Taking a Deeper Dive into Afterschool: Positive Outcomes and Promising Practices

Afterschool Alliance

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Acknowledgments

As the private and public sectors look to increase investment in the afterschool field, it is critical that high-quality evaluations regarding the effectiveness of programs and research on best practices are regularly conducted and readily available. The goal of this report was twofold: first, to examine the role that afterschool programs play to support positive behavior, positive attitudes toward school and improved academic performance among children and second, to explore the afterschool program practices associated with positively influencing students in the aforementioned areas.

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The demand for afterschool programs is great—8.4 million children are currently in an afterschool program, but the parents of more than 18 million children would enroll them in a program if one were available to them. We hope that this report serves as a useful resource to policymakers, business and community leaders, afterschool programs and afterschool advocates in their work to increase funding for quality afterschool programs and help ensure that quality afterschool programs are available to all children.

Introduction

Over the past 15 years, knowledge of the afterschool field has grown substantially. A large body of evidence exists that confirms quality afterschool programs help children become more engaged in school, reduce their likelihood of taking part in at-risk behaviors or acting out in school, and help raise their academic performance.

A greater emphasis on evidence-based practices has increased the number of evaluations of afterschool programs, which in turn has helped parents, educators, business leaders and policy makers alike to see the range of positive outcomes associated with participation in afterschool programs. The growth of afterschool program evaluation has also helped the afterschool field understand the elements of quality afterschool programs, spurring continuous improvements in programs and a growing sophistication of the field.

Yet despite the existing evidence that afterschool programs can positively influence the children participating in their programs and support working families in their communities who are struggling in the current economic climate, there are more than 15 million children who have no adult supervision when the school day ends.[1]

To better understand promising practices in the afterschool field, this report is divided into three sections. The first section—Exploring Outcomes—reviews outcomes associated with participation in afterschool programs, synthesizing high-quality evaluations of 10 afterschool programs—a majority of which employ a quasi-experimental or experimental design. Section II—Promising Practices—steps out from the program level and explores research spanning hundreds of programs to present a summary of promising practices of afterschool programs, analyzing and distilling the findings into key components of quality programs. The third section—Promising Practices in Action—brings the focus back to the program level, linking the afterschool programs highlighted in Section I and the promising practices outlined in Section II. This last section provides specific examples of ways in which the afterschool programs employ each promising practice.

Section I – Exploring Outcomes

At the outset, afterschool programs emerged as a space to provide children with a safe and supervised environment during the out-of-school hours—first, as a place for youth when labor laws changed regarding children's participation in the workforce, and later, to support the needs of working parents.[2] Through the years, afterschool programs have evolved and taken on a larger and more complex role, continuing to provide a safe and supervised environment, but also incorporating academic enrichment, skill building, positive youth development, and adult role models who offer support and guidance. As afterschool programs broaden and tailor their program goals to support the academic, social, emotional and health needs of young people in their communities, numerous studies have been conducted to determine if afterschool programs have the intended impact on the children who take part in their activities. A review of the literature on afterschool program evaluations finds that several positive outcomes are in fact associated with participation in quality afterschool programs.[i] This section divides the outcomes into three categories:

- School engagement, including school day attendance and likelihood of staying in school.
- Behavior, including participation in at-risk behaviors, such as criminal activity, gang involvement, drug and alcohol use, or sexual activity.
- Academic performance, including test scores, grades, graduation rates and college enrollment.

Each category begins with the discussion of a larger scale research study—such as a meta-analysis or multi-program evaluation—and then proceeds to research findings at the individual program level to allow for a closer examination of practices in action in Section III of the paper.

School Engagement

Quality afterschool programs have the ability to excite children about learning, spark their curiosity and connect school-day lessons to their everyday lives. They have the capacity to strengthen students' engagement in school and help them set higher educational aspirations for themselves. And, research has shown this to be true. The "Study of Promising After-School Programs," a landmark study for the out-of-school-time field that spanned 35 quality

[i] Due to the substantial number of afterschool program evaluations that have been written and published over the years, only a select number of afterschool programs evaluations were included in this paper. The evaluations of afterschool programs selected for inclusion in this report were conducted within the past decade; primarily experimental or quasi-experimental in design; and conducted by a research organization, university or an educational consulting firm. With the large number of evaluations on afterschool programs, there are studies that document little to no effect on children's outcomes. However, a strong and significant number of evaluations do show that quality afterschool programs have a positive impact on students' school engagement, behavior and academic performance.

afterschool programs and will be discussed in greater detail in Section II, found that students regularly participating in the programs improved their work habits; demonstrated higher levels of persistence; and saw reductions in reports of misconduct, such as skipping school.[3] The following evaluations look specifically at individual program results, as related to the impact on students' school engagement, expanding on the findings of the "Study of Promising After-School Programs."

After School Matters—Chicago, IL: After School Matters is a program that offers paid internships to Chicago high school students in a variety of areas, such as arts and technology, to help them build a skill set that will benefit them when they enter the workforce. The program also helps motivate students in school by demonstrating that the skills they learn during the school day will help them to succeed in the future. The experimental design evaluation of After School Matters found that students participating in the program had a more positive outlook toward school and were more likely to see the value of school compared to students not participating in the afterschool program.[4] An earlier quasi-experimental study of the afterschool program found that students participating in After School Matters had fewer school day absences than similar non-participating students.[5] Additionally, students who attended After School Matters for more than 27 days saw greater improvements in their school day attendance than students with lower levels of participation. (*For further information on all studies included in this section, see Appendix A*.)

After School Matters (ASM)

Evaluator: Northwestern University and University of Wisconsin-Extension

Evaluation Design: Experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- ASM students see the extrinsic value of school more so than nonparticipants ($p = .007$)
- Compared to the control group, ASM students were able to better focus on tasks, control their emotions and concentrate ($p = .03$)
- ASM students identified with school more so than the control group ($p = .023$)

Evaluator: Chapin Hall Center for Children

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- ASM students had fewer school day absences than nonparticipating peers ($p = n/a$)

AfterZone (AZ)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- AZ students were more likely to share that they felt more connected to school ($p < .05$)
- AZ students missed 1.8 fewer days of school ($p < .05$)
- Students participating in AZ for two years missed almost 25 percent fewer school days ($p < .1$)

AfterZone—Providence, RI: The AfterZone is a network of community-based afterschool programs for middle school youth that offers programming year-round. Activities available through AfterZone are divided into three categories: 1) arts, which include writing, performing and design; 2) skill building, which allows youth to partake in academic enrichment opportunities; and 3) sports.[6] After participating in the AfterZone for one year, students were more likely than their non-participating peers to share that they felt more connected to school. However, there was no change in regard to time spent studying or homework habits. Students participating in the AfterZone also missed 1.8 fewer school days than students who didn't

Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers (ACE)

Evaluator: American Institutes for Research

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- ACE students with low levels of participation saw a 14 percent decrease in the rate of being absent (p = <.001)
- ACE students with high levels of participation saw a 15 percent decrease in the rate of being absent (p = <.001)

Beyond the Bell (BTB)

Evaluator: Educational Resource Consultants

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- 70 percent of BTB participants had a 96 percent or higher school day attendance vs. 56 percent of non-participants (p = n/a)
- 73 percent of students attending the program for more than 33 days had a 96 percent or higher school day attendance vs. 64 percent of students who attended the program six to 13 days (p = n/a)
- LAUSD high school principals gave BTB a 3.53 out of a 4 point scale regarding their satisfaction of the program's effectiveness in developing "student leaders and empowering students to make a difference at their school or in their community" (p = n/a)

participate in the program. Youth who took part in the AfterZone for two years saw even greater gains—missing approximately 25 percent fewer days than their non-participating peers.

21st Century Community Learning Centers— Texas: A quasi-experimental evaluation of Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers, also known as Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE), found that attending the program decreased students' school day absences—both for students who had low levels of participation in the program and students with high levels of participation. Students with low levels of participation in the ACE program decreased the rate of being absent by 14 percent, while students with high levels of participation saw a 15 percent decrease.[7]

Beyond the Bell—Los Angeles, CA: Results from evaluations of Beyond the Bell—an afterschool program that operates throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) serving primarily low-income students—have found that their students are more likely to attend school than non-participating students. A 2012 evaluation of the afterschool program—which provides a wide variety of activities, ranging from academic help to life-skills classes to health and nutrition education—reported that students participating in the program were less likely than their non-participating peers to miss school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 70 percent of Beyond the Bell participants had a 96 percent or higher school day attendance, compared to 56 percent of non-participants. Additionally, students who regularly attended Beyond the Bell were found to have even better school day attendance than students with lower levels of participation at the afterschool program. More than 7 in 10 students (73 percent) attending the program for more than 33 days had a 96 percent or higher school day attendance versus 64 percent of students who attended the program six to 13 days.[8] School administration also saw the value in the afterschool program encouraging student engagement. In a 2013 survey of LAUSD high school principals, they rated their satisfaction of the program's effectiveness in developing "student leaders and empowering students to make a difference at their school or in their community" very high—a 3.53 out of a 4 point scale, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest.[9]

