Before & After School Programs

Tiers 1 & 2

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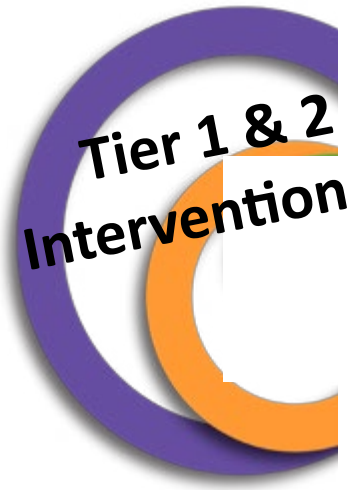


Eight million school age children are left alone at home in the U.S. during the time following school dismissal (estimate by the U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Children may also be unsupervised after adults leave for work, and before the start of school. When females are the head-of household, 77.8% of them work outside the home, 83.7% of male-headed families work outside of the home and in 68% of married-couple families with children age 6-17 years, both parents work outside the home (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). When adults are working for low wages and families are near poverty levels, costs of child care for school aged children during working hours may be prohibitive or unavailable.

These periods of unsupervised time are occasions for many youth to become involved in juvenile crimes or experiment with alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or sexual activity. Students left unsupervised are also more likely to become victims of crime or be involved in car crashes (Miller, 2007). Younger children may engage in dangerous play while at home.

Many of these children face significant challenges including poverty, poor health and nutrition, school failure, dangerous neighborhoods, disproportionate incarceration, lack of employment opportunity, and language difficulty. In a study conducted by the National Research Council, 25% of adolescents are at serious risk of not attaining a “productive adulthood” (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). Therefore, for this population of youth, before and after school programs can provide important supervision and supplemental skills to students struggling in social or academic domains (Lockwood, Barton, & Klump, 2008). These are also critical times for learning and development for children and adolescents.

What are Before and After School Programs?

Before and after school programs, also called “Out-of-school time” programs, “out-of-school-hours” programs, or “after-school hours” programs, serve children and families during the critical times when children are not in school. While the largest number of programs focus on the time immediately after school hours, many of these programs may also serve students before the beginning of school hours. Some may also serve students into the evening for parents who are working evening hours, thus the term “out-of-school time” programs. Although the number of before and after school programs greatly increased in the 1970s and 1980s, many programs had been started much earlier (i.e., the 1940s) when women started entering the workforce (Miller, 2007). A 2014 study found that 10.8 million children, or 18%, participate in after school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

These programs are different from traditional day care or babysitting programs in that they serve larger numbers of children, and are sponsored by a community agency or organization. They are also typically are located in leased space in school buildings, or in locations very close to the school eliminating the need for transportation. Many offer their programs on a sliding fee basis depending on the family's ability to pay and the organization sponsoring the program.

Purposes of before and after school programs. In these programs, students learn through real-world examples, applications, and experiences both inside and outside the classroom (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). Before and after school programs typically have some combination of three purposes: improving students' academic performance, decreasing problem behaviors, and supporting positive youth development (Lauer et al., 2006). They also assist working parents by providing childcare before or after school to accommodate work schedules. Before and after school programs provide safe environments where youth are engaged in essential developmental relationships with fellow peers and adults, including activities ranging from highly structured academic programs to less formal activities, such as basketball or work experience. When considering before and after school programs, it is important to assess the needs of students and their parents, the availability of staff for such a program, the available resources, and other logistical concerns before implementation.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

In 1994, the Improving America's School Act created a federal funding source for before and after school programs through the authorization of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) within the U.S. Department of Education.

This program supports 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. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children (from http://www2.ed.gov/print/programs/21stcclc/index.html).

The CCLC program was intended to address social and educational gaps left by traditional after-school programs. Two points of emphasis for the CCLC were to implement an academic curriculum and improve partnerships between schools, family, and the community.

In 2002, the CCLC program was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind Act. This act shifted the focus of CCLC from a community center learning model to an after-school model with a focus on literacy and other educational services (Bouffard, Little, & Weiss, 2006). CCLC programs should be

family centered and have evidence-based goals that promote educational and social benefits to participants. How each site achieves or works toward their goals is based on specific needs of students and families in their school (L. Johnson, personal communication, May 16, 2013). For example, Pennsylvania's CCLC goals include:

- To assist youth in meeting state standards for core academic subjects by providing students with academic enrichment opportunities before school, after school and/or during holidays or summer recess.
- To offer participants a broad array of other services and programs, such as art, music, recreation activities, character education, career and technical training, drug and violence prevention programming, and technology education.
- To provide educational services for families of participating students, such as literacy instruction, computer training and/or cultural enrichment.
- To ensure that both youth and their families have decision-making roles in the creation, operation and evaluation of every 21st CCLC in Pennsylvania.
- To mobilize school, community and private sector social and health services support and resources in order to remove barriers that impede students' learning (From http://www.21stcclc.org/index.cfm?pageid=4242 downloaded March 26, 2014).

