advocating for improvement and expansion of afterschool care. This is not an authoritative report, but rather a case study utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the benefits, challenges, and best practices of operating the Supper Program in Oregon. Hopefully this analysis will encourage and inform a more in-depth study of the Supper Program in the future.

# Background

## Overview

The Supper Program that operates in Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia allows afterschool programs located in low-income areas to serve meals to children through the age of 18. To better understand how these eight states differ from the other 42, the next section provides a legislative timeline explaining the evolution of the CACFP program. The following sections give a basic overview of and explain differences between all federal programs serving food to children in afterschool care.

## ***Legislative Timeline of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)***

The following list of dates and legislative events at the national level provides an overview of how the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) began providing snacks and meals in afterschool care.<sup>1</sup>

### **1968**

- ❖ Public law established the Special Food Service Program for Children (SFSPFC), a 3-year pilot program that served food in two settings: child care and summer.

### **1975**

- ❖ Public law separated Child Care Food Program (CCFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

### **1981**

- ❖ The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 lowered the maximum participation age for CCFP to 12 years old.

### **1987**

- ❖ The Older Americans Act was amended to allow the Child Care Food Program to serve certain functionally impaired adults.

### **1989**

- ❖ The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 1989 officially changed the name of CCFP to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

### **1998**

- ❖ The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 authorized CACFP reimbursement for snacks to children through age 18 in afterschool care.

### **2000**

- ❖ The Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 expanded the food served in the afterschool care component to allow reimbursement for suppers to children through the age of 18 in six states. Delaware, Michigan, Missouri, and Pennsylvania began offering the Supper Program.

### **2001**

- ❖ In January, the USDA authorized Oregon and New York to offer the Supper Program.
- ❖ In November, The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act authorized Illinois to operate the Supper Program.

### **2007**

- ❖ In December, West Virginia became authorized to offer the Supper Program.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA. *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Legislative History*. Retrieved from [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov) and USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (2008). Child and Adult Care Food Program: At-Risk Afterschool Meals in Eligible States. *Federal Register*, 73 (60).

## ***Federal food programs for afterschool programs***

Afterschool programs serving low-income children are eligible to receive reimbursement for providing food through two federal programs: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). NSLP provides reimbursement only to school sponsored programs for serving snacks; CACFP provides reimbursement for snacks and meals to programs that are operated by non-profits, government agencies, as well as schools. Local sponsors of either program prepare and distribute food to sites that serve children in afterschool programs. Sites are responsible for keeping track of how many meals and/or snacks are served, while the program sponsors are responsible for monitoring sites, keeping program records, and managing the reimbursement process with the administering state agency, in this case the Oregon Department of Education.

## ***Afterschool program requirements and eligibility***

For an afterschool program to participate in any federal food program, NSLP or CACFP, they must meet the basic requirements for enrichment activities, local health and safety inspections, age, and income eligibility:

1. An afterschool care program must provide some level of enrichment activity for the attending children.
2. They must be state licensed or if exempt from licensing undergo local health and safety inspections.
3. There are age limitations for participants, but they vary for each program.
4. The program must be serving low-income children or located in a low-income area.

There are two methods used to determine site eligibility and the amount of reimbursement for afterschool feeding programs. The method an afterschool program uses varies for each food program.

- a. Individual Household Eligibility- a program sponsor must collect household income information for each participant and then will receive a varied reimbursement rate based on each participant's family income.
- b. Low-income Area Eligibility- sites within the attendance boundaries of a school where 50% or more of the students receive free or reduced price school meals will receive the highest reimbursement rate for all children who eat at their program.

## ***Differences between food programs***

The chart below outlines the differences between food programs in four areas: meal type; state in which an afterschool program is located; age of the children eating; and method a program uses to determine eligibility.

**Table 1:** Differences in federal food programs serving afterschool programs<sup>2</sup>

Food Program	Meal type	States	Maximum age that can be served	Basis of eligibility
NSLP	Snack	All states	18	Low-income area eligibility Or Individual household income
CACFP	Snack	All states	18	Low-income area eligibility
CACFP	Supper and Snack	Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia	18	Low-income area eligibility
CACFP	Supper and Snack	All states	12	Individual household income

### ***Reimbursements***

The reimbursement procedure depends on the method an afterschool program uses to determine income eligibility (Reference the chart below for reimbursement rates by meal type for July 2008 to June 2009).

Individual Household Eligibility Method: If a program uses the individual household income, the reimbursement rates will be tiered depending on the number of children in the program that individually qualify. The program will be reimbursed for the food type served (snack and/or meal) at the rate determined by each child’s household income level. Therefore, program operators need to know the family’s income level for each child to receive reimbursements accordingly.

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<sup>2</sup> FRAC. *Afterschool Guide: Nourish Their Minds, Feed Their Bodies.* (2004). Retrieved from [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

Low-income Area Eligibility Method: If a program uses this method to determine income eligibility then it is reimbursed by meal type at the free rate for every child served.

