

About Programs for After School Hours and Non-school Days

It has been estimated that over 11 million children nationwide self-supervise after school; this includes about one in 25 kindergartners through fifth-graders. While estimates are that a total of 10.2 million children (about 1 in 4 families) are enrolled in an after-school program, 41% of parents surveyed said they wanted to enroll but a program wasn't available near them.

Data from the America After 3PM surveys

While students spend a considerable portion of time in classes, they are out of school the majority of time. After school hours and days when schools are not in session are of special concern because what youngsters do during these times can benefit or harm them, their families, their schooling, and society.

Functions of Programs for Non-school Hours

While not enough, there are many youth-oriented programs for after school and non-school days in the United States and globally. Some are on school campuses; other are at parks, community centers, churches, libraries, and organizational and business sites. The programs serve a variety of functions for students, families, schools, and society. They provide a safe time and place to enhance and enrich learning and for healthy recreation; they help with child care for working families; they play a role in countering neighborhood juvenile delinquency and school dropouts. Working families have a particularly high need for such programs. And the programs have been found especially beneficial for students at greatest risk for learning and behavior problems.

Our focus here is on programs in the United States based on school campuses (including those that link with community resources). Such programs offer an array of activities including recreation, sports, homework help, academic tutoring, enriched learning, computer skills, snacks, community service, arts and crafts, performing arts, and more. Some include programs for parents. Some are run by the schools; others are operated on school campuses by externally funded non-profits, or for-profit businesses. (See Appendix A for a brief summary of the number of after-school programs on public elementary school campuses.)

Some Research Findings

How effective are formal programs for after school and non-school hours? Not surprisingly the answer varies depending on who is asked, what programs are evaluated, and what outcomes are the focus of evaluation. An overview of program evaluations finds researchers reporting contrasting findings on effectiveness (see Exhibit A).

The conclusion of the Harvard Family Research Project in 2008 based on meta-analyses of available research on a broad range of out-of-school time programs states:

A decade of research and evaluation studies, as well as large-scale, rigorously conducted syntheses of many research and evaluation studies, confirms that children and youth who participate in after school programs can reap a host of positive academic, social, prevention, and health benefits.

*The material in this document reflects work done by Jeffrey Liando as part of his involvement with the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.

The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Email: smhp@ucla.edu Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> Send comments to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Exhibit A

A Smattering of Researchers' Conclusions

In 2005, an evaluation conducted by Mathematica Policy Research reported that elementary students randomly assigned to attend the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school program were more likely to feel safe after school, no more likely to have higher academic achievement, no less likely to be in self-care, more likely to engage in some negative behaviors, and experience mixed effects on developmental outcomes relative to students who were not randomly assigned to attend the centers (see James-Burdumy, Dynarski, Moore, et al., 2005).

O'Brien and Resnik (2009) conducted a meta-analysis and concluded that attending after-school programs improved personal, social, and academic skills.

McLaughlin and Smink (2009) stress that unequal access to summer learning programs contributes to the achievement gap between lower and higher income youth; they call for making summer programs a high priority.

An American Institute of Research evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Center programs in New Jersey in 2011 reported that the program contributed to student growth and development from both an academic and behavioral standpoint (i.e., a positive and significant relationship was found between a higher number of days of attendance and "improvement in student motivation and attentiveness, prosocial behaviors, and homework completion and quality, as well as in performance on state assessment results in mathematics" (see Naftzger and colleagues, 2011).

Kremer et al., (2015) conducted a meta-analysis focused on research findings related to the impact of after-school programs on behaviors of at-risk students and concluded that "mean effects were small and non-significant for attendance and externalizing behaviors."

Based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies of after-school programs designed to have an impact of delinquency, Taheri and Welsh (2016) state that "not one of the intervention types was associated with a significant effect on delinquency."

Note that Taheri and Welsh caution that "Nothing in the present review suggests that ASPs [after-school programs]—of any type—should be discontinued. But business as usual does not seem in order for ASPs with a focus on delinquency prevention. Several research priorities could go some way toward addressing this, including further high-quality evaluations targeted on the three main types of ASPs and a special focus on program fidelity."

For an example of results from a large-scale, whole child oriented after-school program, see Exhibit B.