Beacon Community Centers—New York, NY: A Policy Studies Associates, Inc.'s three-year evaluation of the Beacon Community Centers in New York—an initiative to provide middle schoolers with academic enrichment, life skills, career awareness, civic engagement, wellness, culture and art—found that overall, Beacon Center students expressed confidence in their school preparedness and were highly motivated to continue through high school and into higher education. For example, in regard to academic preparedness and attitudes toward school, more than 9 in 10 student participants reported that they tried hard in school (95 percent), did well in school (91 percent) and paid attention in class (93 percent). Close to 9 in 10 students shared that they were always prepared for class (88 percent).[10] Asking participants about their academic aspirations, the 2010 report on the Beacon Centers found that nearly all students wanted to graduate from high school (98 percent) and more than 8 in 10 wanted to graduate from college (83 percent).[11] Additionally, students participating in the afterschool program had strong school-day attendance rates. The average school attendance rate was 94 percent for participants in the 5th-7th grade and 93 percent for participants in the 8th grade.[12]

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Initiative (CORAL)—CA: The CORAL Initiative, located in five cities across California, focuses on providing a balanced literacy program—which includes reading, book discussions, writing, skill development activities, as well as enrichment activities—for kids attending low-performing schools.[13] The evaluation of CORAL found that the afterschool program helped to foster a sense of engagement and belonging among student participants.[14] Almost all students shared that there was an adult at the program who they could talk to, 90 percent of children reported that they felt safe at the program, and more than 7 in 10 children (71 percent) said they felt that they belonged at CORAL. Students who had a very strong sense of belonging in the program also saw a positive change in their

Beacon Community Centers

Evaluator: Policy Studies Associates

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- 95 percent of Beacon students reported that they tried hard in school (p = n/a)
- 91 percent of participants reported that they did well in school (p = n/a)
- 93 percent of participants reported that they paid attention in class (p = n/a)
- 88 percent of participants reports that they were always prepared for class (p = n/a)
- 98 percent of participants wanted to graduate from high school (p = n/a)
- 88 percent of participants wanted to graduate from college (p = n/a)
- The average school attendance rate was 94 percent for participants in the 5th-7th grade and 93 percent for participants in the 8th grade (p = n/a)

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Initiative (CORAL)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- 90 percent of children reported that they felt safe at the program (p = n/a)
- 71 percent said they felt that they belonged at CORAL (p = n/a)
- Comparing results from fall 2004 to spring 2006, students who had a very strong sense of belonging at CORAL:
  - Liked school more (p = .001)
  - Were better able to pay attention and concentrate in class (p = .001)
  - Were more likely to want to go to school (p = .001)

Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)

Evaluator: Palko, L.

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

School Engagement Findings:

- 37 percent of students who regularly attended SHINE and demonstrated a need to improve behavior improved their school day attendance (p = n/a)
- Between 2007 and 2012, an average of 90 percent of SHINE participants attended school regularly and didn't have an attendance problem (p = n/a)
- Between 2007 and 2012, an average of 58 percent of students who regularly attended SHINE maintained "exceptionally good" school day attendance (p = n/a)

feelings toward school and in their ability to pay attention and concentrate in class. However, in regard to the likelihood of missing school and finishing their homework, changes were not significant.

Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)—Nesquehoning, PA: The Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE) afterschool program, located in Schuylkill and Carbon counties in rural Pennsylvania, focuses on engaging students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning and provides them with hands-on and project-based learning opportunities. SHINE is the only out-of-school-time program available in the county, serving students from seven rural school districts and one technical school district over 700 square miles in northeastern Pennsylvania. Close to three-quarters of SHINE's students are low-income and 35 percent were or have been in the Children and Youth or foster care systems. A 2012 evaluation of the program found that of students who regularly attended SHINE and demonstrated a need to improve behavior, more than one-third improved their school day attendance (37 percent).[15] A long-term evaluation of the program, looking at data collected between 2005-2012, found that an average of 58 percent of students who regularly attended SHINE maintained "exceptionally good" school day attendance, where "exceptionally good" attendance was defined as missing nine days or less of school. It also reported that between 2007 and 2012, an average of 90 percent of SHINE participants attended school regularly and didn't have an attendance problem.[16]

Behavior

A 2010 *American Journal of Community Psychology* article examining afterschool programs' ability to develop children's personal and social skills stated, "…many [afterschool programs] were initially created based on the idea that young people's participation in organized activities after school would be beneficial for their personal and social growth."[17] The capability of afterschool programs to support the social and emotional growth of students, and the genesis of afterschool programs to positively influence their personal development, is often lost in the mix in the current environment that is heavily focused on test scores and academic achievement. An often cited meta-analysis by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that looked at 75 studies of 68 afterschool programs found that children participating in the programs saw a significant improvement in their perceptions of themselves, improved positive social behavior and a decrease in problem behaviors.[18] A review of individual program evaluations mirrors CASEL's findings.

After School Matters—Chicago, IL: An experimental design evaluation of After School Matters found that students participating in the afterschool program engaged in at-risk behaviors at a much lower rate than non-participants, specifically being less likely to be suspended from school or selling drugs.[19] Participants were also less likely to take part in other negative behaviors, such as gang activity and fighting, however these findings were not statistically significant.

LA's BEST—Los Angeles, CA: Results from a longitudinal evaluation of LA's BEST—an afterschool program that provides balanced enrichment activities focused on students' academic, social and emotional development in primarily economically disadvantaged communities—shows that students who regularly attended the afterschool program were not only less likely to participate in criminal activities than non-participating students, but students who attended the program sporadically as well.[20] Children who had medium levels of engagement in the program saw a one-third reduction in juvenile crime, and high attending students saw a 50 percent reduction. Researchers also translated the reduction in juvenile crime to $2.50 in costs savings to the city for every dollar of investment.

4-H—National: A longitudinal evaluation of 4-H—a national afterschool program that provides children in elementary school through 12th grade with hands-on learning activities in science, citizenship and healthy living—found that youth participating in their program were more likely to make positive life choices than their non-participating peers.[21] The most recent evaluation of 4-H—the Wave 8 report—looks at 4-H participants who are in the 12th grade and finds that compared to their non-participating peers, youth who take part in 4-H programs are 3.4 times more likely to postpone having sex and are also less likely to use drugs, alcohol or cigarettes.

21st Century Community Learning Centers—Texas: A quasi-experimental evaluation of Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers, also known as Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE), compared students attending the ACE program to non-participants and found that ACE students saw improvements in their school day behavior, and the positive

After School Matters (ASM)

Evaluator: Northwestern University and University of Wisconsin-Extension

Evaluation Design: Experimental

Behavior Findings:

- ASM students are less likely to be suspended from school than the control group ($p = .046$)
- ASM students are less likely to sell drugs than the control group ($p = .051$)

LA's BEST

Evaluator: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing; UCLA

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- Students in LA's BEST with high levels of engagement were 50 percent less likely to commit a crime ($p < .05$)
- Students in LA's BEST with medium levels of engagement were 30 percent less likely to commit a crime ($p < .05$)

4-H

Evaluator: Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- 4-H youth are 3.4 times more likely to postpone having sex ($p = <.05$)
- 4-H youth are less likely use drugs, alcohol and cigarettes ($p = n/a$)
- 4-H girls are .5 times less likely to use drugs than non 4-H girls ($p = <.05$)

Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers (ACE)

Evaluator: American Institutes for Research

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- Students in the ACE program for 30 days or more saw a 6 percent decrease in their disciplinary incidents compared to non-participants (p = <.001)
- Students in the ACE program for 60 days or more saw an 11 percent decrease in their disciplinary incidents compared to non-participants (p = <.001)

AfterZone (AZ)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- AZ students had stronger social skills and were able to interact better with their peers than non-participants (p < .10)

Beacon Community Centers

Evaluator: Policy Studies Associates

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- 77 percent of Beacon students said that the Beacon Center helped them to learn about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and other risky activities (p = n/a)
- 80 percent of Beacon students stated the Beacon was either "very helpful" or "pretty helpful" to avoid drug use (p = n/a)
- 74 percent said that in regards to avoid fighting, the Beacon was "very helpful" or "pretty helpful" (p = n/a)

Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)

Evaluator: Palko, L.

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

Behavior Findings:

- 89 percent of parents reported they saw improvements in their child's overall behavior (p = n/a)

impact grew the longer students took part in the program. Students participating in the ACE program for 30 days or more saw a 6 percent decrease in their disciplinary incidents, compared to their non-participating peers. Students taking part in the ACE program for 60 days or more saw an even greater decrease in disciplinary incidents—a decrease of 11 percent.[22]

AfterZone—Providence, RI: The evaluation of the AfterZone found that participants had stronger social skills and were able to interact better with their peers than non-participants, however, there were no differences found when looking at misconduct, conflict management and the ability of students to prepare for the future.

Beacon Community Centers—New York, NY: The final evaluation of New York City's Beacon Community Centers found that more than 3 in 4 students (77 percent) participating in the program said that the Beacon Center helped them to learn about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and other risky activities, with almost half (49 percent) reporting that they "agreed a lot" with the statement.[23] An earlier study of the program found that 80 percent of students who took part in the interviews reported that in regard to avoiding drug use, the Beacon was either "very helpful" or "pretty helpful," and 74 percent said that in regard to avoiding fighting, the Beacon was "very helpful" or "pretty helpful."[24]

SHINE—Nesquehoning, PA: Parent surveys from SHINE's 2012 evaluation revealed that parents recognized a positive change in their child's behavior. Close to 9 in 10 parents reported that they saw improvements in their child's overall behavior.[25]

Academic Performance

In addition to supporting a child's development and sense of worth, building social skills, and igniting his or her passion for learning, afterschool programs have the ability to positively impact a child's academic performance. Both the CASEL meta-analysis and the "Study of Promising After-School Programs" discussed above also find that students participating in quality afterschool programs show gains in their school-day performance. CASEL's meta-analysis finds that youth attending afterschool programs adhering to the practice of SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit)[ii] improved their school grades and their test scores,[26] while the "Study of Promising After-School Programs" found that students participating in quality afterschool programs saw gains in their math test scores compared to non-participating youth.[27] An experimental design evaluation by David Shernoff that looked at middle school students in eight afterschool programs in three Midwestern states found that students attending the afterschool programs had higher English grades than their peers who didn't participate in an afterschool program.[28] There are a number of additional evaluations in the field that also demonstrate the ability of afterschool programs to support the learning that takes place during the school day and help boost students' academic performance and likelihood of graduating from high school—especially students who have fallen behind in school and need the extra support and mentoring.