Program goals may include increasing the number of students who meet state math and reading standards. These programs also seek to decrease truancy rates, suspensions, and disciplinary actions (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002).

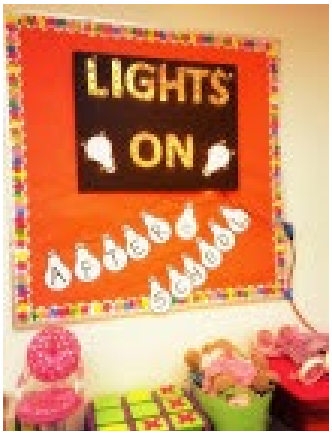
Sites often use a combination of programs delivered by community-based partners that provide a combination of enrichment and academic services. Many before and after school programs use behavior supports or services that are aligned with the school's PBIS plan. Enrichment clubs may include recreation, character development, leadership, and physical activity. These programs also provide training to all partners' staff regarding a variety of professional development topics (L. Johnson, personal communication, May 16, 2003). From 2002-2008, CCLC programs received approximately one billion dollars annually from the Federal Government to provide before and after school enrichment activities for underperforming students (Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010). CCLCs may also be financially supported by the school district, community partners, and Title I funds (L. Johnson, personal communication, May 16, 2013).

What do we know about Before and After School Programs?

Much of the research on before and after school programming has assessed overall program influence rather than specific component activities of programs. Thus, although many of these programs appear promising, their causal link with positive outcomes may need further investigation (Miller, 2007). Given the broad diversity of program components, it is difficult to compare programs or to know which features may have the largest impact. This is true both for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers as well as before and after school programs that are not affiliated with the CCLC program.

Academics. A study conducted after the first year of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program found no impact on reading or mathematics for elementary or middle school students (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). While year one program reports held

discouraging findings, year two reports displayed improvement in social studies achievement and students reported higher feelings of safety (Dynarski & Moore, 2004). However, the researchers pointed out that these studies focused on typical programs and did not attempt to discover characteristics of the most effective programs. Other studies that reviewed a large



number of after-school program evaluations reported that large variations in program structure, goals, size, content, and research designs prevented clear conclusions about the effectiveness of before and after school programs (McComb & Scott-Little, 2003; Miller, 2007).

In contrast, several studies have reported promising effects of before and after school programs on reading and math achievement (Leone & Weinberg, 2010). Lauer et al. (2006) conducted a critical review of after-school programs in which they discovered that one of the strongest benefits of these programs involved the positive impact of tutoring on reading. Effects were strongest for lower elementary and high school grades in reading, while middle and high school students showed the strongest gains in mathematics. Lauer et al. (2006) also found that that the ideal program length for improving reading is 44 to 84 hours, and programs longer than that do not necessarily achieve at higher rates.

When considering specific programs and populations, researchers have found positive results. One such finding is the positive correlation between participation in after-school programs and academic performance of at-risk students. In a longitudinal study of nearly 600 elementary students from an urban, disadvantaged area, students who participated in after-school programs were found to have significantly higher reading achievement, school grades, and motivation (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) also found that superior before and after school programs had a positive effect on low-income youths' academic performance; particularly, after-school programs were associated with significantly higher English and math standardized tests and higher grade-point averages (GPA). When after school programs link curriculum with subjects taught in the regular school day and offer challenging and relevant activities, students' academic performance increases (Shernoff, 2010). Hahn (1994) found that youth who participated in after-school programs have higher academic achievement, are more engaged in learning, were less likely to drop out, and demonstrated a greater capacity to develop friendships.

Social and emotional skills. Some before and after school programs include a focus on helping students develop social skills. For example, an early study conducted by Posner and Vandell (1999) found that children who participated in after school programs were better emotionally adjusted and had better relationships with their peers. Children that attend before and after school programs have been found to be less lonely and show less social dissatisfaction than children who are in self or sibling care (Demircan & Demir, 2014). A research initiative in Maryland gathered several years of data that found a consistent pattern: before and after school programs that empha-

sized social skills instruction were more likely to improve several youth outcomes than programs that had no such focus (Gerstenblith et al., 2005). One meta-analysis of after-school programs that incorporated social skills training found that, on average, these programs had a positive impact on school bonding, attitudes about self-efficacy and self-esteem, as well as decreased aggression, noncompliance, and conduct problems. However, these positive impact scores were found only for programs that included evidence-based skill training. Programs that did not utilize evidence based skill training did not find these improvements (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). However, it should be noted that even when academic and social skill goals are not met, these children are still in a supervised, safe environment, where they often receive healthy snacks and have the opportunity for interacting with peers and adult leaders.

