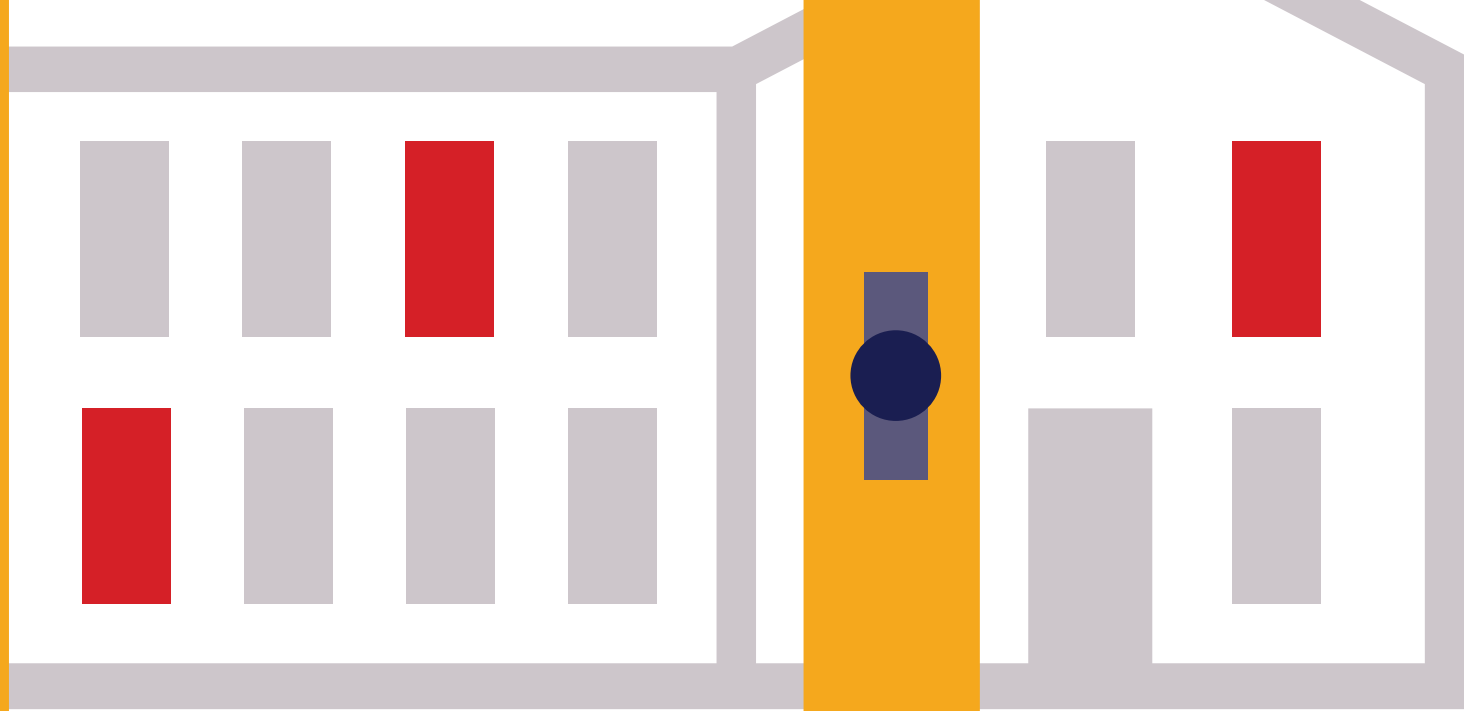


Advancing Access

IN THE
OUT-OF-SCHOOL
HOURS



AN UNDERSTANDING
BROOKLINE REPORT **2019**



Brookline
Community
Foundation



Quality out-of-school time programs keep kids safe and engaged in activities that support learning, healthy development, expression, and self-discovery.

FRIENDS,

We're pleased to share results from a new report by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). *Advancing Access to Quality Out-of-School Time Opportunities in Brookline* responds to challenges raised in our 2012 *Understanding Brookline* report and builds on subsequent conversations in town, including a special forum hosted by the Brookline Community Foundation.