**Table 2:** Reimbursement rates for snacks and suppers, July 2008-July 2009<sup>3</sup>

	<b>Supper (CACFP)</b>	<b>Snack (NSLP and CACFP)</b>
<b>Free rate</b> (Family income below 130% of the poverty line)	\$2.57 + .2075 cash in lieu of commodities where applicable	\$0.71
<b>Reduced-price rate</b> (Family income between 130% and 185% of the poverty line)	\$2.17 + .2075 cash in lieu of commodities where applicable	\$0.35
<b>Paid rate</b> (Family income above 185% of the poverty line)	\$0.24 + .2075 cash in lieu of commodities where applicable	\$.06

### ***Nutritional Requirements***

The snacks and meals provided through the NSLP and CACFP must meet certain nutritional guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. NSLP and CACFP **snacks** must include two out of the following four components milk, fruits/vegetables, grains, and a meat or meat alternate. A CACFP **meal (supper)** must include five servings of the following four components: milk, fruits/vegetables (two servings), grains, and meat or meat alternate. Some states may allow school district CACFP supper sponsors to serve suppers that meet NSLP meal service guidelines.

### ***Operation Days and Times***

A program operating NSLP is only reimbursed for snacks served during afterschool hours on operating school days. A program operating CACFP is eligible to be reimbursed, during the school year, for all snacks and meals served during after school hours on operating school days, as well as weekends and holidays. If a program operating CACFP chooses to serve both a meal and a snack on the same day, there must be three hours between serving times. States may waive the time to two and a half hours between serving times.

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<sup>3</sup> Oregon Department of Education. (2008, July 18). CACFP Reimbursement Rates for FY 2008/2009. Salem, OR.

## **Afterschool Care in Oregon**

Since providing an enrichment activity is an eligibility requirement for afterschool programs serving supper, it is necessary to understand the landscape of afterschool care in Oregon before discussing the benefits and challenges to offering the Supper Program. In 2006, a little over 517,600 school age Oregonian children attended an afterschool program.<sup>4</sup> It is reported that schools and/or local governments are a main provider of afterschool programming for these children. Some of these Oregon schools utilize 21<sup>st</sup> Century grants to fund their afterschool programs. These federal funds support the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.<sup>5</sup> In Oregon, nearly 9,737 children attend programs at 21<sup>st</sup> century community learning centers.<sup>6</sup> There is also a notable presence of large and small nonprofit organizations offering afterschool programming. Examples of large programs include Boys and Girls Club and YMCAs. A small but growing trend for small non-profits is to operate enrichment activities at apartment complexes to increase accessibility for children and families. Despite these programs there is still a great need for afterschool care in Oregon. Currently, a third of children from Oregon working families are unsupervised in the afternoons.<sup>7</sup>

## **Childhood Food Insecurity and Poverty in Oregon**

To better conceptualize the role of the Supper Program in Oregon, it is necessary to understand the frequency of poverty and food insecurity among Oregonian children. According to Children First for Oregon's 2008 data book, almost 17% of Oregon's 877, 547 children live below the federal poverty line<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, a study published by Feeding America, formerly known as America's Second Harvest, found that on average 23% of Oregon's children were food insecure between the years 2003-2005.<sup>9</sup> The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), a commonly known child nutrition program, plays a crucial role in fighting food insecurity in Oregon. Currently, 168,398 Oregonian children eat free and reduced price school meals on an average day<sup>10</sup>. Given the need that school meals fill during the school day, this case study examines the role meals play when provided outside of school hours in afterschool care.

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<sup>4</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2005). *America After 3 PM*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [www.afterschooalliance.org](http://www.afterschooalliance.org).

<sup>5</sup> Reno, Janet and Richard Riley. (2000). *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs*. Darby, PA: DIANE Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2005). *America After 3 PM*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [www.afterschooalliance.org](http://www.afterschooalliance.org).

<sup>7</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2005). *America After 3 PM*. Washington, D.C. Retrived from [www.afterschooalliance.org](http://www.afterschooalliance.org).

<sup>8</sup> Oregon, C. F. (2009). *Status of Oregon's Children County Data Book 2008*. Retrieved from [www.cffo.org](http://www.cffo.org)

<sup>9</sup> Cook, J. (2007). *Child Food Insecurity in The United STatse: 2003-2005*. America's Second Harvest.

<sup>10</sup> Oregon, C. F. (n.d.). *Status of Oregon's Children County Data Book 2008*. Retrieved from [www.cffo.org](http://www.cffo.org)

# Methodology

This analysis utilized several methods to examine the impact of the Supper Program in Oregon. It includes a quantitative look at data and also a qualitative component focused on the perspectives of sponsors and site coordinators. The qualitative analysis was designed to better understand how the Supper Program affects afterschool programming and why certain programs started to utilize the Supper Program while others have not. The quantitative analysis of the Supper Program data provided insight into the growth of the program in Oregon since its implementation in January 2001. The Oregon Department of Education provided all data for the quantitative analysis. The qualitative material for this case study was derived from surveys, interviews and observation.

The first qualitative source was a survey conducted in November of 2009. It was distributed to afterschool supper and snack program sponsors and sites in the Tri-County area (Clackamas, Washington, and Multnomah counties). The Tri-County area was chosen for the survey because the region has the largest concentration of afterschool programs offering supper and is comprised of urban, suburban and rural communities. Forty-five surveys were distributed and there was a 33% rate of return. Of the surveys returned, 84% served suppers and 16% served snacks through CACFP. Of those serving meals, 80% were school-based and 20% were community-based afterschool programs operating out of apartment complexes.