Higher Achievement—Washington, D.C.: An evaluation of Higher Achievement in Washington, D.C.—a long-term and academically focused afterschool program aimed at middle schoolers—found that after two years in the program, students showed significant academic gains. Participants saw much greater improvements in their reading and problem-solving scores than students not participating in the program.[29] A follow-up evaluation of the program found that although Higher Achievement youth and their non-participating peers performed similarly after one year, after two years, Higher Achievement youth performed better on standardized test scores in math problem-solving and reading comprehension.[30]

Higher Achievement (HA)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Experimental

Academic Findings:

- HA students improved their reading scores ($p = .05$)
- HA students saw greater gains on their problem-solving scores ($p = .05$)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures & University of Texas at Austin

Evaluation Design: Experimental

Academic Findings:

- HA students performed better on their reading comprehension standardized test scores ($p < .1$)
- HA students performed better on their math problem-solving standardized test scores ($p < .05$)

[ii] SAFE is discussed in further detail in Section II.

Save the Children (STC)

Evaluator: Policy Studies Associates

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Academic Findings:

- STC participants gained an equivalent of three months of additional schooling ($p < .05$)
- STC participants read more books ($p < .05$)
- STC participants read more difficult books ($p < .05$)
- STC participants made greater gains on standardized reading assessments ($p < .05$)

LA's BEST

Evaluator: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing; UCLA

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Academic Findings:

- Students in LA's BEST for at least three years were less likely to dropout than non-participants, 1999-2000 ($p <.01$), 2000-2001 ($p = <.001$), 2001-2002 ($p , .001$), 2002-2003 ($p <.01$)
- Students in LA's BEST for at least two years had close to a 14 percent lower dropout rate than non-participants (not statistically significant)

AfterZone (AZ)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Academic Findings:

- The average math GPA of AZ students was higher than non-participants ($p < .05$)
- The average ELA GPA of AZ students was higher than non-participants (not statistically significant)
- The average science GPA of AZ students was higher than non-participants (not statistically significant)

Save the Children—National: Save the Children is an afterschool program that provides literacy support to students in kindergarten through sixth grade who struggle with reading. It is located in high-poverty rural areas across the U.S., in states including Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, South Carolina and Tennessee. The evaluation of Save the Children looked at students in grades 2 through 6 participating in the Developing Readers (DR) program in 18 schools across the country and found that participants made significant gains in their literacy performance.[31] Comparing students participating in the afterschool program to matched non-participants, the study found that on average, children participating in Save the Children gained an equivalent of three months of additional schooling, read more books, read more difficult books and made greater gains on standardized reading assessments.

LA's BEST—Los Angeles, CA: The evaluation of LA's BEST found that children participating in the afterschool program were less likely to drop out of school than students who did not participate. The study also found that students' dropout rates decreased even further the longer students were involved in the program. Students who participated in the program for at least two years had close to 14 percent lower dropout rates than non-participants. The difference was even greater between students who were involved in the program for at least three years and non-participants.[32]

AfterZone—Providence, RI: Students who participated in the AfterZone for two years reported higher academic scores than students not participating in the program. For example, the average math grade point average (GPA) of AfterZone students was a B- compared to the C+ average of their non-participating peers. AfterZone participants also received higher English-language arts (ELA) and science GPAs than students not participating in the program, however the differences were not statistically significant.[33]

21st Century Community Learning Centers—Texas: The evaluation of ACE found that the program positively impacted students' school-day performance. Students attending the program—both students with low levels and high levels of participation in the program—were more likely to be promoted to the next grade. The likelihood of being promoted to the next grade increased by 43 percent for students with low levels of participation in the program, and 47 percent for students with high levels of participation.[34] Additionally, ACE students saw improvements in their Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading and math scores.

Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers (ACE)

Evaluator: American Institutes for Research

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Academic Findings:

- Students with low levels of participation increased the likelihood of being promoted to the next grade by 43 percent (p = <.001)
- Students with high levels of participation increased the likelihood of being promoted to the next grade by 47 percent (p = <.001)
- Compared to non-participants, ACE students with low and high levels of participation improved their TAKS-ELA/Reading scores (p = <.001)
- Compared to non-participants, ACE students with low and high levels of participation improved their TAKS-Math scores (p = <.001)

Beyond the Bell—Los Angeles, CA: The 2013 evaluation of Beyond the Bell found that in addition to promoting improved attendance at school, as discussed in the "School Engagement" section, students participating in the afterschool program were also more likely to graduate than their peers not participating in the program. The graduation rate of seniors who attended the program at least one day during each year of high school was 90 percent, compared to 86 percent of non-participating students.[35] Beyond the Bell students also performed better on their California Standards Test (CST) scores and the California High School Exit Exams (CAHSEE) in English-language arts (ELA) and math. For the 2011-2012 school year, the mean ELA score for Beyond the Bell participants on the CST was six points higher than non-participants (337 vs. 331) and the mean CST math score was three points higher (296 vs. 293). Beyond the Bell students were also more likely to pass the CAHSEE both in ELA and math than students not participating in the program. Close to 8 in 10 students (79 percent) in the afterschool program passed the CAHSEE in ELA compared to 73 percent of their non-participating peers, and 81 percent of Beyond the Bell students passed the math CAHSEE compared to 73 percent of students not in the program.[36]

Beyond the Bell (BTB)

Evaluator: Educational Resource Consultants

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental

Academic Findings:

- The graduation rate of seniors who attended the program at least one day during each year of high school was 90 percent vs. 86 percent of non-participating students (p = n/a)
- The mean score for BTB participants in ELA on the CST was six points higher than non-participants and the mean CST math score was three points higher (p = n/a)
- 79 percent of BTB students passed the CAHSEE in ELA vs. 73 percent of non-participants (p = n/a)
- 81 percent of BTB students passed the math CAHSEE compared to 73 percent of students not in the program (p = n/a)

Beacon Community Centers

Evaluator: Policy Studies Associates

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

Academic Findings:

- Beacon students believed that the program:
  - Helped them finish their homework more often (81 percent),
  - Get better grades (78 percent) and
  - Helped them to feel better about their school work (78 percent) (p = n/a, all)

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Initiative (CORAL)

Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

Academic Findings:

- English language learners' average grade-level reading gain between fall 2004 and spring 2006 was 1.76 (p = n/a)
- CORAL's English proficient students' average grade-level reading gain between fall 2004 and spring 2006 was 1.61 (p = n/a)

Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)

Evaluator: Palko, L.

Evaluation Design: Non-experimental

Academic Findings:

- The average rate of promotion to the next grade level for SHINE students was 96 percent (p = n/a)
- 94 percent of parents agreed that their child had improved in reading (p = n/a)
- 95 percent of parents agreed that their child had improved in math (p = n/a)
- Between 2007 and 2012, between 79-90 percent of SHINE students received a satisfactory or passing grade in reading (p = n/a)
- Between 2007 and 2012, between 79-92 percent received a satisfactory or passing grade in math (p = n/a)

Beacon Community Centers—New York, NY: Students involved in the Beacon Center believed that the program supported their academic success. In the final report on the Beacon Centers, 81 percent of students believed that the Beacon helped them finish their homework more often, 78 percent said that they believed the Beacon helped them get better grades and more than 3 in 4 students shared that the Beacon helped them to feel better about their school work (78 percent).[37]

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Initiative (CORAL)—CA: An evaluation of the CORAL afterschool programs found that student participants designated as English language learners made the same gains in reading as their peers who were further ahead in reading.[38]

Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)—Nesquehoning, PA: Students participating in the SHINE afterschool program—almost all of whom were referred to the program for academic reasons and a strong majority who were determined to have remedial needs—also saw improvements in their academic performance. The 2012 evaluation of the program found that close to three-quarters of students who regularly attended SHINE and showed a need for remediation made improvements in their reading and math skills.[39] Parents also saw their child make academic progress, with almost all parents agreeing that their child had improved in reading (94 percent) and math (95 percent). The long-term evaluation of SHINE saw similar positive results. Between 2006 and 2012, students participating in SHINE who improved their academic performance ranged from 71-83 percent. Between 2007 and 2012, between 79-90 percent of SHINE students received a satisfactory or passing grade in reading and between 79-92 percent received a satisfactory or passing grade in math. The long-term evaluation of SHINE also found that the average rate of promotion to the next grade level for SHINE students was 96 percent.[40]

Closing

As evidenced above, quality afterschool programs can boost the overall well-being of children and youth: nurturing their intellectual curiosity, developing them into lifelong learners, helping them become more self-confident and self-aware, supporting them as they navigate friendships and relationships, and improving their performance in and attitude toward school. In his 2010 evaluation of afterschool programs, Shernoff states, "Because the effects of afterschool program participation on quality of experience, social competence, and academic performance were generally positive and suggest the importance of program quality, this study supports recommendations for increasing the opportunities of youth to participate in high-quality programs offering such activities."[41] As different as afterschool programs may look from one another, the quality of an afterschool program is fundamental to make certain that they are using their full capabilities to have a positive impact on their students and support their students' success. While afterschool programs may not look alike, research has found that there are common practices among afterschool programs that are effective in supporting the success of their students, which is the focus of the next section, Promising Practices.