Note that the reports suggesting poor results usually have come from evaluations of specific programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, those focused on students with high needs and poor attendance, and those whose quality is contested. A common theme in discussing negative findings is that many programs lack sufficient financial support and consequently are poorly staffed and operated.

In general, rather than viewing negative evaluations as indicating that out-of-school-time programs cannot produce effective and important results, findings of program deficiencies and factors that produce negative results can be viewed as important formative evaluation information.

Exhibit B

Example of Findings from a Large-Scale, Whole Child Oriented After-School Program

LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) is nationally recognized as a leading after-school program. A brief program description is appended at the end of this Information Resource.

Data from various evaluations by CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles report that compared to nonparticipants, participants in LA's BEST were 20% less likely to drop out of school, demonstrated higher GPAs in middle school, and were 30% less likely to commit a juvenile crime.

For a sense of the nature and scope of the CRESST evaluations, here is an excerpt from the 2007 summary report entitled: *The Long-term Effects of After-school Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: a Study of the LA's BEST After-school Program*.

"This research tracked the academic and juvenile crime histories for a sample of 6,000 students, 2,000 students participating in LA's BEST and 4,000 matched control students not participating in LA's BEST. We used multilevel propensity scores to match control to treatment students and applied multilevel longitudinal models and multilevel survival analyses methods to analyze the data. Results indicate that students' engagement in the program is a strong mediating factor of program effectiveness. The key element of positive program impact is student engagement, as indicated by a medium to high average monthly attendance, and by significant adult contact of at least one additional adult (volunteer) per day. Student participants, who attended sites with a higher average of adult volunteerism, demonstrate modest achievement gains compared to students who did not participate in LA's BEST. Likewise, students who consistently attended LA's BEST demonstrate a substantively significant reduction in the juvenile crime hazard compared to participants with inconsistent attendance, and compared to students in the control group. Benefit-cost analyses indicate that results are sensitive to assumptions regarding the value of avoided costs from prevented crimes."

[Note: Estimates suggest that for every dollar invested in an LA's BEST program, the city would save \$2.50 from crime related costs.]

It also should be noted that advocates stress that program's such as LA's BEST help working families by providing childcare, a safe after-school environment, and a range of student/learning supports that are especially needed by low income families.

*Risk can be transformed into opportunity
for our youth by turning their non-school
hours into the time of their lives.*

From *A Matter of Time*
Carnegie Task Force on Education

Programs Vary in their Aims and What they Offer

A primary emphasis of school-based after-school programs is on providing a safe environment and support for academics. Some also focus on social-emotional learning, especially with a view to reducing misbehavior at school. Some focus on promoting health and well-being and on offering a variety of extra-curricular enrichment, service, and career/vocation-related activities. For many parents, especially working parents, the programs also provide after-school daycare. Traditionally, summer programs have been concerned with countering the deterioration of student's skills and knowledge, especially among low-income students; the focus for summer has expanded to encompass many of the other aims highlighted above.

In their analysis, Peterson and Fox (2004) suggest the following as key components that make an effective after-school program:

- *Academic offerings* – homework assistance, tutoring, hands-on learning, reading and writing enrichment;
- *Enrichment and accelerated learning* – exposure to visual and performing arts, field trips, character education, critical thinking skills, foreign languages, and technology;
- *Supervised recreation* – organized sports and sports education; and
- *Community service* – connects students to the community.

Kunz and colleagues organize key elements of quality programs into two sets of indicators: *administrative and programmatic*.

“Administrative indicators are necessary for the quality of any program that includes children as participants. Although not sufficient as indicators of quality programs, in order for programs to be implemented with high quality, they must include elements of safety, self-reflection, and organization/management.

The programmatic indicators go beyond administrative indicators and are required for program sustainability. Programmatic indicators include program development, instructional activities, recreational activities, family involvement and accessibility, community partnerships and mentoring, health awareness and opportunity, and active participation. Several of these indicators have a tendency to overlap in program implementation yet are distinct enough to warrant individual discussion. It is important to note that experimental studies were lacking in the literature; therefore, results presented herein are descriptive only.”