At this first-ever convening on out-of-school time in Brookline, 70 town leaders and providers affirmed the critical importance of quality out-of-school time programs and agreed that current resources are not meeting the needs of all kids and families. NIOST has taken that discussion a step further, pulling existing data into one place and conducting a survey, interviews, and focus groups that paint a fuller picture of Brookline's current out-of-school time landscape. Based on this data and lessons from other districts, NIOST suggests concrete steps we can take to advance out-of-school time access for all our kids. Here, we present highlights.

We envision a Brookline where all young people are safe, thriving, and supported to reach their potential. We invite you to join us in learning how, together, we can realize that vision.

Sincerely,



JENNY AMORY
Chief Executive Officer



JULIE MARCUS
President, Board of Trustees

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME MATTERS

71%

of Brookline families whose children are not enrolled in out-of-school time programs want more options.

Source Public Schools of Brookline, 2017.

THE ENRICHMENT GAP

By 6th grade, middle class children spend

6,000

more hours learning than kids born into poverty.

Source The After-School Corporation, 2013.

◀ This explains as much as 2/3 of the achievement gap.

WHAT IS OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME?



- before school
- after school
- evenings
- weekends
- school vacations

Programs may be operated by schools, community organizations, camps, town departments, or others in a variety of settings.

80%

Children spend more than 80% of their waking hours outside of school.

Source Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership, 2018.

BROOKLINE'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME LANDSCAPE: Inequitable, Fragmented, Difficult to Navigate

Children and families across Brookline report a strong desire to participate in quality out-of-school time programs, and the town boasts hundreds of programs operated by dedicated providers, meeting a variety of needs and interests. Still, some populations—particularly middle schoolers, low-income families, and families whose home language is not English—remain significantly underserved. Some of these challenges stem from lack of funding; others have to do with uneven communication, outreach, and coordination.

None of these challenges are insurmountable, but it's important to understand them fully so we can identify solutions. Here, we present NIOST's key findings.

[Read the full NIOST report at brooklinecommunity.org/ost](https://brooklinecommunity.org/ost)

1

Low-income families are disproportionately represented in some neighborhoods. This uneven distribution is reflected in school demographics and out-of-school time access.

Median income varies significantly by census tract. As a result, four K-8 schools—Coolidge Corner, Lawrence, Lincoln, and Pierce—serve a higher percentage of children (10.4%-13.5%) from low-income households than the remaining four K-8 schools (6.4%-8.4%).

School populations vary in other ways too. The two schools with the highest proportion of economically disadvantaged students also have the highest proportion of students who speak a language other than English at home and who identify as Black or Latino/a.