Section II – Promising Practices

As discussed in Section I, a substantial body of evidence exists documenting the breadth of positive outcomes for children and youth participating in quality afterschool programs—from gains in test scores to improved behavior to higher levels of self-confidence. As more research emerges demonstrating the benefits of afterschool programs, research questions in the afterschool field have shifted from *if* afterschool programs impact youth to *why* afterschool programs impact youth.[42]

While there is large consensus that the supports, opportunities and experiences provided by afterschool programs differ depending on the child, location and needs of the community, a handful of overarching practices come up repeatedly in the literature examining promising afterschool programs. This section moves away from the program-level evaluations, reviewing and distilling larger-scale research evaluations of hundreds of programs to find the promising practices that effective afterschool programs share. The key factors for promising program quality have been separated into four categories:

1) Intentional programming/Strong program design
2) Staff quality
3) Effective partnerships
4) Program evaluation and improvement

> *With the knowledge that we now have, we should spend time and energy developing strategies, supports, policies and funding for . . . (quality) afterschool and summer learning programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other similar initiatives . . . rather than continue to argue whether they make a positive difference.*
>
> — *Joseph Durlak and Roger Weissberg, Researchers*

Intentional Programming/Strong Program Design

Structured programming that is intentional and specifically targets clear goals and outcomes is a central component of numerous studies examining the features of quality afterschool programs.[43] In particular, the previously cited landmark "Study of Promising After-School Programs" and the CASEL meta-analysis call attention to the importance of intentionality and program design. The promising programs study states, "Our theory of change emphasizes that structural and institutional features provide the foundation on which promising after-school programs can build a meaningful and enriching set of activities for youth."[44] An instrumental finding of the CASEL meta-analysis of 75 afterschool program studies is that four practices associated with intentional program design are characteristics that positively impact program participants' academics, behavior and self-perceptions.[45] The key aspect of each practice spells out the acronym SAFE, which represents:

Sequenced — Coordinating and implementing activities that are broken down and sequenced to allow youth to learn, develop, connect to and master a specific set of skills.

Active — Employing teaching strategies that use active forms of learning and engage students in the learning process through hands-on exercises.

Focused — Focusing appropriate time and resources on student instruction and skill development.

Explicit — Developing clear and explicit learning goals that are relayed to youth in well-defined and specific terms.

The combination of all four practices—SAFE—is what the researchers found to affect positive change among youth; a case where the whole equates to more than the sum of its parts. Taken separately, each practice has its strengths, but is not an effective approach on its own.[46] The practices described above significantly overlap with effective strategies discussed in other studies examining promising practices that fall under the category of intentional program design. When considering the strategies outlined below, it is important to think of intentional program design as a process rather than standalone steps.

SAFE program practices support positive student outcomes:

- Using a **S**equenced set of activities that are broken down and arranged to allow youth to learn, develop, connect to and master a specific set of skills.
- Employing **A**ctive forms of learning and engaging students in the learning process through hands-on exercises.
- **F**ocusing appropriate time and resources on student instruction and skill development.
- Developing **E**xplicit learning goals that are relayed to youth in well-defined and specific terms.

Activity variation (Active)

A strong suit of afterschool programs is their ability to offer a variety of activities to bolster student engagement and improve participant outcomes—mixing academics, hands-on exercises, interest-based learning and social skills-building. Similar to the CASEL meta-analysis, research has found that students see academic and developmental gains when afterschool programs diversify the types of activities youth are able to take part in. In a 2010 longitudinal study of three afterschool programs, researchers found that improved math grades and work habits were associated with afterschool program activities that were diverse in nature and age appropriate.[47] Additionally, a study of The After-School Corporation (TASC) found that youth participants made gains in their English language-arts (ELA) and math test scores when programs combined academics with multidisciplinary activities, as well as when programs included physical fitness activities.[48]

Activities that are challenging and relevant to youth have also emerged as characteristics associated with high-quality programs. A study of children from eight Midwest afterschool programs found that when students felt more challenged and were more engaged in the programs' activities, they received higher English and math grades.[49]

Dosage (Focused)

Sufficient time participating in an afterschool program—which includes both attendance in a program and engagement in the program's activities—is a critical piece of a program's ability to have a positive influence on youth participants.[50] An evaluation of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth found that students participating in the program for at least two years reported better experiences in school, greater confidence in their academic ability and more positive attitudes toward school than their peers who were in their first year of the program.[51]

Program organization (Sequenced and Explicit)

A program's ability to establish clear goals and develop well-defined activities that align with the goals and mission of the organization is another important component of program quality. For instance, an evaluation of the James Irvine Foundation's Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) sites found that when programs established specific goals, developing focused activities and deciding on the staff necessary to carry out the activities subsequently followed, resulting in higher quality programming.[52] Similarly, a study of TASC found that students saw greater gains in their math and ELA test scores when the site coordinator required staff to submit lesson plans compared to students in programs where the coordinator did not require lesson plans.[53]

In SEDL's "Building and Managing Quality Afterschool Programs," a five year study examining high-quality afterschool programs, program organization and academic programming practices were two focus areas considered necessary for successful and effective afterschool programs. Practices under program organization included strong leadership who can, among other things, clearly convey the program's mission and goals to staff, children and families; while academic programming practices included activities aligned with the goals of the organization and designed with specific goals in mind for students participating in the program to achieve.[54]

Staff Quality

Much like the studies on students' school day performance that have found teacher quality to have a substantial effect,[55] studies of afterschool programs link the ability of a program to positively impact student outcomes with the capabilities of program staff. [56]

Positive relationships

Afterschool program staff are mentors, role models and support systems for children and youth attending afterschool programs. Positive afterschool program staff-student relationships create an environment in which students feel safe and supported, fostering student growth socially, emotionally and academically.[57] Positive relationships between program staff and program participants have been shown to improve students' academic performance [58] and engagement in school, as well as lead to higher educational and future aspirations.[59]

Additionally, a study that focused on specific afterschool program characteristics found that children in programs that established more positive program staff-child relationships saw greater gains in their reading and math grades compared to children in programs where relationships were not viewed as positively. Positive associations with staff interaction were also linked to improvement in students' social skills.[60]

A review of high-quality programs highlighted their ability to create a supportive environment between staff and participants—where an open dialogue and interest in students' lives was encouraged—as a common factor found across most programs.[61] A 2004 Policy Studies Associates, Inc. report evaluating TASC programs also found positive effects when the majority of program staff spoke a second language and when more than 75 percent of program staff was younger than 35 years of age.[62] These findings align with the emphasis on the ability of staff to connect with students and form a positive relationship.

At the opposite side of the spectrum, programs that punish their participants for their actions and respond in a negative fashion to their behavior have been found to be of low quality[63] and have a negative effect on student outcomes.[64] Research has also discovered that staffing issues—such as programs with higher student-to-staff ratios and larger group sizes—have a negative effect on a participant's view of the program, and increases the number of problematic interactions.[65]

"Good intentions are not enough. Although money is an issue, the most important resources in an afterschool setting are the people (staff and youth), and their talents and values should be considered in the change process. If you want to influence real-world practices, you must make a concerted effort to inform and to collaborate with front-line providers and to support and to problem solve with them as new programs or practices are introduced into their setting."

– Joseph Durlak, Loyola University, Chicago

Prepared staff

Along the same vein of the need for staff to establish positive relationships with students in the program is the importance of staff's ability to manage and respond in a productive manner to issues that may take place in the program. A longitudinal study of 12 youth programs in Illinois found that how well program staff handled difficult situations—responding to situations positively and emphasizing youth engagement—was one aspect of an effective program.[66] Professional development, low staff turnover and staff satisfaction also factor into staff preparedness.[67] For example, in a review of high-quality programs, researchers found that the staff tended to stay on longer because they felt supported and appreciated, and were given professional development opportunities. These program aspects in turn contributed to staffs' ability to work well with and develop positive relationships with the students.[68]

High quality staff

Staff education and experience factor highly into the quality of afterschool programs. Multiple evaluations by Policy Studies Associates, Inc. found positive correlations between the experience of program staff and student outcomes. For example, student participants saw academic gains in both reading and math when the afterschool program coordinator had a teaching certification and when an education specialist was on staff.[69] A 2011 report that reviewed quality afterschool programs found that the programs primarily employed staff with a high educational background and with significant experience in the afterschool field. More than 7 in 10 program staff had a bachelor's degree or higher (47 percent bachelor's degree, 24 percent master's degree).[70] The report also found that two-thirds of staff had more than three years of afterschool work experience and close to 1 in 4 staff has six years of experience or more.[71] Similarly, in another review of high-quality programs, researchers found that program directors and activity leaders were often well-educated and had ample experience working with youth.[72]

Effective Partnerships

Communities, families and schools are valuable assets, each one bringing unique, yet complementary resources that benefit afterschool programs. Afterschool programs that recognize the value of strong partnerships and nurture and develop meaningful relationships can leverage the resources that spring from these partnerships.