Dawes, Pollack, and Sada (2017) emphasize that engagement in after-school is a critical element of effectiveness. In this respect, they stress three general features for advancing engagement: (1) structure, (2) support for efficacy and mattering, and (3) supportive peer relationships.

What Research Hasn't Clarified

Future research can help clarify critical elements for school-based non-school hour programs with a view to improving operation, development, access, engaged participation, and outcomes. Special attention can be given to matters such as (a) barriers to establishing, developing, and sustaining programs, (b) factors interfering with participation and engagement, (c) breadth, content, and delivery processes that enhance variety, appeal, and quality of what's offered, (c) matching interventions with student motivation and capabilities and developing relationships with staff and peers, and (d) dosage considerations (e.g., age of initial participation during elementary school, length of time in a given year and over years consistency of participation, middle school participation).

Also of import is the matter of how such programs interface with a school's agenda. For example, are they woven into or separate from school improvement policy and practice?

Given that cautions have been raised about possible negative consequences related to non-school hour programs, these also need study. Does participation result in some students not having enough independent time for pursuing personal activities and reflection? What is the impact of pressured participation from school and/or home (referral by the school, court-ordered diversion intervention, instances of overparenting)? Who benefits and at what costs? Do costs outweigh benefits for some participants?

In addition to the above considerations, there also are the ever present concerns about improving evaluation methodology (e.g., see Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010).

Given the limited financing for research on these matters, it obviously will be a long time before the body of research is robust enough to be more than suggestive. In the meantime, the consensus is that programs for non-school hours are an essential element in enhancing equity of opportunity for whole child development and addressing barriers to such development.

A Note About the Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program

In the 1990s, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (i.e., the Improving America's School Act of 1994) established the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and increased the role of the federal government in supporting after-school programs. The U.S. Department of Education states:

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. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>

By 2017, the program served around 1.6 million children and federal funding steadily increased (from \$40 million to over \$1 billion). However, in 2017, the President's federal budget proposal threatened to de-fund the program citing some of the negative evaluation findings. Advocates countered the claim that the program was ineffective. For example, long-time after-school program researcher Heather Weiss summed up the views of many by stating: "There is a lot of evidence. Engaging kids in high-quality after-school programs, many of which are supported by 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants, results in kids doing better in school. They're more likely to graduate and to excel in the labor market."

In making its budget recommendations, the House Appropriations Committee recommended \$1,000,000,000 for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which is the level authorized for the program by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Other Sources of Federal Funding

In addition to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, the *Afterschool Alliance* states that there are more than 120 sources of federal funding to help support after-school. "Each of

these funding sources varies to some degree, from the agency awarding the grants to the length of the grants and the types of permissible activities” See <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/fundingFederalAtAGlance.cfm>.

Here are a couple of examples:

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides child care vouchers to subsidize the cost of care for low-income families as well as funds for state child care quality improvement initiatives. States may choose to use these funds to support initiatives to improve the quality and availability of school-age care, such as training programs or capacity-building grants for after-school providers.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/child-care-and-development-fund>

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds, which provide financial support for low-income families, may also be used to support after-school programs in ways consistent with one or more of the four purposes of the TANF program. States may either directly spend TANF funds on after-school programs and initiatives, or states can transfer up to 30 percent of their federal TANF allocation to the CCDF. TANF funds transferred to CCDF are subject to all of the CCDF rules and requirements, and can be used to expand out-of-school time capacity-building and quality-enhancement efforts. Direct TANF spending can provide states with additional flexibility when it comes to after-school care. For example, funds can support services for older youth and can support programs as well as individual subsidies for children.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/programs/tanf/about>

Federal Food and Nutrition Programs may support snacks or meals for after-school program participants. After-school programs may be able to receive reimbursements from one of four different food and nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: the National School Lunch Program: Afternoon Snacks, the Child and Adults Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program and the School Breakfast Program. Reimbursement from these programs can be used to free up funds already spent on meals and snacks to support other program components. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>

For an example of a state's approach to after-school funding, see *North Carolina After-school Funding Streams Overview* from the North Carolina Center for After-school Programs – http://www.nccap.net/media/pages/Funding_Streams_Overview_2011-2013.pdf

Concluding Comments

The importance of supporting the development and sustainability of high quality, whole child-oriented programs for non-school hours seems evident. From our perspective, after-school and non-school days are facets of the many transitions that arise daily and throughout the year for which students often need support. Such transitions often are missed opportunities for promoting healthy development, addressing barriers to learning, and preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Schools, of course, cannot and should not be expected to be the sole provider of non-school hours programs. They, however, do have a major role to play and significant benefits to gain by capitalizing on the opportunities such programs provide to advance a school's mission. Given this, non-school hour programs should be an integral part of school improvement policy and practice and fully embedded into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports at every school (see the National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>).