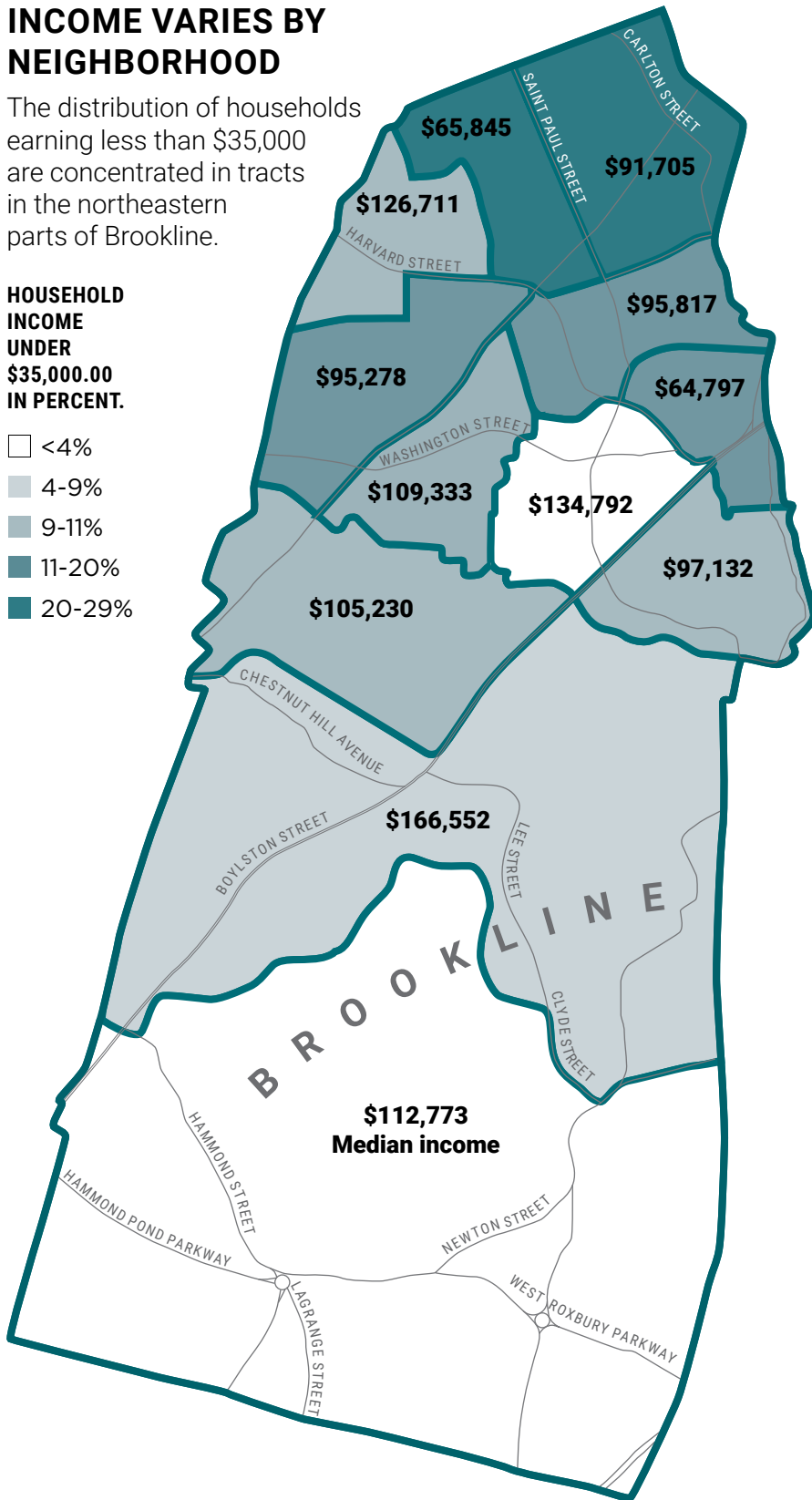
Low-income families report limited access to school-based programs. State and national research point to a broad pattern of inequitable out-of-school time access according to income, a point echoed in local focus groups. At least two K-8 schools serving high numbers of low-income families have long waiting lists for their extended day programs.

INCOME VARIES BY NEIGHBORHOOD

The distribution of households earning less than \$35,000 are concentrated in tracts in the northeastern parts of Brookline.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME UNDER \$35,000.00 IN PERCENT.

- <4%
- 4-9%
- 9-11%
- 11-20%
- 20-29%



MANY SOURCES, ONE REPORT

NIOST drew on multiple sources to create the most complete picture of Brookline's out-of-school time landscape to date.

Data & Research Review:

Reports and data from the US Census Bureau, Brookline Community Foundation, Brookline Housing Authority, Override Study Committee, Public Schools of Brookline, and the Town of Brookline.

Program Provider Survey:

33 organizations and Town departments responded.

Environmental Scan:

Supplementary review of school and provider websites.

Informant Interviews:

20 interviews with leaders of Town departments, school programs, and the Foundation's out-of-school time work group.

Focus Groups:

Three focus groups with parents living in Brookline Housing Authority units, parents who speak Spanish as a primary language, and youth enrolled in Steps to Success at the Lincoln School.

2

The school-based out-of-school time landscape remains fragmented and difficult to navigate, especially for working families who rely on full-coverage care.