School partnerships

When a dialogue and culture of sharing is established between a student's school and his or her afterschool program, that program is better able to align its programming and tailor its curriculum to complement the learning that takes place during the school day. Programs can use their partnerships with schools to help improve their students' academic performance by building on students' school-day lessons, deliver resources more efficiently—gaining insight from schools and school staff to target students who are most in need of help—and leverage school day staff's expertise to enhance program content and delivery.

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has examined the evidence implicating the important role positive relationships between schools and afterschool programs can play. HFRP includes partnering with schools as a practice that can lead to improved student engagement in school and positive attitudes toward school, smarter targeting of resources, and additional support for the afterschool program and program staff in their 2008 brief, "After School Programs in the 21st Century - Their Potential and What It Takes to Achieve It,"[73] and their 2010 paper, "Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports."[74] A 2011 Policy Studies Associates, Inc. report also reveals the benefits that stem from strong relationships between schools and afterschool programs, providing examples from interviews with programs that were a part of the New York City DYCD Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth initiative.[75] Additionally, a review of quality afterschool programs found that partnerships between schools and afterschool programs were related to

the programs' success improving students' academic achievement, with a majority of program directors meeting with the school principal at least two or three times per month and more than one-third of activity leaders communicating almost weekly with school-day staff.[76]

Community partnerships

Just as afterschool programs are a part of the ecology of learning, so are community organizations. Community partnerships can connect youth to issues that are pertinent to their neighborhood, bring outside expertise and real-world relevance to subjects students in afterschool programs are engaged in, and connect students to new and different learning experiences that they may not be exposed to during the school day. A brief that reviewed a decade of research on afterschool programs included partnerships with community organizations as a critical component of a successful afterschool program.[77] Similarly, the practice of developing relationships with partners in the community has been included in guides to help build quality afterschool programs, such as SEDL's practitioner's guide based on a five-year study examining high-quality afterschool programs that were associated with increasing their students' academic achievement.[78]

Relationships with community organizations can also provide afterschool programs with added resources, such as equipment, volunteers and donations—both in-kind and monetary.[79]

> *"Partnerships play a key role in financing and sustaining out-of-school-time programs in rural communities. They can provide both financial and in-kind resources to support daily operations. Partnerships can also increase program visibility, foster greater collaboration, make better use of existing resources, and develop public will for out-of-school-time programming within the community."*
>
> — *The Finance Project*

Family partnerships

Family engagement in their child's education is an integral component to support student growth and success. Multiple benefits are associated with parent engagement—such as improved academic performance, attendance and graduation rates—and are documented in a number of studies.[80] Partnerships established between afterschool programs and families are mutually beneficial, as afterschool programs can raise overall family engagement in their child's education, act as a bridge between families and schools, and provide wraparound services to families—such as counseling, adult education classes and connecting them to social services.[81] On the other side of the equation, families can help improve student attendance at and engagement in afterschool programs and support afterschool program quality.[82]

In particular, a strong relationship between families and programs is especially important in underserved populations. As discussed by Delia Pompa, National Council of La Raza's senior vice president of programs, afterschool programs that work closely with parents and families in Latino communities can leverage the relationship to help update families on how their child is doing during the school day, help them understand the benefits—academic support, snacks and

meals, and counseling—their children receive when attending the program, and arm parents with the knowledge and tools they need to support their child's academic success.[83]

Program Evaluation and Improvement

Ongoing program evaluation and improvement is a promising practice that helps hold programs accountable to high quality standards; allows programs to reflect, reassess, recalibrate and further develop and improve upon their program content and service delivery; and contributes to the knowledge base of the afterschool field as a whole. Authors Joseph A. Durlak, et. al. stated "Assessing program implementation is now viewed as an essential feature of a program evaluation and should become part and parcel of all [afterschool program] outcome research."[84]

Connecting program quality to youth outcomes—the practice of collecting program data, program self-assessment, and program improvement based on findings—is gaining traction in the afterschool field. For example, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST) at the University of California, Los Angeles included continuous program evaluation and improvement as a part of their CRESST Afterschool Program Quality Model.[85] The federal government also places an importance on evaluation, allowing 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees to use a portion of their funding for evaluation efforts.

Research has found that programs implementing ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts have seen positive results. The CORAL Initiative in California saw improvements in program quality and gains in students' reading comprehension after instituting a continuous improvement cycle. Their ongoing program assessment included staff training and professional development, then data collection, then program monitoring and staff coaching, and finally data analysis. The cycle started over again with training personnel and staff development based on findings from the data.[86]

Additionally, the use of ongoing program assessment loops back into the promising practices discussed above. In a review of nine youth development program quality assessment tools, Nicole Yohalem and Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom found the commonality among the assessment tools was that each examine and measure the following practices to some degree:

- Connections between youth participants and program staff,
- Program environment,
- Program participant and staff engagement in program activities,
- Staff ability to establish expectations and responses to positive and negative participant behavior,
- Availability of intentional learning activities that will help participants develop specific skills, and
- Program organization and curriculum structure.[87]

Other practices included in some, but not all, assessment tools related to connections to community and families, staffing issues, such as staff quality and staff-to-student ratios, youth leadership and participation, and program management.

The question has been raised of whether programs will be able to improve their quality if a commitment to ongoing program assessment is not made.[88] In an article offering recommendations to help the afterschool field continue to make progress in supporting student success, the authors advocated for investment in designing tools to measure program quality; implementation and testing of those tools; and funding dedicated to support staff, programs, and the infrastructure and research necessary for continuous improvement efforts.[89]

Closing

The above practices are a synthesis of the research on the characteristics that embody quality afterschool programs. However, in line with the discussion of program evaluation and improvement, the ability of afterschool programs to carry out each practice satisfactorily is an ongoing and iterative process. As stated by researcher Robert Granger, "In the afterschool field, it is tempting to characterize a program as being of high or of low quality…it is more appropriate to consider quality as something that varies within a program, with many programs…being more effective in one area than another."[90] Moving forward, arming the afterschool field with additional information on promising practices—what they are, how to adopt them and most importantly how to implement them—is a necessary endeavor to help ensure that the children in afterschool programs are receiving the best supports and care available. To better understand how effective afterschool programs are implementing promising practices, Section III takes the individual programs discussed in Section I and provides a detailed look at how they each carry out promising practices.

> *"Building an effort to improve the quality of existing programs means investing in developing standards and benchmarks that emphasize capacity building at the systems level….we know that this capacity building must include evaluation, professional development, and strategies for compensation."*
>
> — *Heather Weiss, director, Harvard Family Research Project*

Section III – Promising Practices in Action

To provide greater insight into the way in which promising practices can be implemented in afterschool programs, this section provides specific examples that describe how programs are carrying out the practices described in Section II. As promising afterschool program practices are inherently interlinked with afterschool programs that are effective in helping engage their students in school, empowering them to make the right decisions and improving their performance in school, the programs described in Section I will be used to provide detailed examples of promising practices in action.

Activity Variation

Beyond the Bell is an example of an afterschool program that offers children a wide range of activities to participate in, balancing academics, hands-on activities and social skill building. Their programs, located throughout Los Angeles, California, include three components: an academic tutorial program, a recreational program and an enrichment program. The academic tutorial program supports students in a variety of academic subjects—such as reading, math, writing, science and social studies—and their high school afterschool program offers college preparation and job readiness support. Students are able to take part in sports, dance and aerobics through the recreational program, and they can participate in life skills, art, cooking and music classes through the enrichment program.[91]

After School Matters employs active forms of learning through hands-on activities to engage their students. The afterschool program provides apprenticeships for high school students across Chicago, Illinois, in a wide range of fields, including technology, the arts and sports. Instructors, who are experts in the respective apprenticeship fields, work with youth to help them develop not only the technical skills they will need, but the critical thinking, communication, social and teamwork skills they will need in the workplace.[92] The apprenticeships immerse students in proactive learning that is challenging and structured to accomplish a task. For instance, students can join the Junior Research Scientists program and take part in research projects ranging from examining the growth rate and spread of E. coli bacteria to finding renewable materials that could serve as alternative energy sources.[93]

Dosage

Higher Achievement is a rigorous afterschool and summer learning program that provides intensive academic enrichment to their scholars and requires a high level of commitment in return. Students participating in Higher Achievement must commit to its four-year program, which takes place from 5th through 8th grade. Higher Achievement's *Afterschool Academy* meets three times a week during the school year for four and a half hours after school and its *Summer Academy* meets five days a week, eight hours a day, for six weeks.[94] Students are expected to attend every session during their four years in the program. The program enforces

a strict attendance policy, prohibiting students who miss 25 percent of the program's required days from participating in the program through the end of the semester. In order to return to the program the following semester, students must attend a conference with their family and the center's director, where the student's commitment to participating through the eighth grade will be discussed.[95]

Program Organization

A program's ability to establish clear goals and develop well-defined activities that align with the goals and mission of the organization is an important component of program quality. The goal of **Save the Children's** literacy program is very specific—to improve the reading skills of students in poor rural areas who are struggling.[96] The program defines what they deem as "struggling" in reading in order to tailor their efforts even further. Save the Children employs literacy activities that are designed to align with their mission to improve struggling students' reading proficiency. Daily program activities include guided independent reading practice and support to build literacy fluency, which consists of reading text out loud repeatedly to practice unfamiliar words and phrasing of text, read-alouds, and small group reading tutorials. Each activity is allocated a specific amount of time within the program's Developing Readers literacy block. Save the Children administers reading quizzes and reading assessments to their students to track their progress and provide support in areas where they continue to struggle.