The second qualitative source was personal interviews carried out in the fall of 2008. They were conducted with twenty-two program sites and sponsors that operate or operated the Supper Program. Some of these interviews were with programs located inside the Tri-county area, but to gain insight into how the Supper Program operates and affects other parts of Oregon, a majority of interviews were conducted with program operators located outside of the Tri-County area. Of those who were interviewed, 50% were nonprofit organizations with sites located at community centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and apartment complexes, 40% were school-based and 10% were former sponsors. Interviews were also conducted with staff from the Child Nutrition Programs at the Oregon Department of Education and from Oregon Afterschool for Kids (ASK). The perspectives of these organizations were sought because of their work across the state with an array of afterschool program coordinators offering the Supper Program. Lastly, observations occurred during visits and when volunteering at afterschool programs serving supper. Even though these observations are not explicitly mentioned in the case study, they are another key qualitative method used in the formation of this case study.

A limitation of the study was that Oregon currently does not require all afterschool care providers to be registered, and thus a comprehensive list of programs does not exist. Consequently, this case study does not reflect input from afterschool programs not operating the Supper Program. Therefore, insight into why some programs are not utilizing the Supper Program can be drawn from comments current program operators provided about challenges they face, as well as feedback from sponsors who stopped participating.



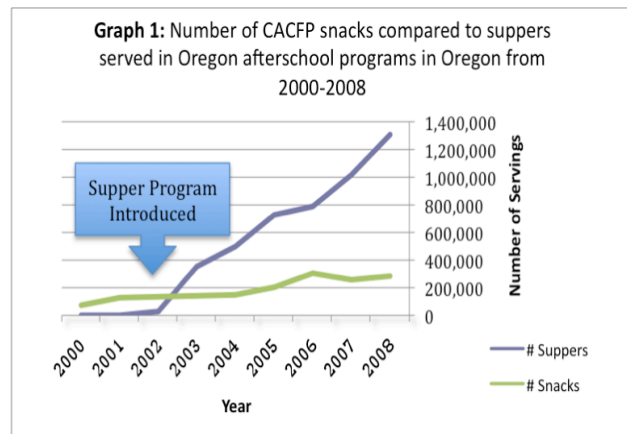
Another major limitation of this case study is the small sample. Given these limitations, this case study does not attempt to reflect all attitudes towards the Supper Program that may exist in the Oregon's afterschool community, but rather is a snapshot of emerging themes from a series of interviews and surveys. Hopefully, this case study prompts a deeper and more holistic exploration of how the Supper Program affects afterschool programming, and ultimately the impact on the children and families.

## Results

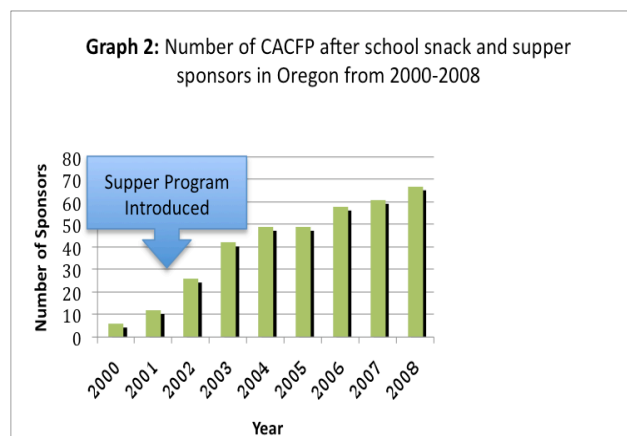
### Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis of CACFP data for afterschool programs from 2000-2008 provides valuable insight into program growth after the 2001 introduction of the Supper Program.

Graph 1 displays the number of suppers and snacks served over time in afterschool programs using CACFP. Prior to the introduction of the Supper Program, afterschool programs using CACFP were not serving suppers even though they were eligible to be federally reimbursed for those provided to children through the age of 12. It is evident from the data that there is a strong correlation between the introduction of the Supper Program and the increased number of suppers served at afterschool programs using CACFP. The number of suppers served in 2008 is 40 times the amount served in 2002 (a year after the Supper Program was introduced), while the number of snacks served in 2008 is only twice the amount served in 2002.



Graph 2 displays the growth in the number of CACFP sponsors providing snacks and suppers in afterschool programming from 2000-2008. After the introduction of the Supper Program in 2001, the number of sponsors increased dramatically over the following seven years. Between 2002 and 2008 there was almost a 200 percent increase in the number of sponsors. Therefore, it is evident that the number of sponsors increased along with the number of



suppers served after the Supper Program was introduced.

When looking at the historical data it is important to remember that afterschool programs could serve suppers before the Supper Program was introduced in 2001, but only to children below the age of 12 and if they individually qualified each participant. However, not one program sponsor utilized this option. It was not until after the introduction of the Supper Program, which extends suppers to children through the age of 18 in afterschool programs located in a low-income areas, that programs started serving suppers.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

The quantitative analysis reveals an increase in the number of suppers served and program sponsors since 2000. However, it does not explain why program operators decided to start accessing the Supper Program after it was introduced. The qualitative analysis, drawn from interviews and surveys, provides this information with a glimpse into both the benefits and challenges of operating the Supper Program. It also gives a deeper explanation and understanding of why the growth occurred after the Supper Program's introduction in 2001, as well as the challenges that may explain barriers affecting the program's continued expansion.