Vocational skills. Some questions have arisen about the utility of after-school programs when they simply replicate classroom-learning environments that may have already failed youth. In contrast to the after-school programs that often function as an extension of the regular school day, some schools have implemented an apprenticeship model of after-school programming. A non-profit program in Chicago called After-School Matters (ASM) has implemented an apprentice style program in 35 high schools in low-income neighborhoods, serving about 100 youth at a time in each school (Halpern, 2006). ASM contracts with working professionals and non-profit organizations to provide 10 or 20 week apprenticeships (3 days a week, 3 hours a day) to groups of about 20 youth in one of five general areas: arts, words/communications, technology, sports instructions, and life guarding. Youth who participate in the program are paid a stipend of up to $450 for 10 weeks.

Halpern (2006) conducted a two-year qualitative study of this program. The results showed that the ASM apprenticeship model resulted in many benefits for students not found in traditional learning. They found that "constant detailed interactions between instructor and apprentice, whether attending to a technical problem, demonstrating a technique, encouraging, guiding, or modeling the questions one asks oneself about work in progress has a cumulative effect" (p. 231). Halpern argues that these experiences lead students to: take more responsibility for their actions; begin exercising leadership, hard work, self-expression, and imagination; learn about themselves; learn about gaining skills in something, including: what it takes, how long it might take, the demands and pleasures of achievement; and changes their perspective about taking risks and trying new things.

School-Based versus Community Based Programs

After-school programs can be found both on school campuses and in the community. Both sources can offer valuable contributions such as a safe environment, mentors, improved social skills, and tutoring. However, school-based programs may offer greater connection between students, their families, and the classroom. Some of the challenges to community-based programs could be overcome through improved partnerships with schools through which curriculum is in use, referrals, and communication between community, staff and teachers could be facilitated. One study found that students who attended school-based programs out performed students who participated in other programs on math and reading measures (Baker, Rieg, & Clendaniel, 2006). In addition, school-based programs can apply for federal funding through grants or Title 1 funding. Lockwood et al. (2008) further advocates for school-based programs by proposing that schools hire certified teachers to

stay after school and run these programs or split their time between the school day and after school. Whether using certified teachers or external staff, those that implement after school programs should receive high-quality training, coaching, and monitoring (Miller, 2007).

Making Before and After School Programs Successful

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention "Model Programs Guide" cited research, which has identified several characteristics of successful after-school programs, have also overlapped with other research (e.g., Miller, 2007):

- An emphasis on social skills or character development
- More structure, with a predictable schedule
- Smaller size, with lower adult/youth ratios and with opportunities for one-on-one training/tutoring
- Strong links to school-day curriculum
- Qualified and well-trained staff (e.g., hiring staff that hold bachelor degrees)
- High percentage of male staff
- Low attrition (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Fashola, 1998; Gottfredson, Cross, & Soule´, 2007)

In addition, Miller (2007) also asserts that effective after school programs should also focus on data collection and analysis. Data allows for progress monitoring on program goals and student benchmarks, as well as attaining perspectives of multiple stakeholders. These efforts are also likely to be most successful when they involve collaborating and communicating with parents and community resources (Leone & Weinberg, 2010).

Additionally, engagement is critical in order to obtain positive outcomes from before and after school programs. Greene, Lee, Constance, and Hynes (2013) found specific program content and quality of staff were highly correlated with youth engagement. They further found that particularly for older children adding "future" aspects to program content, such as learning about careers and college, were positively associated with student engagement. Content matched for youth age groups can help raise participation as well as better guide youth to positive future outcomes. In support of these findings, Jones and Deutsch (2013) state that both developmentally appropriate program content for varying ages and staff-youth relationships are crucial in supporting student engagement and guiding social and identity development. The bottom line is that in order for students to reap the benefits of after school programs they must put in substantial effort, which will not be the case for students that are not engaged in or feel connected to their before and after school program. In order for programs to be enduring students, teachers, administrators, and community organizations must be interconnected (Davies & Peltz, 2012).

Implementing Before and After School Programs

Needs and resource assessment. The first step in implementing a before and after school program is to conduct an assessment of the school's needs and resources. Different programs have been created to target reading skills, math skills, social skills, and career opportunities, among others. When evaluating a school's resources, administrators should explore possible funding sources, particularly Title 1

Funding and CCLC. Local businesses may also be willing partners in donating money, supplies, or snacks (Davies & Peltz, 2012). Parents may also pay for services on a sliding scale.