Site visits to various **Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE)** found both high- and low-quality activities.[97] High-quality activities were structured in a way that was explicit to students, students understood the purpose of the activity, the lessons were planned in advance, materials were ready for students, and students knew the timeframe of the project and therefore had an understanding of how they would use their time. On the other hand, observations of students participating in low-quality activities saw that the staff did not clearly explain the intent of the exercise, did not have materials ready for students, or did not time the activity well. The final recommendations in the ACE program evaluation outlined the importance of program quality, including the characteristics of both high- and low-quality activities to help guide future program design and implementation.

Positive Relationships

One-on-one positive and meaningful interactions between students and staff create a supportive and nurturing environment. Instructors for **After School Matters** work closely with students, asking them to perform and complete tasks that build on the previous skill or lesson learned, providing them with real-time feedback. Instructors help their students with their work, but also encourage students to have the self-confidence to make decisions on their own and take ownership of their project.[98]

Students at the **Beacon Center** shared that the staff treated them with respect, valued their opinion, cared about their well-being, and believed in their intelligence and abilities.[99] They also shared that they felt they could talk to the staff about their problems. Other activities at

the Beacon Center that helped foster positive relationships include staff interacting personally with students, using positive behavior management techniques, and being fair and inclusive.

Prepared Staff

Dedication to staff development is an integral part of employing quality staff and helping staff build positive relationships with students. The **New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth** (OST) initiative provides technical assistance and professional development workshops through the Partnership for After-School Education.[100] Staff meetings, internal staff orientations and external workshops are used as additional sources of professional development.

Higher Achievement in Washington, D.C., also understands the importance of providing their staff with the support they need. New hires have a number of trainings over their first 90 days with the organization to help ready them for their work with students.[101] Summer staff take part in a seven-day orientation before they are placed in classrooms with students.

> *"The challenge is more trying to get staff to think like the students think if we are going to have a program that's successful. Staff don't always get that. The staff needs to learn to speak to middle school kids. They aren't elementary students and they aren't high school students. You have to approach them differently. You can't make them do anything. The staff needs to think, how did I think at that age?"*
>
> — *Beacon Community Center Director*

High Quality Staff

The **Beacon Community Centers**, located throughout New York City, are extremely intentional in their staff hiring and in assigning staff member responsibilities.[102] College students and certified teachers are hired to design, implement and lead academic activities. Specialists, such as artists and dancers, are responsible for content-specific activities. A number of Beacon Centers also employ a master teacher or an educational specialist, in addition to program staff, to assist with curriculum development.

Effective School Partnerships

The **Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)** afterschool program in rural Pennsylvania collaborates with school day teachers to align their programming with school day lessons and target their resources to best support the needs of their students.[103] SHINE program staff communicate regularly with school day teachers to help develop each student's individualized Instructional Plan. The plan—which is constantly updated and revised based on classroom teacher and guidance counselor input—allows the afterschool program to tailor their activities

to help students who may be struggling in a certain academic area, or address a specific behavior issue. Surveys are also sent to classroom teachers to track SHINE students' progress in homework completion, classroom behavior and academic performance.

SHINE works closely with schools to monitor the school day attendance of the children who attend their program. The program put in place early warning and prevention measures to decrease the chance of students dropping out of school, concentrating largely on student attendance rates. In addition to collecting academic records, assessments and report cards of students attending the afterschool program, SHINE receives attendance reports from the school, keeping alert for chronic absenteeism.[iii]

Effective Community Partnerships

4-H was established to help youth and their families learn the skills necessary to become leaders and innovative thinkers in their communities. The weight placed on community and connecting young people to their surroundings is embodied in the 4-H pledge:

> *I pledge my head to clearer thinking,*
>
> *My heart to greater loyalty,*
>
> *My hands to larger service,*
>
> *And my health to better living,*
>
> *For my club, my community, my country, and my world.*

Community service and citizenship is one of 4-H's key program areas, with the goal of encouraging participants to become active partners in their community. Civic engagement, which includes advocacy and informed decision making; service, including community service and service learning; civic education, including global understanding and personal roles and responsibilities; and personal development, such as character development and leadership, are all focal topics.[104]

An example of 4-H's emphasis on community is their Rural Youth Development program. Through the program, 4-H partners with land-grant colleges and universities to encourage rural communities to involve youth in identifying local issues and developing strategies to address those issues.[105] Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana was one of the communities that participated in the Rural Youth Development program. Led by Blackfeet Community College, 4-H participants worked with family members and community members to create two new 4-H clubs, host community forums and conduct service projects addressing issues raised in the community forums. Together with community organizations, volunteers and parents, 4-H youth adopted lakes, cleaned illegal dump sites and planted flower and vegetable gardens. Blackfeet Community College also provided in-kind support to the afterschool program, supplying meeting space, staff, and buses to facilitate transportation for families to and from events.[106]

[iii] Chronic absenteeism is defined by Attendance Works as missing 10 percent or more of school, including excused and unexcused absences.

The **AfterZone** in Providence, Rhode Island, is a different example of community partnerships. The AfterZone model is a citywide afterschool initiative; the program is offered at multiple community facilities within a specified area, allowing students to take part in afterschool activities located at the "anchor" middle school or at libraries, art centers, museums and other community organizations.[107] The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) led the initiative, which also had strong support from Providence's mayor at the time, David Cicilline. Mayor Cicilline brought together the city's departments and the school district to redirect resources to support the AfterZone initiative. To support sustainability efforts, PASA worked with public and private stakeholders, including community-based organizations (CBOs), to oversee and manage AfterZone sites. PASA contracted with local CBOs to hire and supervise site staff, handle the program's daily operations and manage grants associated with the sites.

"Community members/leaders involved with the park project now understand, in my opinion, the power that youth can create as well as understand that youth are the voices of the future. If it weren't for programs in our small rural community such as 4-H, [Kentucky Family Resource & Youth Services Centers], Community Education, Gifted & Talented, Gear Up [sic], Migrant, Champions, [Kentucky Agency for Substance Abuse Policy] and other non-for-profit groups and state and federal programs, our youth would not have as many opportunities as they do now. These programs strive to serve and involve youth as much as possible to promote youth and adult partnerships as well as to give youth focus and develop their leadership abilities."

– 4-H Survey Respondent

Effective Family Partnerships

LA's BEST understands the valuable role parents play in their child's education, and incorporates a strong parent engagement component into their programming.[108] All LA's BEST staff participate in trainings that teach them how to best build relationships with parents. LA's BEST also holds parent orientations, one-on-one parent conferences and open forum parent meetings to establish and grow the rapport between the program and parents. Each site has a specific space where parents can gather to facilitate a sense of community.

LA's BEST also works to establish that parents' voices matter in their program—a position on their Advisory Board is reserved for a parent; the program distributes annual parent surveys asking for feedback on the program's direction, policies and quality; and the program encourages the formation of parent committees that help plan and carryout LA's BEST community events. The program works to be inclusive in their outreach, sending a quarterly newsletter to parents in both English and Spanish, as well as translating surveys for non-English-speaking parents.

Program Evaluation and Improvement

The **Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL)** Initiative in California began as an effort by the James Irving Foundation to improve the academic achievement of students in the lowest-performing schools. The program hired an outside evaluator, SRI International, to assess if they were meeting their goals and determine their impact on program participants. The evaluation found that the program was falling short in a number of areas. Implementation, number of participants, quality of enrichment activities and cost of the program were all flagged as problematic issues for the program.[109]

Based on the evaluation, CORAL revisited their programming approach and concluded that they needed to implement a more targeted educational focus. CORAL revised their goals, adopting a new, more tailored focus. In turn, the program's curriculum was also improved to reflect their new goals. Along with the implementation of the revised curriculum, Public/Private Ventures was brought on board to evaluate CORAL by measuring student participation, engagement and outcomes.

> *"We talk about the idea of continuous improvement processes…It's that ongoing look at the program from either the agency running the program or another intermediary organization to continually reflect on and think about whether the quality elements that they're looking for are present."*
>
> — *Christina A. Russell, Researcher, Policy Studies*

A continuous program improvement cycle—as discussed briefly in Section II of the report—was also implemented as a part of CORAL's dedication to raise student achievement. To start the process, CORAL established well-defined goals that were explicit in nature and dedicated a senior staff member to supervise and manage the quality improvement process. The cycle consisted of three steps: 1) staff training and professional development; 2) data collection, program monitoring and staff coaching; and 3) data analysis. [110]

In the first part of the cycle, staff trainings were developed to further the program's goals. Frequent staff trainings, scaffolding staff trainings and paring new staff with experienced staff were various strategies employed by CORAL. Next, senior staff observed the quality of the programming, monitored staff use of practices taught during staff trainings, and documented their observations. Step three of the cycle included the senior staff and/or an outside evaluator reviewing and analyzing the data collected, such as the documented observations and student participant attendance rates and skills. Senior staff then determined what changes needed to be made to the curriculum, what skills the staff needed more help with, and the types of trainings that would be most useful to staff and support the overall goals of the program. The cycle began again with staff development, and findings from the data analysis were incorporated into the new staff trainings.