School-based extended day programs are a vital but limited resource. All of the K-8 schools have extended day programs that provide daily programming until 6pm. All have limited capacity. Most of these programs end at 5th grade, and some have waitlists starting as early as Kindergarten.

Low-income parents want full coverage but can't always access it.

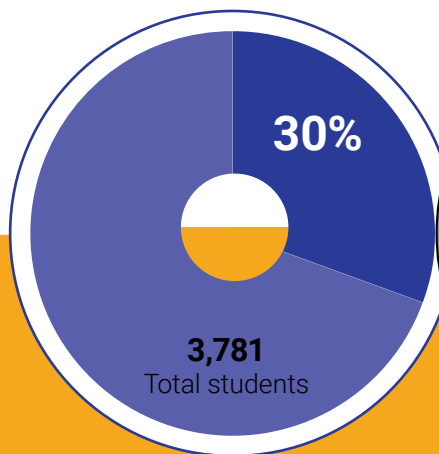
Working parents of elementary-aged children need consistent, reliable care and therefore prefer school-based options that minimize transitions and transportation needs. Extended-day slots are limited, however, and even with subsidies, the programs can be prohibitively expensive (\$500-600/month) for low-income families.

Other enrichment options add up to fragmented care. School-based enrichment programs, which include homework support, sports, and other interest-driven programs, do not provide full coverage or transportation. These programs vary in duration and cost and require separate registration, leaving families to piece together an incomplete schedule and complicated logistics.

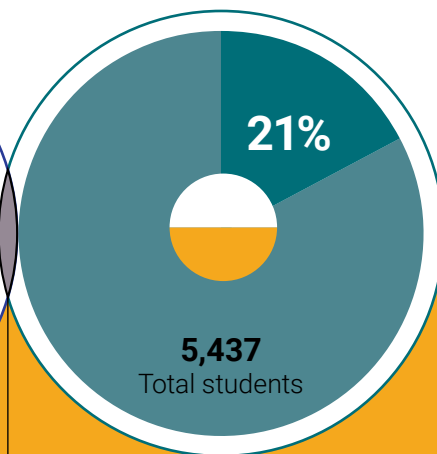
Communication isn't always effective. Parents report that they don't always know of out-of-school time opportunities that may appeal to their children or have the time to track down information from dozens of programs that communicate in varied ways.

BROOKLINE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

1,165 grades K-5 students enrolled in school's full coverage **extended day programs**



1,400 grades K-8 students enrolled in one or more school-based **enrichment programs**



Some children are enrolled in both extended day and school-based enrichment programs



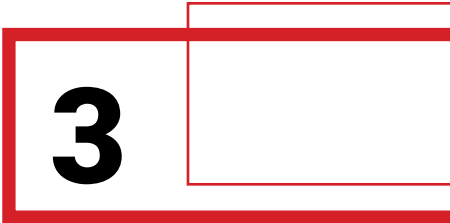
Income and home language affect access to out-of-school time and families' sense of being welcome.

Cost is a significant barrier. Most fee-based providers have subsidies or financial assistance, but that aid is typically capped and doesn't always meet full need. Families also report that applying for financial assistance can be intrusive and time-consuming.

Language can inhibit access too. More than half of providers have some multilingual capacity, but that support is typically provided on an as-needed basis, requiring parents to self-advocate. Print and online materials, meanwhile, tend to be written in English. The language barrier creates a practical and emotional hurdle for families whose primary language is not English.

English-speaking families often feel unwelcome as well. Low-income families spoke about a sense of disconnection that goes beyond language. Some bring their children to Boston for more affordable and welcoming programs. A few noted that Brookline as a whole doesn't engender a sense of belonging for families like theirs.

Brookline's low-income families echo statewide concerns. A 2007 report notes that low-income parents in Massachusetts are less likely to find out-of-school time programs they deem high quality, conveniently located, run by trustworthy adults, and interesting to their child. Transportation, work responsibilities, and family factors (e.g., sibling care, illness or disability) present barriers too. Similar concerns were raised in local focus groups.





