Millions of children are home alone after school. Where do your students go?
According to the Afterschool Alliance's recent survey, *America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on After-school in America*, 14.3 million children head home to empty homes, including nearly 4 million middle school students. Experts worry that this unsupervised period of time leads to an increase in juvenile crime, teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol use, and a list of other youth problems.
11% of America’s K-12 youth are in after-school programs. Of that group ...

- 66% are in grades K-5
- 15% are in grades 6-8
- 8% are in grades 9-12
- (11% are in unidentified grades)

25% of K-12 youth care for themselves in the afternoon. Of that group ...

- 11% are in grades 1-5
- 34% are in grades 6-8
- 51% are in grades 9-12
- (4% are in unidentified grades)

African-American and Hispanic youth spend more time unsupervised than other children.
TOP AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM PROVIDERS

1. Public Schools
2. YMCAs
3. Religious Groups
4. Boys and Girls Clubs
5. Private Schools

On average, families spend $22 per week per child for after-school programs.

91% of the parents of kids enrolled in after-school programs are extremely or somewhat satisfied with those programs.
More African-American children (20%) are currently in after-school programs - compared to 11% of children over all.

25% of African-American children have no adult supervision after school, and care for themselves during the afternoon hours.

Demand for after-school programs is great in the African-American community: 53% of African-American parents say they would enroll their children if programs were available, versus 30% of parents in general.

African-American children (40%) are more likely than other children to attend after-school programs run by religious organizations.
“What’s The First Thing You Do When You Come Home From School?”

27% - Eat

19% - Engage in personal care (washing, bathing, dressing, and “none of your business.”)

15% - Watch TV

13% - Study

9% - Play

Source: National Study of Adolescence conducted by Sandra L. Hofferth, a sociologist at the Institute for Social Research (ISR).
Many studies suggest that middle schoolers should not be left home alone. Research on Southern California eighth-graders shows that latchkey children are more likely to:

- have lower grades and poorer school performance;
- use drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol;
- have sexual intercourse (usually at the home of the boy while his parents are at work);
- experience anger, stress, and fear;
- take risks, feel at odds with their families, and complain of their parents’ absence;
- cut school to attend parties; and
- cite friends as their major source of influence.

Source: National Study of Adolescence conducted by Sandra L. Hofferth, a sociologist at the Institute for Social Research (ISR).
Successful

After-School Programs for Middle Schoolers
After-school programs (especially for middle schoolers) are in short supply. Therefore, a successful program that adolescents enjoy attending could be a real competitive advantage for your school.

The most effective programs provide the following opportunities:

- **Positive social interactions with peers and adults**
- **Meaningful participation**
- **Physical activity**
- **Creative expression**
- **Flexibility**
- **Safety**
This is a crucial component in any successful program involving middle schoolers. Allow them to work in large groups, small groups, or by themselves on projects that test and hone their social skills. Balance the schedule between child- and adult-directed time. During a study hall hour, adult supervision can be expected. But when a group of adolescents is working collaboratively on a project, the adults should step back and become little more than monitors. Allow students to experience more “adult-like” roles.

Positive social interactions with peers and adults
Involves students in program development and policy-making. Allow an after-school “student council” to confer on program options, and let the members have a voice in the decision-making process. The program then becomes, to a degree, theirs. Also, set up service opportunities for middle schoolers to help others and feel that they have a role in the community; assisting at hospitals and senior centers, reading to preschoolers, and other beneficial involvement with people can go far to boost confidence in young adolescents.
Because students in this age group mature physically at different rates, the program must offer a variety of activities. For example, a weekly trip to a bowling alley is particularly appealing to middle schoolers - it gives them a chance to socialize and relieve some of the day’s stress. Find out what programs your middle schoolers are involved in after school and try to replicate those programs in your extended care. If the interest is there, include soccer and basketball leagues, music and dance lessons, or scout meetings with your after-school activities.
If a curriculum is provided, it should not be a continuation of the school day. Be imaginative! Offer courses not normally found during the formal school hours. Options should include not only art but music, gymnastics, gardening, cooking, photography, chess, rocketry, weather study, or other modes of expression.
The program must be “loose” enough to adapt to the diverse and ever-changing needs of middle schoolers, and to take advantage of community events. Provide adolescents with a great deal of freedom to move about and a wide choice of activities.
Middle schoolers need a comfortable environment that protects them physically and emotionally, while boosting respect and responsibility. Specify appropriate behavior rules, particularly concerning the teasing and harassment that are common at this age.