



Prime Time
PALM BEACH COUNTY
Dedicated to Quality Out-of-School Time

VISION FULFILLED, VISION RENEWED: TWO NEW STUDIES FROM PRIME TIME PALM BEACH COUNTY

The New Ecology of Afterschool: Emerging Pressures on Workforce, Children and Developmental Relationships

This study uses interview data from a countywide sample to examine changes in the afterschool landscape and their effects on workforce stability, developmental relationships and program outcomes.

Over the past several years, conditions surrounding afterschool programs have shifted. Patterns in performance data changed, and coaches and program leaders reported new challenges in daily practice.

In response, we conducted a census study of program directors across Palm Beach County. Directors described a changing ecology shaped by workforce instability, evolving child needs and increasing pressures on families.

The workforce has become less stable, with higher turnover and more early career staff entering roles with limited experience. At the same time, many children arrive with elevated stress and greater behavioral, emotional, and medical needs, while families face growing economic and logistical challenges that can limit consistent engagement.

These conditions place strain on the foundation of program effectiveness: developmental relationships.

Afterschool programs depend on stable, skilled relationships between adults and children. Through these relationships, adults support emotional regulation, engagement, and skill development that transfers to school and daily life.

In the current environment, these relationships are harder to sustain. As they weaken, effects extend across the system. Program quality becomes harder to maintain, child engagement declines, and the outcomes and long term returns associated with afterschool participation are put at risk.

Smith, C. D., Giannella, S. E., Chance, T., & Buenanueva-Vila, E. (2026). The New Ecology of Afterschool: Emerging Pressures on Workforce, Children and Developmental Relationships. Prime Time Palm Beach County.



What We Do Next

- Strengthen data systems to better identify emerging pressures in programs
- Adapt professional learning to support an increasingly early-career workforce
- Expand supports for program leaders to stabilize staffing and practice
- Reinforce relational practices that support child development
- Create a pipeline for child development workers and managers

Scan for full report.



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