4

Out-of-school time needs differ based on the ages and interests of young people.

Elementary school parents want consistent school-based coverage.

Respondents to the district’s 2017 survey were largely satisfied with school-based options, but low-income families, people of color, and speakers of languages other than English were underrepresented in the survey. As noted above, low-income families told NIOST that full-coverage programs remain largely unavailable, unaffordable, or not matched to their needs.

Middle school programming is a challenge. Families want consistent coverage for this age group too, while also giving their children a chance to experience more autonomy, pursue interests, and connect with peers. Participation in school-based and Town of Brookline Recreation Department programs drops in middle school, in part because older children vote with their feet. A range of community-based programs have the potential to form a full schedule of developmentally responsive activities for middle schoolers, but few families have the time or resources to weave together disparate programs.

High schoolers want to specialize, hone skills, and earn money.

Brookline High School provides many on-site activities, including clubs, sports teams, and performing arts. Students often navigate these opportunities on their own. The Brookline Teen Center and the Brookline Public Library’s teen-designated rooms also provide important, welcoming spaces. For some teens and their parents, the opportunity to work and earn money is very important. Unlike Boston and Cambridge, Brookline lacks a town-wide summer jobs program, but some community-based organizations, such as Steps to Success and the Brookline Teen Center, provide their own paid opportunities for youth.

A variety of providers creates a complicated patchwork. Brookline is home to many quality resources for youth in the out-of-school hours, including its libraries, the Brookline Recreation Department, a range of community-based organizations, and several larger organizations with a local footprint. These providers meet a variety of interests, including academic enrichment, arts education, athletics, and faith-based opportunities. Each provider, though, has its own schedule, approach to outreach, registration process and fees. Few are intended to provide full-time care and fewer still offer free transportation.



59%

of Brookline High School students report participating on at least one sports team.

Source Brookline Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.



66%

report participating in organized extra-curricular activity at least one day in the past week.



**BEYOND COST,
WHAT FACTORS
MATTER MOST
TO YOUTH AND
FAMILIES?**

FOR PARENTS

- High-quality programs
- Schedule
- Safety
- Transportation

FOR YOUTH

- Friends
- Food
- Responsive staff
- Positive peer environment

Source NIOST Focus Groups, 2018.



Families appreciate consistent communication and personalized support navigating out-of-school time options but don't always find it.

Parents appreciate direct, personal outreach. They highlighted people and organizations—including Brookline Housing Authority, Steps to Success, and school staff—that take the time to get to know individual families and connect them to resources. Not all organizations have this capacity.

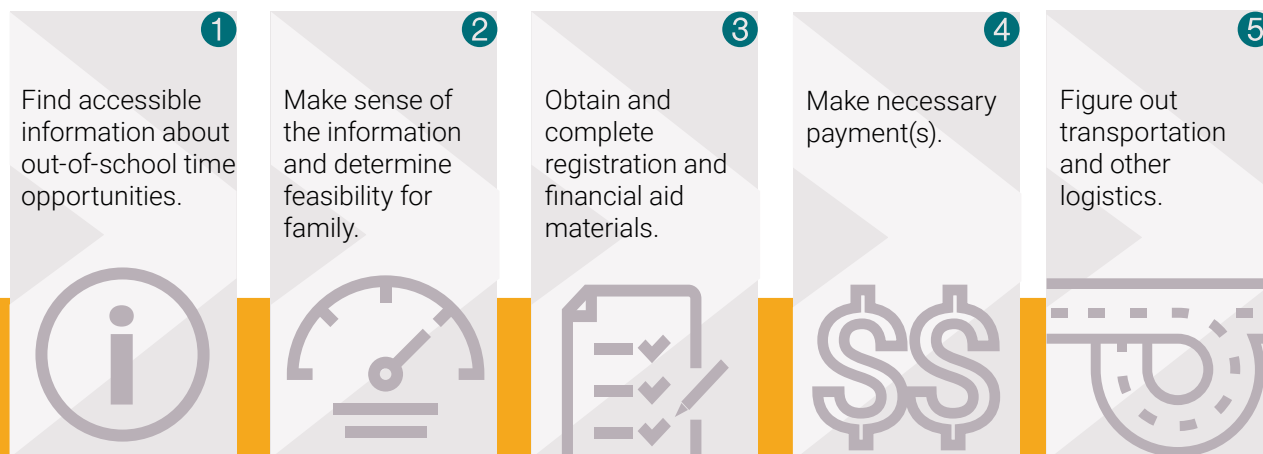
Paper still rules. Parents appreciate informational flyers about out-of-school options, both delivered home and posted publicly. Handouts delivered in school are effective for children in the younger elementary grades but less effective as children get into middle school.