Overall, there was an overwhelmingly positive response from program operators regarding the impact of serving suppers during afterschool programs. The survey results indicated that **80% of operators feel the supper program has made their afterschool program more effective and/or financially sustainable**. Clear themes highlighting the need for and benefits of the Supper Program quickly emerged when program operators were asked why they started utilizing the Supper Program and how offering a supper has affected their afterschool programs. The three main responses why program operators took advantage of the Supper Program were that **kids are hungry after school, offering just snacks isn't enough** and the reimbursement rates for suppers made it **financially sustainable**. When asking program operators about the benefits of offering suppers, a majority of responses indicated that **afterschool suppers provide help to families** of the children attending their programs. Respondents also noted that the supper program **attracts kids to their afterschool program, creates opportunities for community building, decreases behavioral problems and increases children's capacity to focus** during enrichment activities.

Even though the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, many program operators encountered certain challenges when operating and expanding the Supper Program. The two major trends were related to **infrastructural issues with food preparation and serving** and **lack of financial resources or volunteers to sustain the enrichment component** of the afterschool program. Statewide afterschool advocates and the state agency administering the Supper Program shared thoughts on the difficulties of **marketing** the program and challenges with capacity to provide **technical assistance**. The qualitative analysis of this case study concludes by bringing forth operational best practices and opportunities shared by program providers.

Both the benefits and challenges of operating the Supper Program are explained in more detail below. The feedback sheds light on why so many program operators started serving suppers after they were extended to children through the age of 18. It also gives insight into the positive effects that offering suppers has on the operation of afterschool programs. The challenges expressed by operators give a glimpse into why some afterschool programs and communities may have not yet taken advantage of the Supper Program.

## **Supper Program: Benefits and Reasons for Operating**

### ***Students are hungry after school***

It became clear in both the surveys and the interviews that program operators feel a need to feed students after school. A little over 60% of those interviewed mentioned that they started utilizing the Supper Program because students were hungry after school. Several program operators noted that due to busy school schedules many students were eating school lunch early in the day. With afterschool programs ending late in the evening it is necessary to serve a supper so children have the energy they need to participate in enrichment activities. Mike Jezewski, Program Director at the Police Activities League in Portland explained that, “Some kids are eating school lunch at 10:30 am and then they don’t go home from the community center until 7 or 8pm at night. We have seen kids depend on it. If for some reason the meal isn’t served at 3:30pm the kids freak out.”

**“We found that kids are hungry. The kids would come into the community room and ask if there was anything to eat—we noticed that happening a lot. We watched kids walking around the housing complex at dinner time just snacking on whatever they could get their hands on—some kids were just eating uncooked ramen noodles just as a crunchy thing.”**

Fran Weick, Resident Services Manager at Human Solutions, explaining why they started serving suppers at their affordable housing properties

Mike Jezewski also said that he noticed many of the middle and high school students going to the corner store after school to buy cheap, but filling, “junk food snacks.” The Supper Program gives him the opportunity to provide the students with a healthy and accessible alternative to eating corner store snacks after school. Many program operators indicated that they started the program to provide students with access to a complete and nutritious meal that they otherwise may not have received.

**“We are in a rural area with high poverty rates and the suppers are serving the needs of students. Many parents are working and they don’t get home until late at night. If we didn’t have the supper program, kids would go home and eat junk because they are fendng for themeselves after school.”**

Rhonda Hoffine, Food Service Director at North Bend School District

## ***Offering snack just wasn't enough***

Many program operators mentioned that they previously served afterschool snacks through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or paid for snacks out of their program budget. Almost 60% of those interviewed noted serving only a snack just wasn't enough food for the students. Complaints about still being hungry and pleas for seconds were common occurrences for providers when they were only offering a snack. Rhonda Hoffine, Food Service Director of North Bend School District explained that, "We used to offer a snack and it was like a drop in the bucket and when the opportunity to serve a supper came along we jumped on it."

**"We used to offer NSLP snack and it was really a small amount of food for the children. We are in a high needs area and we found that the kids were still hungry, so we began supplementing the snacks with extra food bought with private funds to fill the need. Now with the Supper Program kids don't complain about being hungry anymore."**

Sharon Tabor, Afterschool Coordinator for Eugene School District

One of the benefits specific to the Supper Program is the program's ability to serve a supper to teens. Sondra Ross of Building Healthy Families in Enterprise emphasized that, "it's absurd that other states don't have this program because the need doesn't stop when a child turns 13." Interviewees also noted that in many cases the need for afterschool suppers actually increases in the high school years, whether because of their increased nutritional requirements or other food choices made throughout the day. Jessica Whelan of Springfield High School explained that, "Many high school kids that qualify for free and reduced price lunch aren't eating it because of the stigma, but at the afterschool Supper Program it is an open site so all students who attend can eat."

Many also highlighted the fact that larger suppers were more appealing to students, and often times children got bored with a simple 2 component snack, such as milk and crackers. Offering a supper allows program operators more opportunities to provide a greater variety of foods, which in turn makes it more appealing and healthier for the students. Organizations that were previously paying for snacks out of pocket found it hard to purchase healthy food. Stacy Simpson, Program Coordinator at Troutdale Apartments noted that, "Before the Supper Program we bought food for the children and we couldn't afford to buy nutritious snacks—offering suppers allows us to provide a balanced and complete meal."