Conclusion

Evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of quality afterschool programs supporting the success of our nation's children has grown immensely. Additionally, the afterschool field has benefitted considerably from research examining and documenting the components of quality programs. This body of research not only shows the power of afterschool programs, but it helps the field better understand how to continuously improve its programming and find ways to create more opportunities for children to participate in quality afterschool programs. Heather Weiss, founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project, wrote in an article for *Expanding Minds and Opportunities*, "In 15 years, the afterschool field has built a substantial research and evaluation literature that is serving as a driver for more high-quality programs and opportunities around the country. It is also a model for how to invest in research and evaluation for those seeking to invest in building the knowledge base in other new service fields."[111]

In addition to research that reveals the positive impact of afterschool programs on children, Americans believe in the importance of afterschool programs. Close to 90 percent of Americans agree that afterschool programs are important given that research has shown that high-quality afterschool programs can lead to increased attendance and improved behavior and grades among children who regularly attend.[112] And, an overwhelming majority of parents believe that there should be "some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn."[113]

In spite of the evidence of afterschool programs' ability to give children a safe and supervised environment during the hours after school, to provide kids with enriching learning activities, and to support working parents, the availability of afterschool programs does not meet the demand for them. While there are 8.4 million children in afterschool programs, there are 18.5 million children—more than double—who *would* participate in a program if one were available to them.[114]

The significant demand for afterschool programs further reinforces the need for increased investments in afterschool. Existing research—both the research establishing that afterschool programs work to help children reach their full potential, and the studies that demonstrate how afterschool programs can best support positive outcomes for their students—not only makes the case for greater investment in afterschool, but provides strategic insight. Together, federal, state, local, public and private actors can use this research base to best determine the ways in which to leverage their investments and help make certain that all children have access to quality afterschool programs that will keep them safe, support their academic success, encourage their social and emotional growth, and help them raise and reach their future aspirations.

Appendix A – Afterschool Program Evaluation Chart

Afterschool Program	Evaluation Title	Author(s)	Year	Type of Study	Description of Study	Findings
4-H	*The Positive Development of Youth: Report of the Findings from the First Eight Years of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*	Lerner, R.M., Lerner, J.V., and Colleagues Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University	n.d.	Quasi-experimental National Level	The evaluation of 4-H is a longitudinal study that began in 2002. Researchers began collecting data on fifth graders in the 2002-2003 school year (Wave 1). Since then, data have been collected from more than 7,000 youth in 44 states. Currently the "4-H Study of Positive Youth Development" is in Wave 8 and has collected information on youth in grades 5 through 12. The study compares youth participating in 4-H programs at least two times per month to their peers who participate in other out-of-school time activities including, but not limited to, sports, school clubs and religious groups. Control and treatment groups are matched by gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, residential location and mother's education level.	**Behavior:** - 4-H youth are 3.4 times more likely to postpone having sex (p = <.05) - 4-H youth are less likely use drugs, alcohol or cigarettes (p = n/a) - 4-H youth are 2.8 times as likely to report healthier habits (p = <.05) - 4-H girls are .5 times less likely to use drugs than non 4-H girls (p = <.05)
After School Matters (ASM)	*After-School Programs for High School Students-An Evaluation of After School Matters*	Hirsch, B.J., Hedges, L.V., Stawicki, J. and Mekinda, M.A. Northwestern University, University of	2011	Experimental Local Level	The evaluation of After School Matters used a three year randomized controlled trial, with a control group and a treatment group, assessing 535 youth. A pre-test and post-test assessment of both the control and treatment group were made. Evaluators analyzed the data using a hierarchical linear model approach,	**School Engagement:** - ASM students see the extrinsic value of school more so than non-participants (p = .007) - ASM students identified with school more so than the control group (p = .023) - ASM students had fewer number of absences than the control group

		Wisconsin-Extension			controlling for key demographic variables.	(p = .094) - ASM students have a greater sense of belonging than the control group (p = .182) **Behavior:** - ASM students are less likely to….. than the control group o Be suspended from school (p = .046) o Sell drugs (p = .051) o Drink alcohol (p = .066) o Engage in physical fights (p = .094) o Steal more than $50 (p = .170) o Engage in gang activity (p = .2) o Carry a weapon (p = .411) o Use drugs (p = .498) o Steal less than $50 (p = .574) o Engage in risky intercourse (p = .689) **Academic:** - ASM students have a higher GPA than the control group (p = .289) - ASM students failed fewer courses than the control group (p = .313)
After School Matters	*After-School Programs and Academic Impact: A study of Chicago's After School Matters*	Goerge, R., Cusick, G.R., Wasserman, M. and Gladden, R.M. Chapin Hall Center for Children	2007	Quasi-experimental Local Level	The evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design, collecting data from 24 schools on 20,370 students: 17,099 students did not participate in the program, 1,982 applied to After School Matters but did not participate and 1,289 participated in the program. Researchers controlled for participant and non-participants' motivation in school, educational achievement prior to entering high school, and attendance prior to entering the	**School Engagement:** - ASM students missed fewer school days than non-participants (p = n/a) **Academic:** - ASM students had a lower percentage of failed courses than non-participants (p = n/a) - Students with very high levels of participation in ASM were 2.7 time more likely to graduate than students who did not participate in ASM (p = n/a)

					afterschool program.	
AfterZone (AZ)	*AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence's Citywide After-School System.*	Kauh, T.J. Public/Private Ventures	2011	Quasi-experimental Local Level	A two-year quasi-experimental study, gathering data on students from six middle schools in Providence, close to half of whom participated in the AfterZone. Data gathered includes school records, youth surveys and records from PASA's management information system.	**School Engagement:** - AZ students were more likely to share that they felt more connected to school ($p < .05$) - AZ students missed 1.8 fewer days of school ($p < .05$) - Students participating in AZ for two years missed almost 25 percent fewer school days ($p < .1$) - There were no differences found between participants and non-participants when looking at time spent studying and homework habits **Behavior:** - AZ students had stronger social skills and were able to interact better with their peers than non-participants ($p < .10$) - There were no differences found between participants and non-participants when looking at misconduct, conflict management or preparing for the future. **Academic Findings:** - The average math GPA of AZ students was higher than non-participants ($p < .05$) - The average ELA GPA of AZ students was higher than non-participants (not statistically significant) - The average science GPA of AZ students was higher than non-

						participants (not statistically significant)

Beacon Community Centers	*The Beacon Community Centers Middle School Initiative: Final Report on Implementation and Youth Experience in the Initiative*	LaFleur, J., Russell, C.A., Low, M. and Romash, R.
		
		Policy Studies Associates, Inc.
			2011	Non-experimental
				
				Local Level
					The final report of a three-year evaluation on the Beacon Community Centers. Findings are based on surveys of Beacon directors at 80 centers, 831 completed surveys from program participants, program data on 21,798 participants, Department of Education match data on 5,851 participants and site visits to 10 centers.	**School Engagement:**
						- 95% of Beacon students reported that they tried hard in school (p = n/a)
						- 91% of participants reported that they did well in school (p = n/a)
						- 93 percent of participants reported that they paid attention in class (p = n/a)
						- 88% of participants report that they were always prepared for class (p = n/a)
						Behavior:
						- 77% of Beacon students said that the Beacon Center helped them to learn about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and other risky activities (p = n/a)
						- 80% of Beacon students stated the Beacon was either "very helpful" or "pretty helpful" to avoid drug use (p = n/a)
						- 74% said that in regard to avoiding fighting, the Beacon was "very helpful" or "pretty helpful" (p = n/a)
						Academic:
						- Beacon students believed that the program:
						  ○ Helped them finish their homework more often (81%),
						  ○ Helped them get better grades (78%) and
						  ○ Helped them to feel better about

						their school work (78%) (p = n/a, all)
Beacon Community Centers	*The Beacon Community Centers Middle School Initiative: Report on Implementation and Youth Experience in the Initiative's Second Year*	Russell, C.A., LaFleur, J., Scott, T.A., Low, M., Palmiter, A.S. and Reisner, E.R. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.	2010	Non-experimental Local Level	The second year report of a three-year evaluation of the Beacon Community Centers Middle School Initiative. The evaluation included Beacon Center data; site visits; analysis of Department of Education data on student participants' demographics, school attendance and academic performance; and surveys of Beacon directors, student program participants and parents.	**School Engagement:** - 98% of participants wanted to graduate from high school (p = n/a) - 88% of participants wanted to graduate from college (p = n/a) - The average school attendance rate was 94% for participants in the 5th-7th grades and 93% for participants in the 8th grade (p = n/a)
Beyond the Bell (BTB)	*Los Angeles Unified: After School Program Report Card for 2011-2012*	Educational Resource Consultants	2013	Quasi-experimental Local Level	The evaluation matched participants in the Beyond the Bell program with the LAUSD's student population, comparing gender, ethnicity, grade level, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, in addition to other educational characteristics.	**School Engagement:** - 70% of BTB participants had a 96% or higher school day attendance vs. 56% of non-participants (p = n/a) - 73% of students attending the program for more than 33 days had a 96% or higher school day attendance vs. 64% of students who attended the program six to 13 days (p = n/a) **Academic:** - The graduation rate of seniors who attended the program at least one day during each year of high school was 90% vs. 86% of non-participating students (p = n/a) - The mean score for BTB participants in ELA on the CST was 6 points higher than non-participants and the mean CST math score was 3 points higher

						(p = n/a) - 79% of BTB students passed the CAHSEE in ELA vs. 73% of non-participants (p = n/a) - 81% of BTB students passed the math CAHSEE compared to 73 percent of students not in the program (p = n/a)
Beyond the Bell	*Beyond the Bell After School Programs: High School Program Principal Satisfaction Survey 2012-2013*	Educational Resource Consultants	2013	Non-experimental Local Level	The evaluation was a survey of 46 LAUSD high school principals or assistant principals.	**School Engagement:** - LAUSD high school principals gave BTB a 3.53 out of a 4-point scale regarding their satisfaction of the program's effectiveness in developing "student leaders and empowering students to make a difference at their school or in their community" (p = n/a)

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Initiative (CORAL)	*Advancing Achievement: Findings from an Independent Evaluation of a Major After-School Initiative*	Arbreton, A., Sheldon, J., Bradshaw, M., Goldsmith, J., Jucovy, L. and Pepper,S.
		