Electronic communication is mixed. Email, particularly with clear and catchy subject lines, works for families that check regularly, which is not everyone. Social media is perceived as less effective.

School is a primary connector. Both young people and families see school as a helpful place to reach children directly. They appreciate when school staff present information and when out-of-school time providers visit classrooms.

Word-of-mouth referrals matter. Families especially appreciate recommendations from trusted community members.

FROM INTEREST TO ENROLLMENT A MULTI-STEP PROCESS



WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Brookline boasts a variety of quality out-of-school time options across age groups and interests areas. Those resources do not yet add up to a coherent system that equitably meets the needs of all children and families, however. The challenges described in *Advancing Access to Quality Out-of-School Time Opportunities in Brookline*—including uneven access and fragmented communication and care—are not unique to Brookline, but the strategies to address them must take into account local needs and resources.

NIOST recommends a set of short- and long-term actions that build on existing strengths in Brookline and, together, can help build a more coordinated system of out-of-school resources that provide all Brookline children with safe spaces to learn and grow.

Short-Term Actions

Advance community awareness of the importance of out-of-school time. Common talking points and creative outreach can help Brookline amplify the importance of out-of-school time participation and priorities for advancing access.

Start with subgroups and/or working groups. Small groups of stakeholders can make headway by working together around specific topic areas, age groups, or neighborhoods.

Engage the bigger systems. By identifying new funding, building on existing investments, and engaging those in a position to lead, Brookline can bring more stakeholders to the table to create a common agenda.

Engage marginalized residents. The input of young people and families who participate in out-of-school time programming—or would like to do so but experience barriers—is vital.

Document and share efforts to address equity. Organizations and institutions that are already working to support underserved populations and advance out-of-school time equity can become resources for our community.

Invest in an identifiable face for out-of-school time. Brookline can follow the example of communities that have pooled public and private resources to create a position representing the entire out-of-school time system to the community.

Long-Term Actions

Collect better data about low-income families and their experiences. Local stakeholders need a shared and nuanced understanding of how out-of-school time disparities play out. Better data will help identify priority areas for change and track progress over time.

Increase awareness and opportunities to participate. Information about out-of-school time opportunities should be communicated consistently, coherently, and in many languages. A common registration system would go a long way.

Engage families in ways that work for them. The best way to understand what works for an individual family is to reach out directly and ask. Families know their own priorities and interests, including their transportation needs.

Address cost issues, including the burden of applying for subsidies. Brookline can follow the example of communities that have raised new investments or created cross-sector funding partnerships for out-of-school time. Providers can share best practices for making assistance more accessible.

Identify and replicate promising practices. Stakeholders can learn from and build on what is already working in Brookline.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

This important conversation must continue. Stick with us as we convene Brookline's leaders, out-of-school time providers, and families to identify actions we can all take to advance access for all Brookline kids.

Spread the word. You can help us build town-wide understanding of out-of-school time needs by sharing this report with your neighbors and friends.

Add your perspective. We're still gathering input and want yours! Take a quick survey to share your views on issues raised in this report: brooklinecommunity.org/ost

Make a strategic gift. Over the last four years, BCF awarded more than \$610,000 to expand access to out-of-school time programs, build provider capacity, and promote town-wide coordination. Help us expand this crucial pool of support with a gift to the BCF Fund for Brookline. give.brooklinecommunity.org

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