

Office of Special Services

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Research You Can Use

Extended Time Programs

Introduction

A not so well known individual once stated: "Time is the great equalizer for students who come from disadvantaged and poverty situations." Her statement reflects what educators know and experience each day. Children of poverty and children at educational disadvantage often need more time to master the content that comes rather easily to their advantaged peers. However, given the learning and teaching gaps that are often experienced by students in high poverty schools, staffs struggle with the constraints of time, the same time that is available for all students. In many of these schools, time is the enemy, not the friend that provides the resources that are needed. What's the answer?



looking at how students spend the hours after the school bell rings. After school programs are emerging as a popular strategy for improving student performance."

Furthermore, Shumnow (2001), noted that "the current emphasis on performance standards and testing has led schools to look to the after-school hours as time that can be spent developing children's academic skills."

The use of the term "after school programs" may be somewhat misleading. A more accurate term may be extended time programs or out of school time programs since many programs may operate before school or other times when school is not in session.

One answer may lie in the development and implementation of extended time programs. Miller (2001) concurs: "Faced with high-stakes testing, published results, and other high pressure policies, many educators are

The purpose of this issue of *Research You Can Use* is to provide information to schools that will assist them in examining the viability of extended time programs as a strategy for increasing student achievement.

The article will summarize available research, outline potential benefits and pitfalls of extended time models, and detail the steps in developing an extended time model.

Research Synopses

Research on the benefits of extended time programs:

In 1995, the U. S. Department of Education published a two volume document on extended time. This publication delineated research and case studies showing the benefit of extended learning time strategies for disadvantaged students. More recent studies that focus on the benefits of extended time programs are articulated below.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS)(1999) indicated that the research on after school programs was not well developed. However, in its publication “When School is Out”, ESC pointed out the benefits of after school programs for some children:

- “Younger children (ages 5 to 9) and those from low income neighborhoods gain the most from after school programs, showing better behavior with peers and adults, work habits, and performance in school.
- “Young teens who attend after school activities achieve higher grades in school and engage in less risky behavior.”
- “Participation in after-school activities is associated with improved attendance, the development of new skills and interests, decreased time watching television and increased time spent on homework, and the development of higher aspirations,

including plans to complete high school and go on to college.”

Miller (2001) stated that research from a variety of studies indicated that after school program participation was associated with higher grades and test scores, especially for low income students.

According to Pierce and Vandell (1999), academically at-risk children who attended after school programs more frequently, as compared with children who attended less often, developed better work habits in their school programs, attended school more often, and endorsed less aggressive strategies to resolve conflicts with peers.

The Department of Education (2000) shared limited research on the effectiveness of after school programs. The Department noted that: for many children reading and math scores improved because after school programs allowed them to focus attention on areas in which they were having difficulties. The report also stated that teachers and parents indicated that children who participate in after school programs develop better social skills, and they learn to handle conflicts in more socially acceptable ways. Furthermore, it indicated that children in these programs tended to have higher aspirations for their future, including intentions to complete high school and attend collage.

The above research identifies benefits for involvement in after school programs. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) (1999) summarizes the benefits of after school programs for both students and the community as follows:

- “Quality after-school programs can have far-reaching benefits. Though not always immediately evident, the

benefits for students include increased learning, improved health, increased exposure to career choices and enhanced social psychological development.”

- “The rewards of after-school programs are not limited only to students. Many benefits can also be reaped by the school itself and the surrounding community. Specific benefits can include:
 - more effective use of funding (e.g. better use of public libraries, parks and recreational facilities;
 - increased capacity to serve children;
 - increased business support and involvement;
 - increased parental involvement and support of the school;
 - maintenance or increase of student enrollments;
 - improved school image;
 - decreased vandalism and delinquency; and
 - increased advocacy on the part of the community for the school.”

In the spring of 2001, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) conducted a survey on the characteristics, successes, and challenges of after-school programs. The sample included 800 principals of public schools serving students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade.

The results of the survey indicated that “principals with after-school programs rated them “extremely” important (77%) and “very” successful (57%).

Concerns about the effectiveness of extended time models:

In this review of the research, the preponderance of studies supported the value of after-school programs. There were, however, a few studies that raised questions as to the benefits of these models.

An author of the evaluation section of the issue “When school is out: analysis and recommendations” indicated that ‘research on after-school programs is at a very rudimentary stage. Strong, long term evaluations of after school and youth development programs have not yet demonstrated widespread impact on the high priority youth outcomes that matter to most policymakers and the public.’”

Perhaps the most extensive review of extended day and after school programs was done by Fashola (1998). He reviewed the available literature on the effectiveness of after- school, school-based academic extended-day, volunteer tutoring, study-skills, language arts after-school, and community-based after school programs. In answer to the question what works best in after-school programs, he concluded that the answer depends on why the program was set up, the extent to which the program designed addressed the needs of the participants, and the extent to which the program shows positive outcomes when evaluated for evidence of effectiveness.

The United States Department of Education recently released the results of an evaluation of first year findings on 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The findings in the study were used to support recommendations for a decrease in proposed funding for budget year 2004.

The authors of the study cited these findings:

- limited academic impact;
- adult care increased but the programs did not reduce the number of “latch key children”;
- there were no improvements in safety and behavior;
- there was increased parental involvement at the middle school level;
- there was negligible impact on developmental outcomes such as whether students felt that they were better able to set goals, or work with a team.

The study also detailed issues with implementation that included findings about levels of student participation, program staffing, and efforts to form partnerships and planning for sustainability. The director of the Afterschool Alliance challenged the results of this study and noted that it had “significant limitations, serious methodological problems and an obvious bias.”