**"We used to offer NSLP snack and it just wasn't sufficient, especially for the older kids above 4<sup>th</sup> grade through high school."**

Dorie Vickery, Administrator of Extended Learning at Central School District

## ***The Meal Program Benefits Families***

A majority of those interviewed made note of how beneficial the Supper Program is to the families of children attending their programs and they identified this as a reason for offering suppers. A little over half of interviewees mentioned that they see how the Supper Program directly helps families and/or have received positive feedback from families for offering suppers as part of their afterschool program.

**“Several parents expressed appreciation for having a night where they didn’t have to worry about where the money would come from for dinner to feed their kids.”**

Laura Lirette, Former Site Coordinator at Arbor Glen Apartments

Providers expressed a wide range of benefits and reasons for families’ appreciation. For many families it is the simple fact that they work late evening hours, making it difficult to find time to prepare an evening meal for their children. Fred Reyes, Program Director of the Boys and Girls Club in Rogue Valley, shared that, “it [the Supper Program] is a tremendous asset to the parents, including myself as a parent, especially when many of us are getting off of work late in the evening.” For other families the meal program makes up a part of the nutrition safety net they depend on during hard financial times. Stacy Simpson of Troutdale Apartments noted, “I have had several families of children in the program fall into hard financial problems. The Supper Program ensures a meal after school for their children. This is a great program and it makes a difference in a lot of children’s lives.” In addition to freeing up a family’s food budget, Holly Lett at Vose Elementary School also noted, “parents express their approval at the balance and portions of the meal.”

**"We survey parents of students in our afterschool programs every year to get a pulse on what is working and where we can make improvements. Parents are overwhelming pleased with the programs. Their children receive academic support and enrichment classes, a hot supper, and a bus ride home from the afterschool programs. Parents tell us that these programs are huge supports for their children and families." Sharon Tabor, Afterschool Coordinator for Eugene School District**

## ***Offering meals is cost effective***

Nearly half of all those who were interviewed mentioned that operating the Supper Program was cost effective for the afterschool program. In the two most common scenarios for providing food, prior to the supper program, program operators were either using NSLP snack or buying snacks out of their own budget. Many former providers of NSLP snack found that the program was not financially sustainable and the higher reimbursement for supper, which includes cash in lieu of commodities, was an incentive to switch to the Supper Program. Michael Vetter, Food Service Director at Central School District explained that, “we were losing

money with NSLP snack because the reimbursement wasn't covering the price of labor, milk and transportation. With the Supper Program we are breaking even- it covers the cost of everything."

Several program operators were purchasing food out of their oftentimes already limited program budgets. The Supper Program frees up these funds, previously spent on food, and allows programs to invest that money into enrichment and education activities for the children. Shannon Wilson of Harold Oliver Primary School (a SUN community school in Portland) pointed out that, "SUN Schools are located in high priority areas- 78% of students in my program receive free and reduced price lunch- it is not uncommon for families to not have any food- it [the Supper Program] is a great and important asset. Food is a necessary part of the program, so the fact that it is provided-helps us channel money into other programmatic elements."

Sustainable funding becomes even more important for school districts and non-profits during times of economic uncertainty. Jessica Whelan of Springfield High School described the current impact of the federal dollars, "There is a budget freeze in the district and the Supper Program really helps sustain our program financially, especially in tough budget times. We wouldn't be able to provide this much needed food without it." Many educators and caregivers emphasized the importance of incorporating food into their programs. The Supper Program makes it financially sustainable for program operators to do what they were already doing, but in a more consistent and often times more nutritious way.

**"Before the supper program we were making 300 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches almost every day to feed kids. We weren't able to consistently offer this food because it was dependent on volunteers preparing the sandwiches and available funds to buy ingredients."**

Fred Reyes, Program Director of the Boys and Girls Club in Rogue Valley

**"We would be lost without the Supper Program. We don't have enough money to buy the extra food we used to serve to supplement NSLP snack and offering just a snack isn't enough for the kids-the supper is a huge part of the afterschool program."**

Sharon Tabor, Afterschool Coordinator for Eugene School District

### ***Meals attract kids to the programs***

Shortly after starting to offer meals, many program operators realized they were seeing an impact in their participation numbers in the afterschool program. The survey found that half of respondents offering meals saw increases in student participation after they started offering

**"Participation numbers nearly doubled when we started offering suppers. With NSLP snack we served around 40 kids at program sites and now with the meals we are serving up to 60-80 kids at each site. As a result, more kids are coming to drop-in tutoring sessions that aren't even mandatory- it has been amazing!"**

Michael Vetter, Food Service Director at Central School District

suppers. In the interviews, a little over a third of all program operators referenced the suppers as a recruitment tool for their enrichment program.

Mike Jezewski, Program Director of the Police Activities League in Portland explained how offering supper ties into the larger goal of positively engaging youth in communities. In reference to the suppers, Jezewski noted, “It’s a nice recruiting tool. We definitely draw a lot of kids into our program that way. They come here instead of being on the streets possibly causing mischief, which saves the tax payers money in the long run.”