Appendix A

Summary of Findings from the 2009 Federal Survey of After-School Programs in Public Elementary Schools*

This section presents key findings from the last U.S. survey-count of after-school programs at public elementary schools. See the document for the detailed tables.

- Of the estimated 49,700 public elementary schools, 56 percent reported that one or more after-school programs were physically located at the school in 2008. Forty-six percent reported a fee-based stand-alone day care program, 43 percent reported one or more stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs, and 10 percent reported a 21st CCLC.
- One-tenth of the schools provided the programs as required because they were not making Adequate Yearly Progress (20 percent are city schools, 21 percent are high minority schools, and 23 percent are high poverty schools).
- Eighteen percent reported one formal after-school program, 23 percent reported two programs, 14 percent reported three or more programs, and 44 percent indicated that no formal after-school programs were located at the school.
- Public elementary schools reported an estimated 4 million enrollments in formal after-school programs. These include duplicated enrollments because a student could be counted more than once if he/she enrolled in more than one program. Fee-based stand-alone day care accounted for 34 percent of the total enrollments, stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs accounted for 39 percent, 21st CCLCs accounted for 11 percent, and other types of formal after-school programs accounted for 16 percent.
- Of the schools offering fee-based stand-alone day care, 23 percent indicated the program operated less than 15 hours per week, 52 percent reported operating 15 to 19 hours per week, and one-fourth indicated operating for 20 or more hours per week. Among schools offering various types of stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs, the proportion reporting operating for 5 or more hours per week ranged from 29 to 34 percent. Of schools offering 21st CCLCs, 21 percent indicated operating less than 10 hours per week, 35 percent reported operating 10 to 14 hours per week, and 45 percent reported operating for 15 or more hours per week.
- Forty-one percent of public elementary schools with 21st CCLCs reported that their 21st CCLC provided transportation home for students; 37 percent of the schools with stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs reported providing transportation home; 4 percent of the schools with fee-based stand-alone day care reported providing transportation home; and 24 percent with other types of after-school programs indicated that the school provided transportation home for students.
- Among schools with fee-based stand-alone day care that was operated by the school or district, 38 percent indicated that cost to parents hindered student participation to a moderate or large extent, 23 percent reported that the lack of/inadequate transportation hindered student participation to a moderate or large extent, and 21 percent indicated that insufficient slots hindered student participation to a moderate or large extent. Thirteen percent of the schools with 21st CCLCs reported that inadequate transportation hindered student participation to a moderate or large extent, and 29 percent indicated that insufficient slots hindered student participation to a moderate or large extent.
- Forty-six percent schools reported their students attended fee-based stand alone day care at another location, 22 percent reported that students attended stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs, 3 percent reported that students attended 21st CCLCs, and 8 percent reported that students attended other types of formal after-school programs.

*Parsad, B., and Lewis, L. (2009). After-School Programs in Public Elementary Schools. (NCES 2009–043). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. – <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009043.pdf>

Appendix B

Example of a Large-Scale, Whole Child Oriented After-School Program

The following is excerpted from the evaluation reported in 2007 by CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles entitled: *The Long-term Effects of After-school Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: a Study of the LA's BEST After-school Program*.

LA's BEST is the largest school-based after-school program in Los Angeles County. Its emphasis is on whole child development (i.e., enhancing students' cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development). The mission is to provide engaging settings so that each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for both students and adults; furthermore, each student can be actively engaged in learning activities that is connected to their school and broader community; and most importantly, each student also has the access to extra-curricular activities, academic enhancements, and to qualified, caring adults.

LA's BEST was first implemented in the fall of 1988. The program is under the auspices of the Mayor of Los Angeles, the Superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), a board of directors, and an advisory board consisting of leaders from business, labor, government, education, and the community.