Obviously, there is no easy resolution to the problem of whether to use extended time programs as a strategy for increased student achievement. The research findings are mixed. Nevertheless, if after an in-depth review of some of the resources cited in this article, school staffs choose to implement an extended time service model the following steps may be useful in planning.

Planning for the Implementation of an Extended Time Model

The Disney Learning Partnership offers the following suggestions for planning a good after-school program:

1. ***Set goals that reflect the needs of the children and families in your community.*** Use an assessment of the needs and strengths of your community as an initial step in designing the program.
2. ***Establish strong leadership and a clear organizational structure.*** A solid organizational structure allows for effective communication between all parties, flexibility, and accountability.
3. ***Develop a budget and financial plan that provides for long-term sustainability.*** This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of implementation. Too many programs fail to develop options for long term sustainability after initial grant funds expire. As an additional consideration for funding, think about the use of Title I dollars as a source of funding for after-school programs. Deich, Wegener, and Wright (2002) noted that: “The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides important opportunities for out of school time and community school initiatives. The authors mentioned that increased funding for Title I allows school officials to consider financing out of school time and community school efforts without limiting other programs now funded with Title I. In addition, they said that the new legislation encourages and/or requires schools to offer a broader range of services that support academic performance for students and their families including extended learning opportunities and parent involvement programs. For a tool to plan for sustainability, go to the

Finance Project website listed in the reference section.

4. ***Understand the legal requirements and liability issues for your after-school programs, and be sure your plan addresses them.*** Investigate any licensing requirements that may impact program operation.
5. ***Address the safety, health, and nutritional issues that effect the children in your program.***
Transportation to and from the site may be especially difficult to work out. Also, the safety and cleanliness of the location should be of paramount concern.
6. ***Carefully consider staffing needs.***
The issue of staff quality can be a determinant of the program's success. Staff stability is extremely important for students who often experience chaos in their homes. In order to ensure the stability of staff in the long term, administrators must carefully examine pay rates and benefit packages.
7. ***Provide professional development that is of high quality and ongoing.***
8. ***Evaluate whether the program is meeting the needs of the children and community.*** If necessary, hire an outside evaluator and use the results of the evaluation to make revisions as appropriate.

Beware of some the pitfalls that occur in program implementation. NWREL (1999) provides an overview of the risks that might occur:

- ***Planning:*** setting up programs without the involvement of all of the stakeholders who are likely to be affected by the service;

- ***Pacing:*** attempting too much too soon rather than building on successes and scaling up at an appropriate pace;
- ***Buy-in:*** not securing the buy in of staff at the school site if school space is to be used for extend time services;
- ***Transportation:*** not providing safe transportation options;
- ***Scope:*** providing the same type of activities and options that are available during the school day;
- ***Diplomacy:*** engaging in turf wars between the school and community groups; and,
- ***Funding:*** not planning for sustainable funding over the long term.

Conclusion

The results of research studies on the impact of extended time programs as a strategy for increasing student achievement are inconclusive. Although, there are a preponderance of studies that support the connection between extended time programs and increased student achievement and other positive behaviors. One author, Noam (2002) has indicated that after school education is a new ally for educational reform. Certainly, the attainment of positive outcomes from these models is dependent on issues like program quality and sustainable funding. Potential program planners and developers should examine available research and decide for themselves as to whether the probable impacts are worth the extensive work needed to implement extended time models.

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U. S. Department of Education (February, 2003). When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21st-century community learning centers program: first year findings. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/21cent/firstyear>

Key Resources for Planning, Implementing & Evaluating Extended time programs

A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance, by Denise Huang, Barry Gribbons, Kyung Sung Kim, Charlotte Lee, and Eva L. Baker. A longitudinal study report and synthesis of research by the Center for the Study of Evaluation at the University of California at Los Angeles, June, 2000. Available for download from <<http://www.lasbest.org/learn/uclaeval.pdf>>

America's After-School Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement, by Sanford A. Newman, James Alan Fox, Edward A. Flynn, and William Christeson. A report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000. Available from Fight Crime at 202-776-0027 or www.fightcrime.org <<http://www.fightcrime.org>>. Two-page summary available for download from <<http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/as2pager2000/as2pager2000.html>>.

Beyond the Bell: A Toolkit for Creating Effective After-School Programs, Second Edition, by Katie E. Walter, Judith G. Caplan, and Carol K. McElvain. Produced for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001. Available for download from <<http://www.ncrel.org/after/bellkit.htm>>

Evaluation of the MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) Initiative: Final Report-Summary of Findings, by Robert Halpern, Julie Spielberger, and Sylvan Robb. A discussion paper by The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, March, 2001. Available for download from <http://www2-chc.spc.uchicago.edu/ProjectsGuide/registration/register.lasso>.

Getting Started with Extended Service Schools: Early Lessons from the Field. A report from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, November, 2000. Available for download from The Wallace Funds at <<http://www.wallacefunds.org/frames/framesetpublications.htm>>

The Web of Support: Providing Safe, Nurturing, Learning Environments During Out-of-School Time, by Wendy R. Nadel. Produced for Save the Children-U.S. Programs, 2000. Available for download from <<http://www.savethechildren.org/wosokit/pdfs.html>>.

A Resource Guide for Planning and Operating After-School Programs, by Janet Hall Bagby. Prepared for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), 2001. Available for download from <<http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam95/afterschool.pdf>>

Additional Web Resources

After- School Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org

21st Century Community Learning Centers
www.afterschool.gov

National Institute on Out- of -School Time
www.niost.org

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
www.nwrel.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
www.nwrel.org

The Finance Project
www.financeproject.org

Upcoming Events

Colorado's Single Accountability Conference: Working Together to Close the Achievement Gap March 5-7, 2003. Register online at:
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeunified/SACregistrationInfo.htm>