Many program operators mentioned how much of a struggle it can be to engage middle and high school kids in afterschool programming. This age group is often viewed as the most vulnerable or “at-risk” for negative behaviors. A study conducted by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids found that, “on school days the hours between 3-6 pm are peak hours for teens to: commit crimes; be victims of crimes; be in or cause a car crash; smoke, drink or use drugs.” The report recommended quality afterschool programs for high school kids to help decrease juvenile crime rates.<sup>11</sup>

This argument is well acknowledged and continues to propel program providers to create strong afterschool programs for teens. However, many providers interviewed stated that it is difficult to get older students to attend afterschool programs, especially if the programs are academically focused. Jessica Whelan, Afterschool Program Coordinator at Springfield High School explained that, “The meal entices them to come because getting them to come for tutoring is like pulling teeth.” Val Bako, Program Supervisor of Nutrition Services at Beaverton School District, echoed Whelan’s sentiment by asserting that at Aloha High School, “kids participate in the homework club because of the supper”.

**“In the middle and high schools the Supper Program has definitely helped increase the participation in afterschool programs- it is the carrot that gets them to come. It is hard to get them in the door and the meal really draws them into the program.”**

Dorie Vickery, Administrator of Extended Learning for Central School District

### ***The meal helps kids focus and decreases behavioral problems***

Beyond simply getting students in the door, program operators also find that the suppers positively affect the attention span and behavior of children attending their afterschool programs. Over 70% of

**“Test scores and just plain active learning is impossible when your basic needs aren’t being met on a daily basis- education has to be holistic to create a pathway to engaged learning. The Supper Program provides one picture of that.”**

Shannon Wilson, Harold Oliver Primary School

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<sup>11</sup> Kids, F. C. *America's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning*. Washington, D.C.: [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).



those surveyed said that increased concentration and fewer behavioral problems are an important benefit to serving suppers. In the interviews, a little over 30% referenced how the Supper Program has enhanced children’s ability to engage in enrichment programs.

Many program operators simply stated that they see a positive difference in children’s behavior and that children focus better in the afterschool programming after they eat a supper. Fred Reyes, the Program Director at the Boys and Girls Club in Rogue Valley, described how kids at his program line up early for the supper instead of choosing to participate in programs, highlighting that those children find it difficult to engage themselves in enrichment activities if they are hungry.

**“Our programming is academic based and we want them to have enough energy to engage in the academic activities. Feeding them enhances their potential for academic success in the program. Our mission is to have a safe and healthy space for kids and offering suppers helps us fulfill that.”**

Michelle Jensen, Afterschool Program Coordinator of Springfield Public Schools

### ***The meal promotes community building***

During the interviews a third of all program operators referenced how the Supper Program helped facilitate community building among children and families. Operators of apartment-based programs unanimously noted this as a clear benefit. They indicated that the community building happened in two realms—among children during mealtime and between providers and families.

**“Family style serving is great for teaching socialization skills-the magic of sitting down and eating together is a great time for kids to bond and learn.”**

Debra Jones, Housing Authority of Lincoln County

During suppers children not only consume food, but also engage and interact with one another. Laura Lirette, a former site coordinator at Arbor Glen apartments explained how, “the kids developed friendships over a meal and they also began to replicate helping behaviors they saw modeled during the mealtime.” This interaction among children seemed to help increase communication and contact among parents and between providers and parents, which is often a goal of managers at affordable housing developments. Stacy Simpson of Troutdale Apartments explained that the program “allows her to stay in touch with families and provide help to them when needed-it has helped build community”. Fran Weick, Resident Services Manager at Human Solutions described that at their housing complexes, “it [the Supper Program] has brought the community together and made it a more stable project”



**“All the students eat and they invite friends and siblings to eat frequently. This is an important program that we feel is very beneficial to our students.”**

Chilton Timmons, Lynch Wood Community School

## Supper Program: Challenges

### *Logistical challenges with meal preparation and serving*

During the interviews, a little over half mentioned encountering some type of logistical challenge related to the preparation and/or serving of suppers. Program operators touched upon a wide range of logistical challenges.

The first theme to emerge was that some programs have had a hard time serving students and allowing enough time for everyone to eat, without taking away too much time from the enrichment activities. In some cases teachers are in the position of having to serve, document and clean up after the supper is served, in addition to teaching the curriculum. Larger school-based programs mentioned that they are sometimes feeding more kids than during a regular lunch session, because there is only one serving time for afterschool suppers, while there are usually multiple lunch periods during a school day.

**“There were logistical difficulties like how to keep the food warm and the best way to serve suppers. The hardest part was connecting with a sponsor because the closest two school districts refused to extend food services to our site. I would recommend finding ways to make it easier for non-traditional sites such as apartment complexes to access the Supper Program.”**

Laura Lirette, former site coordinator at Arbor Glen Apartments

Another grouping of logistical challenges related to the lack of infrastructure and resources. A few program operators gave examples regarding the lack of equipment, such as warmers to serve hot suppers, while others noted how difficult it is to pay for health inspections. Lynne Reinoso, Manager of Child Nutrition Programs at Oregon Department of Education stated, “The health inspection fees are a big barrier for non-profits to use the program. In Oregon, federal funds are available to help Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) pay for the sanitation inspection, which helps SFSP sponsors with about 50% of the inspection cost.” Because these funds are not available to afterschool supper sponsors, and yet a health inspection is a requirement to begin serving suppers, this may place a burden on afterschool programs considering participating in the program.