LA's BEST seeks to provide a safe haven for at-risk students in neighborhoods where gang violence, drugs, and other types of anti-social behaviors are common. The program is housed at selected LAUSD elementary schools and is designed for students in kindergarten through fifth/sixth grade. The LA's BEST sites are chosen based on certain criteria, such as low academic performance and their location in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods. For optimal program success and to ensure buy-in from the principals and the school staff, the school principals have to officially write a letter of request for the program to be placed in their school site.

LA's BEST is a free program open to all students in the selected sites on a first come first serve basis. Students who sign up for the program are expected to attend five days a week in order to reap the full benefits of the program offerings. Currently, LA's BEST serves a student population of approximately 30,000 with about 80% Hispanic and about 12% Black elementary students. English language learners comprise of at least half of the student population from most sites. Of this population, the majority's primary language is Spanish; while the other percentage of the English learner population is composed of those who's first language is of Asian/Pacific origin.

Parents often mention homework help and proper supervision as the primary incentives for enrolling their children to the program. Students are also recommended by teachers to attend LA's BEST due to behavioral or academic needs. Students enjoy the program due to its supportive staff and positive environment conducive for academic achievement and engagement of extracurricular activities.

Each individual LA's BEST sites may be autonomous in how they structure their specific programs as long as the site coordinators and staff adhere to the foundational principles of the program. As a result, each site has its distinct characteristics and program themes (such as arts, self-esteem, conflict resolution, technology, etc). Subsequently, relationships with the day school, and levels of school and community supports also tend to vary with each site.

The focus for cognitive development is on concerns such as:

- “• responsibility and positive work habits- through emphasis on the importance of completing assignments, teaching learning strategies and study skills, and providing a learning climate that enforces positive attitudes towards school

- love of learning- through active participation, explorations, and engaging research-based activities
- self-efficacy- through guided experiences, challenging activities, and relationship building between staff and students
- future aspirations-through high expectations, activities that build self-reliance, value of education, collaborations, and critical thinking”

and the focus for physical, social & emotional development:

- “• sense of safety & security- through providing students with a safe and nurturing environment.
- healthy life style-through curriculum and activities that promotes drug and gang prevention, healthy eating habits, and plenty of exercises.
- social competence- through demonstrating and enhancing students’ respect for self and others, and providing students with opportunities to form friendships and develop trust and respect with peers and adults.
- sense of community- through providing students with opportunities to participate in community sponsored events, volunteer in community assignments, and offering field trips to local business and organizations.
- respect for diversity- through role modeling and curriculum that enhances awareness and responsibility to each other within their diverse community.”

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The following list provides an overview of the different educational and enrichment activities offered:

>Cognitive/Academic – This includes homework time, tutoring, academic incentive programs, math and science activities, reading and writing activities, computer activities, and psychological programs addressing conflict resolution skills.

>Recreational – This includes arts and crafts, cooking, games, holiday activities, and sports such as aerobics, karate, and team sports.

>Performing and Visual Arts – This includes choir and music, dance, drama/theater, flag/drill team, museum visits, art camps, etc.

>Health and Nutrition – This includes study of nutrition, healthy habits, and exercises programs such as tennis, skating, and BEST Fit community health fair.

>Community and Cultural – This includes community programs, such as adopt-a-grandparent, and community days; and cultural programs, such as those dedicated to Black history, “Folklorico,” and other cultural holiday celebrations

>Parental Involvement Activities – These activities include:

- celebrations, for example: Halloween Kidfest, Community Jam, and Awards Days;
- programs for children, for example: parents’ volunteering for daily activities and field trip supervision;
- programs for parents, for example: parent workshops and parent education speakers;
- communication/information, for example: open house events, assemblies, and parent-teacher meetings; and
- field trips, for example: a variety of field trips to performing arts events and visits from artists to LA’s BEST sites.

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For more references and resources, see the Center's Quick Finds on:

> *Expanded Learning Opportunities* – After-School & Summer Programs (and their evaluation) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/afterschool.htm>

> *Transitions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

Also see the many resources from the

> *Afterschool Alliance* – <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/researchIssueBriefs.cfm>