		Public/Private Ventures
			2008	Non-experimental
				
				Local Level
					The evaluation conducted quantitative and qualitative analysis on data collected on children participating in CORAL including enrollment, attendance, activity and participation data; reading assessments at multiple points in time; and students' standardized test scores. Researchers also interviewed program and partner agency staff; conducted site visits and parent focus groups; and sent out parent, youth participant and staff surveys.	**School Engagement:**
						- 90% of children reported that they felt safe at the program (p = n/a)
						- 71% said they felt that they belonged at CORAL (p = n/a)
						- Comparing results from fall 2004 to spring 2006, students who had a very strong sense of belonging at CORAL:
						  ○ Liked school more (p = .001)
						  ○ Were better able to pay attention and concentrate in class (p = .001)
						  ○ Were more likely to want to go to school (p = .001)
						  ○ Were more likely to study hard for a test in the last 30 days (p = .01)

						○ Were less likely to miss school (not significant) ○ Were less likely to come to class without finishing their homework (not significant) **Behavior:** - Comparing results from fall 2004 to spring 2006, students who had a very strong sense of belonging at CORAL were less likely to get in trouble at school in the last 30 days (p = .01) **Academic Findings:** - English language learners average grade-level reading gain between fall 2004 and spring 2006 was 1.76 (p = n/a) - CORAL's English proficient students' average grade-level reading gain between fall 2004 and spring 2006 was 1.61 (p = n/a)
Higher Achievement (HA)	*Staying On Track: Testing Higher Achievement's Long-Term Impact on Academic Outcomes and High School Choice*	Herrera, C., Baldwin Grossman, J. and Linden, L.L.	2013	Experimental Local Level	The evaluation of Higher Achievement is a random assignment evaluation that includes 952 students. The evaluation includes a treatment and a control group. Students were given standardized tests in reading comprehension and math problem-solving. Both youth and their parents were surveyed one, two and four years after the random assignment. Surveys of youth measured their attitudes, behaviors, program participation and demographic information.	**Academic Findings:** - HA students performed better on their reading comprehension standardized test scores (p < .1) - HA students performed better on their math problem-solving standardized test scores (p < .05)

Higher Achievement	*Testing the Impact of Higher Achievement's Year-Round Out-of-School-Time Program on Academic Outcomes*	Herrera, C., Linden, L.L., Arbreton, A.J.A. and Baldwin Grossman, J. Public/Private Ventures	2011	Experimental Local Level	The evaluation of Higher Achievement is a random assignment evaluation that includes 951 students. The evaluation includes a treatment and a control group. Both youth and their parents were surveyed one, two and four years after the random assignment. Students were given standardized tests in reading comprehension and problem solving. Surveys of youth measured their attitudes, behaviors, program participation and demographic information. Additionally, observations of programs and interviews with program staff, teachers and mentors were conducted.	**Academic:** - HA students improved their reading scores ($p = .05$) - HA students saw greater gains on their problem-solving scores ($p = .05$)
LA's BEST	*The Long-Term Effects of After-School Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: A Study of the LA's BEST After-School Program*	Goldschmidt, P. and Huang, D. National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), University of California, Los Angeles	2007	Quasi-experimental Local Level	The treatment group for LA's BEST's evaluation includes 2,000 LA's BEST students and the control group includes 4,000 matched students in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) not participating in the afterschool program. The control group is constituted of students from LAUSD's database matched by grade, gender, ethnicity, income level, language proficiency and achievement level of LA's BEST students.	**Academic:** - Students in LA's BEST with high levels of engagement were 50% less likely to commit a crime ($p < .05$) - Students in LA's BEST with medium levels of engagement were 30% less likely to commit a crime ($p < .05$) - Students in LA's BEST with low levels of engagement did not see a change in the likelihood of committing a crime

LA's BEST	*Keeping Kids in School: An LA's BEST Example-A Study Examining the Long-Term Impact of LA's BEST on Students' Dropout Rates*	Huang, D., Kim, K.S., Marshall, A. and Perez, P. National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), University of California, Los Angeles	2005	Quasi-experimental Local Level	The evaluation of LA's BEST looked at four grade-level cohorts and three participation levels (one year, two years, and three or more years) using a control and treatment group. The control group consisted of LAUSD students not participating in the program, and the treatment group was made up of students involved in the LA's BEST afterschool program. Groups were matched by grade, gender, ethnicity, and income and achievement level. In the one-year participation level, there were 2,967 LA's BEST participants and 2,963 non-participants, the two-year participation level had 1,636 LA's BEST participants and 1,634 non-participants and the three-or-more-year participation level included 1,224 LA's BEST participants and 1,219 non-participants. Researchers collected data from LAUSD's longitudinal student database.	**Academic:** - Students in LA's BEST for at least two years had close to a 14% lower dropout rate than non-participants (not significant) - Students in LA's BEST for at least three years were less likely to dropout than non-participants, 1999-2000 ($p < .01$), 2000-2001 ($p < .001$), 2001-2002 (p , .001), 2002-2003 ($p < .01$)
Save the Children (STC)	*Save the Children Literacy Programs: Results from the Comparative Pilot Study, 2009-10*	Romash, R.A., White, R.N. and Reisner, E.R. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.	2010	Quasi-experimental National Level	The evaluation of Save the Children was a quasi-experimental design, collecting data from 18 schools in nine states on students in 2nd through 6th grade. Originally, data for 1,715 participants and 1,773 non-participants were collected. After using propensity matching to control for differences between participants and non-participants, the evaluation looked at 1,249 children in grades two through six who participated in the	**Academic:** - STC participants gained an equivalent of three months of additional schooling ($p < .05$) - STC participants read more books ($p < .05$) - STC participants read more difficult books ($p < .05$) - STC participants made greater gains on standardized reading assessments ($p < .05$)

					organization's Developing Readers (DR) program and 1,249 children who did not. The control and treatment groups were matched by grade, school and reading scores.	
Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)	*Project SHINE (Schools and Homes In Education): Project Evaluation Report*	Palko, L.	2012	Non-experimental Local Level	The evaluation of the program collected pre- and post-test data only on students participating in the program. Data are gathered from 20 different data sources, and includes, but is not limited to, standardized test data, report card grades, attendance data, and teacher and student surveys.	**School Engagement:** - 37% of students who regularly attended SHINE and demonstrated a need to improve behavior improved their school day attendance (p = n/a) **Behavior:** - 89% of parents reported they saw improvements in their child's overall behavior (p = n/a) **Academic:** - The average rate of promotion to the next grade level for SHINE students was 96% (p = n/a) - 94% of parents agreed that their child had improved in reading (p = n/a) - 95% of parents agreed that their child improved in math (p = n/a)
Schools & Homes in Education	*Project SHINE (Schools and Homes In Education): 2007-2012 Trend Data Report*	Palko, L.	2012	Non-experimental Local Level	The evaluation of the program compares and contrasts data collected between 2007 and 2012. Only pre- and post-test data on students participating in the program were collected. Data are gathered from 20 different data sources, and includes, but is not limited to, standardized test data, report card grades, attendance data, and teacher and student surveys.	**School Engagement:** - Between 2007 and 2012, an average of 90% of SHINE participants attended school regularly and didn't have an attendance problem (p = n/a) - Between 2007 and 2012, an average of 58% of students who regularly attended SHINE maintained "exceptionally good" school day attendance (p = n/a) **Academic:**

						- Between 2007 and 2012, between 79-90% of SHINE students received a satisfactory or passing grade in reading (p = n/a) - Between 2007 and 2012, between 79-92% received a satisfactory or passing grade in math (p = n/a)
Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE)	*Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Year 2 evaluation report*	Naftzger, N., Manzeske, D., Nistler, M. and Swanlund, A. American Institutes for Research	2013	Quasi-experimental State Level	The evaluation of Texas' Afterschool Center on Education (ACE) was a quasi-experimental design, collecting data from 40 ACE programs on students participating in the program and using propensity score matching to create a comparison group. Variables used to match the control and treatment groups were age, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, gifted education status, test scores, previous retention, and number of disciplinary incidences and absences in the previous year. Site visits to programs; surveys of staff, youth and parents; and interviews with youth, program staff, principals at schools involved with the program, project directors and site coordinators were also conducted.	**School Engagement:** - Students with low levels of participation saw a 14% decrease in the rate of being absent (p = <.001) - Students with high levels of participation saw a 15% decrease in the rate of being absent (p = <.001) **Behavior:** - Students in the ACE program for 30 days or more saw a 6% decrease in their disciplinary incidents compared to non-participants (p = <.001) - Students in the ACE program for 60 days or more saw an 11% decrease in their disciplinary incidents compared to non-participants (p = <.001) **Academic:** - Students with low levels of participation increased the likelihood of being promoted to the next grade by 43% (p = <.001) - Students with high levels of participation increased the likelihood of being promoted to the next grade by 47% (p = <.001)

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