Some program operators in rural environments stated that their communities lack access to certain resources that this program requires to run smoothly. Sondra Ross of Building Healthy Families, a nonprofit sponsor located in Enterprise, explained “vending is a recommended best practice for small non-profits operating the meal program, but that isn’t even an option for us being located in a rural area.” Sondra continued to describe how they used to hire someone to

prepare food, but since they were operating on such a small scale the reimbursement wasn't high enough to cover the cost of labor.

A final logistical theme to emerge related to the difficulty of training staff about the rules and regulations of serving the suppers. Since food service staff complete their workdays before afterschool programs begin, oftentimes the staff serving the suppers are non-food service staff. Some providers mentioned that the turnover rate of afterschool staff is high, which results in an ongoing struggle to keep them abreast of the regulations related to serving and recording suppers properly.

**“Training staff at meal sites how to run the meal part has been a challenge-it isn't their second nature. They are not food service people.”**

Rhonda Hoffine, Food Service Director at North Bend School District

### ***Challenges finding financial and staffing resources***

A little over a third of those interviewed mentioned the difficulty in finding either financial resources or volunteers to help run the enrichment component of the afterschool program. Since enrichment is a requirement to serve suppers, a program can't focus on one without the other.

Small community-based programs don't tend to have large program budgets and depend heavily on volunteers to help run afterschool programs. Many of these smaller programs only have one full time staff person to operate the program and find it extremely difficult to supervise the students, run the enrichment component and serve the food. When asking about the challenges they face, many immediately expressed the need for volunteers.

**“We [the food service] have the capacity to expand the meals we serve, but there isn't the staffing or the funding for the programming component. We also run the summer food program and the after school program is very different because of the required enrichment program aspect, so it isn't as easy to expand.”**

Val Bako, Program Supervisor of Nutrition Services at Beaverton School District

Program operators frequently noted the difficulty they face in acquiring financial resources to sustain afterschool programming. A former sponsor of the Supper Program explained that they stopped being a sponsor of the Supper Program because “the afterschool program for which they provided this service [supper] no longer existed.” The former sponsor continued by clarifying that the afterschool program “was funded through the school and was intended to be self supporting. After finding that this was not possible, we discontinued the program.” Some afterschool coordinators that receive funding for their programming through 21<sup>st</sup> Century grants mentioned that they worry about finding adequate financial support to continue their programs once the granting period is over.

**“Funding for afterschool programs is such an issue.”**

Michelle Jensen, Afterschool Program Coordinator for Springfield Public Schools

### ***Challenges with statewide marketing and technical assistance***

Lynne Reinoso, Community Nutrition Manager at the Department of Education and Beth Unverzagt, Executive Director of Oregon Afterschool for Kids shared their perspectives on the statewide operation of the Supper Program. Beth is involved with efforts to improve and expand afterschool programming in Oregon. Lynne manages the administration of the Supper Program on the state level. Two major themes emerged during the interviews with both Beth and Lynne. The first theme was inadequate statewide marketing to potential sponsors and providers. The second issue revolved around the State’s capacity to provide training and technical assistance if program growth exceeds the Oregon Department of Education’s staff capacity to effectively respond to a marketing campaign.

Beth pointed out that, “There is a lack of marketing of the program. Afterschool programs that could utilize the Supper Program don’t always know about it.” Lynne explained that the Department of Education “doesn’t have the capacity to plan a full-blown outreach campaign. Furthermore, they don’t have the administrative capacity to follow up with all of the responses that an outreach campaign would create.” Lynne described how some afterschool program providers, usually nonprofit organizations, need a lot of technical assistance to set up the Supper Program. The Oregon Department of Education is committed to getting people started on the right foot to ensure they run a successful Supper Program, but sometimes it can be incredibly labor intensive. In summation, two major roadblocks in the growth of the Supper Program in Oregon are inadequate marketing of the Supper Program and personnel in the Department of Education’s Child Nutrition Programs to respond to the increased demands for training and technical assistance that would be created by an intensive Supper Program marketing campaign.

## **Supper Program: Best practices and opportunities**

### ***Best Practice: Community sites partnering with school districts***

Nearly half of all nonprofit programs coordinate with their local school district to operate the Supper Program. These nonprofit organizations either vend meals through their local school district’s food service or a local school

**“I wanted to be a sponsor and went to the training, but it would have been a huge challenge for me to administer the program. For a non-food service person it was very overwhelming, so we went through our school district and they are now our sponsor.”**

Debra Jones, Housing Authority of Lincoln County

district sponsors them as a site. Several providers commented that it is far easier and more cost effective to work with a school district's food service staff because of their previous experience and knowledge of child nutrition programs, as well as already having the infrastructure to prepare and serve food. Simply put by some, it is their business to prepare food that meets the USDA nutritional requirements and doesn't cost more than the reimbursement- they know the strategies to make it work. This is often not the skill set of those running the afterschool care program.