Leadership. Additionally, school principals, can serve as leaders in the movement to adopt before and after school programming as a critical feature of school improvement (Lockwood et al., 2008). Once a program has been selected, staff will need adequate training and ongoing support. Continual evaluation of the process and outcome data should be used to guide necessary changes and adaptation.

Training. Recently a partnership between the National After-School Association and Youth Today, sponsored by the Robert Bowne Foundation was announced. The partnership will deliver "high-quality, relevant training and tools" to strengthen the professionals working in these programs through networking connect them to others in this field. Activities and materials will allow "afterschool professionals' access to training and professional learning communities to further their knowledge, build skills, and advance the profession." Training topics will include "Engaging Youth in Language and Literacy During the Out-of-School Time", "Using the Arts to Engage Children and Youth in Language and Literacy," and "Using Sports Debates as a Way to Engage Children and Youth in Language and Literacy." In addition, the NAA will be developing a series of Google Hangouts, which will engage researchers, policymakers and practitioners in dialogues around critical issues in out-of-school time. The dialogues will be available to the general public via YouTube.

Conclusion

Millions of children and adolescents are unsupervised after school, often because their parents need to work during those hours. When these students are unsupervised, they are at risk for involvement in inappropraite inappropriate behaviors. After-school programs are a potential solution to this problem because they provide students with supervised, safe activities that may also increase academic or social skills. They also provide opportunities for academic tutoring, and social mentoring. Despite the fact that research has thus far been unable to categorically support the positive effects of after-school programs, the general consensus is that the programs are helpful and have even more untapped potential than has yet been shown. By providing these programs, schools increase the likelihood that students' free time after school will have a positive effect on their lives rather than a negative one.

See related Strategy Briefs on: Academic Supports, Mentoring & Motivation.

Resources on Out-of-School Time Programs

After-School Alliance
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org
"The Afterschool Alliance is the only organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for more afterschool investments."

- Connect with other after-school networks
- Learn about after school programs already in your area
- Resources for advocating for after-school programs

Afterschool.gov
http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs
"Effective afterschool programs can improve classroom behavior, school attendance, and aca-

demic aspirations and reduce the likelihood that a student will drop out."

- Information on how to begin and fund an after-school program
- Benefits of after-school programs
- How to develop an after-school workforce
- Program options

After School Programs
http://afterschoolprograms.com/
After School Programs, Inc. (ASP) was founded in 1991 and is the largest provider of quality on-site after school programs in Broward County, FL.

Afterschool Programs—From Vision to Reality
www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/afterschool/index.html
Welcome to our workshop on Afterschool Programs -- From Vision to Reality. In this workshop we will look at the benefits that a quality afterschool program can provide to students, their families, and their community will be examined, as well as ways to create and sustain such programs."

Afterschool Training Toolkit
www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits
"This toolkit is designed to give afterschool program directors and instructors the resources they need to build fun, innovative, and academically enriching activities that not only engage students, but extend their knowledge in new ways and increase academic achievement."

Collective for Youth
http://www.collectiveforyouth.org/
"Collective for Youth's Mission is to lead and support a network of high quality OST programs that inspire and engage youth, while stimulating academic and personal growth."
Goal is to build a sustainable system of quality before and after school programs in the Omaha, Nebraska metro area. Dedicated to creating quality partnerships between schools and community organizations. Oversees the provision of out-of-school time activities to 3,500 school students in 25 Omaha Public Schools.

National After-School Association
http://naaweb.org/
"NAA is the membership association for professionals who work with children and youth in diverse school and community-based settings to provide a wide variety of extended learning opportunities and care during out-of-school hours. Its members include afterschool program directors, coordinators, sponsors, front-line staff, school leaders, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, board of education members, nonprofit leaders, advocates, community leaders, policymakers, researchers and more."

The Harvard Family Research Project
http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time
The Family Research Project's before and after school work strives to promote quality, accessibility, and sustainability of before and after school (BAS) programs and activities across the nation. Our BAS resources support the work of practitioners, policymakers, and researchers.

- Evaluation strategies
- Research literature and data base
- List and details of specific programs

- Ideas for how to engage families

Youth Today
http://youthtoday.org
Youth Today is a print and online publication housed at the Center for Sustainable Journalism at Kennesaw State University, just outside of Atlanta. It provides news, information and commentary on topics related to youth work and children, specifically disadvantaged children during their Out of School Time (OST). The OST Research and Resource Hub which is in the process of being developed will provide layers of research, resources, toolkits, white papers, pertinent links and expert advice. These materials will be available at this website.

Book Resources

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