Some current site coordinators mentioned that they previously attended the Department of Education's training to become sponsors of the Supper Program and soon realized they didn't have the capacity to do it on their own. Luckily, for many of these providers, they found a local school district to become their sponsor. Not all sites are able to find a local school district to partner with them. Laura Lirette, former site coordinator at Arbor Glen Apartments, recounts how difficult it was for her program to find a sponsor to serve suppers. The local school districts that were already sponsors of the Supper Program refused to take on her program as a new site. Often, a working partnership between multiple organizations is necessary to successfully serve suppers in afterschool programs.

**"I was unable to devote the extra time necessary to get it [the Supper Program] implemented on my own, in addition to my other duties as site coordinator; he [the food service director who recently started the Supper Program] made it work for us."**

Francine Zandol, site coordinator of an afterschool program at Monmouth Elementary

### ***Best Practice: Operating on non-school days***

Afterschool programs using the Supper Program have the option to serve meals, during the school year, on non-school days, such as weekends and during school vacation. The ability to serve on non-school days is a major difference between NSLP and CACFP. Even though providers using the Supper Program have this ability, only a little more than 10% of interviewees mentioned that they serve meals on non-school days. However, two providers shared exemplary and unique models for serving meals on non-school days.

- ❖ In Enterprise, OR there is only a 4-day school week. **Building Healthy Families** uses the Supper Program to serve food on Fridays when there is no school. On Fridays, Building Healthy Families runs their enrichment program from 10am-3pm and serves children both a snack and a meal.
- ❖ **Marion-Polk Food Share**, a regional food bank, has been providing free lunches, without receiving federal reimbursement, to children during spring break in the Salem area since 1993. Last year they developed a partnership with Salem-Keizer School District. The school district, already a Supper Program sponsor, started to provide the meals at some

of the food bank's already established spring break meal sites, while Marion Polk Food Share continued to organize the enrichment programming and volunteers at these sites. They are continuing their partnership with Salem-Keizer School District and Marion Polk Food Share is also becoming a sponsor, so that they can provide meals at their Polk County sites.

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this case study provide some insight into the benefits and challenges of operating the Supper Program in Oregon. Afterschool program providers utilizing the Supper Program described how it not only supports, but also improves their afterschool programming. The two main responses to why program operators took advantage of the Supper Program were that **kids are hungry after school** and **offering just snacks isn't enough**. Furthermore, the reimbursement rates for the suppers make it **financially sustainable** for afterschool programs to operate. When asked about the benefits of utilizing the Supper Program, program providers explained how the suppers **attract kids to their afterschool program, create opportunities for community building, decrease behavioral problems and increase children's capacity to focus** during enrichment activities. Many also explained how Supper Program fills the need to provide students with a balanced meal after school. When discussing the benefits of the program, providers continuously mentioned parents' appreciation for the supper program and how it **supports families**, especially during hard economic times.

Despite the frequency of positive responses to the Supper Program, providers also mentioned the challenges they had with the operation and expansion of the program. The first challenge providers frequently brought up was the **lack of financial resources or volunteers to sustain the enrichment component** of the afterschool program. Since the Supper Program is tied to afterschool enrichment, you can't have one without the other. Therefore, there needs to be adequate resources to support afterschool programming for the Supper Program to expand.

The second challenge providers mentioned relates to **infrastructural issues with food preparation and serving**. Oftentimes, it can be challenging to figure out the logistics of serving and preparing food in an efficient way and usually with limited staff that do not have food service experience. Some providers have overcome these logistical challenges and have valuable insight into how to make the program work and could share with others facing similar challenges.

Afterschool advocates and personnel that manage the Supper Program on a statewide level provided a macro level perspective on the challenges with operating and expanding the program. They expressed a lack of financial and infrastructural **support for marketing** the Supper Program to afterschool providers statewide. As mentioned before, the Supper Program supports children and strengthens afterschool programs. Given the benefits of the Supper Program, it is logical to promote it with increased marketing. However, marketing of the program is intrinsically linked to the **state agency's capacity** to adequately provide training and

technical support to potential afterschool program operators. In order for more children to receive the benefits of the Supper Program in Oregon, there needs to be funding for a marketing campaign that includes funding for Oregon Department of Education personnel to respond to increased inquiries and provide additional technical assistance and training.

During the interviews providers highlighted certain best practices and opportunities that improve the operation of the Supper Program. One commonly referred to best practice was that community-based sites, which are usually not experienced with food service, found it easier to operate the Supper Program by **partnering with a school district's food service**. Another opportunity that could be promoted is to **operate on non-school days**. The option to serve on non-school days is underutilized, but the programs that do serve on non-school days are using innovative models. Overall, program operators expressed the benefits to serving supper in afterschool care settings. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed for the Supper Program to continue expanding in Oregon.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Fund a marketing campaign that includes funding for Oregon Department of Education personnel to respond to increased inquiries and provide additional technical assistance and training
- ❖ Continue to establish funding sources that support current and new afterschool programs and funders should participate in outreach efforts to expand the Supper Program
- ❖ School Districts' Food Service should play an active role in sponsoring the Supper Program and partnering with community based sites
- ❖ Promote the operation of the Supper Program on non-school days during the school year
- ❖ Create a venue for current Supper Program operators to share best practices and support each other in the operation of the Supper Program
- ❖ Examine if the impressions found in this case study are valid from a larger sample size