Doing Afterschool Right:
Issues and Programs in Out-of-School Time for 5-11 year-olds

A century ago, school hours were shaped around the lives rural families (school let out early enough for youth to help with chores). The arrangement worked for suburban families with one breadwinner, less so for one or two working-parent families. Today, almost 30 million children's parents work outside the home, with as many as 15 million kids unsupervised during afterschool hours. School and out-of-school time needs to be reshaped to meet needs of families.

Voters strongly support tax expenditures for programs and expect them to offer:

- A safe place to learn
- Tutoring and homework help
- A cooperative climate
- Structured supervision
- Conflict resolution
- Goal setting
- Mastery of new skills (including arts, service, and sports)
- Computer skills

Quality programs not only help adults become more productive employees but skills learned cultivate youth workplace skills. Afterschool activities not only reduce risk behaviors for youth today and also prepare them to be caring, competent, contributing citizens now and into the future.

Quality means more than extending the school day, than offering pizza and TV, than herding children into a gym. *Quality programs foster youth development through a variety of stimulating activities and leadership opportunities, nurturing relationships, cooperative partnerships with families and community partners.*

Quality afterschool time is not a problem to be solved. It is an investment to be embraced for the sake of our kids, families, and communities.

Sources: 1997 Annual Average Figures from Current Population Survey, US Dept.of Labor; The National Study of Before- and After-School Programs, Seppanen, et al., 1993; 1999 Mott Foundation poll report, Afterschool Alliance.

This newsletter seeks to briefly summarize what we know about afterschool programs for 5-11 year-olds.

For additional resources, visit

Dreamcatcher
*Family
Life
website*

*www.
uwyo.edu/ag/ces/dream.htm*

Research Update: Afterschool Prorgrams

Research Summary on Afterschool Programs

Latchkey children who do not participate in any after school activity are prone to experience: loneliness, fear, worry, injury, poor nutrition, victimization, and excessive TV viewing

School-based programs.
Advantages:
- Credibility
- Continuity of care
- Access to resources
- Convenience
- Training, resources to support innovation

Disadvantages:
- Possible higher personnel costs
- Often low priority vs. academic activities
- Perception that pro-gram extends school

Non-school sponsor site/program needs:
- Educational
- Recreational
- Rest rooms
- Kitchen

Funding sources:
- Tuition (sliding scale)
- Grants and contracts
- Government (Federal and local)
- Foundations
- Local businesses and organizations contributions

Typical program goals:
Psychosocial Dev.
- Bond w/ caring adults
- Build child self-worth
- Develop child self-care
- Responsibility and resist risk behaviors

Education
- Personalized support to reinforce school
- Study time, space
- Enrichment events
- Experiential, exploratory events

Recreation
- Recreation for physical skills, energy outlets
- Sports to develop self esteem, cooperation, and conflict resolution

Career Success
- Age-appropriate job readiness
- Orient to career training options
- Experiences with local business, entrepreneurship

Recruitment is key in accomplishing success.
- Letters, flyers, and local newspapers
- Parent contact
- Facilities & equipment
- Challenging recreation, learning

Key Staff Skills:
- Interpersonal, communication
- Organization
- Love for youth
- Ability to individualize
- Reliability, patience, and flexibility
- Positive attitude

Source: Schwartz, Wendy. After-School Programs for Urban Youth. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education Digest. Eric-web.tc.Columbia.edu/digests/ dig114.html

MOST Out-of-School Initiative
Findings in three cities show that low-income schools are improving in their efforts with out of school programs:
- 6,000 new school-age care spaces created
- $2 million in program support funds raised over initial grant
- Training in after-school program skills for hundreds of providers
- Expanded size and range of programs of organizations and partnerships

Benefits for school-age and youth work fields:
1. Increased awareness of other organizations - framework, strategies, standards, staff qualifications
2. Collaboration - shared resources, training, funding
3. Cooperative strategies for youth development agenda in community, organization, local settings

National program goals
- Improve program
- Increase participants
- Increase professional training for providers
- Increase public awareness of need
- Create project support resources

Source: Esposito, Marie E. Growing Together: Connections Between the School-Age Care and Youth Work Professions. (1997). Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College.

Stats and Facts: Afterschool Hours

Wyoming Demographics

Total population:
1999 Children 5-9 years   32,853
1999 Children 10-14   37,557
1999 Total under 18   126,807

Working parents:
Pct 6-12 yrs. living w/ working parents: 58%
Pct low-income working parents
 w/children under 13   23%

Legal child-to-staff ratios:
Age	Ratio
6-10 yrs+:	25 to 1

For more info on school age child care contact: Child Care Licensing Agency, Department of Family Services, Division of Juvenile Services, Hathaway Building, 3rd Floor, 2300 Capitol Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002 or 307-777-6285.

Source: NCCIC. Wyoming Demographics. www.nccic.org/statepro/wyoming.html

Statistics on Out-of-school Hours

- Nearly five million school-age children spend time without adult supervision during a week
- 35% of 12-year-olds care for themselves regularly after-school
- Between the times of 3pm and 8pm violent crime triples
- 280 children are arrested for violent crimes every day
- Between 2-6pm children are more likely to be hurt by a non-family member

Children without adult supervision are at a greater risk of:
- Truancy
- Stress
- Receiving poor grades
- Risk-taking behavior
- Substance abuse

Center on Research for Women. Fact Sheet On School-Age Children's Out-of-School Time. National Institute on Out-of-School Time. December 1998. www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/factsht.htm

Facts on Afterschool Programs

Children need supervision after school:
- 2/3 youth live with single employed parent or two employed parents
- Over 29 million children ages 6-17 live with employed parents
- Nearly 80 percent of working parents are employed full-time
- The typical married-couple family worked 247 hours more per year in 1996 than in 1989.
- 70% of full time employed parents feel time with children is inadequate
- 8 million children ages 5 to 14 spend time without adult supervision regularly
- Children spend 20% of waking time in school over a period of one year

Children spend time after school in a variety of ways:
- In 1997, children were spending more time on household work, sports, and studying, and less time playing, eating, and watching television from 1981
- Children (ages 2-17) spend 4.8 hours per day watching TV, computers, video games, or VCR
- From 1981 to 1997, the time boys spent studying increased 50%, the time girls spent increased 16%
- In 1997, boys and girls ages 6-8 spent 22 minutes per weekday studying, while boys and girls ages 9-12 spent an average of 39 min. and 37 min.

Program responses vary widely:
- Approx. 39% K-3s receive non-parental care before and/or after school on a weekly (6.1 mil., 14 hr/wk)
- 30% of public schools and 50% of private schools offer before and/or after-school care in 1993-1994, compared to only 15 and 33% in 1987-1988 (least available in rural areas: (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).
- Parent fees range from $2.41 per hour in Minnesota to $4.70 per hour in New Jersey
- 85% of voters reported difficulty finding local after-school programs
- 25% of urban demand for afterschool currently met (Govt Accounting Office)

Facts, continued

Benefits to Children in High Quality Programs
- Improved peer relations, emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, grades, and conduct in school
- Increased learning opportunities, academic activities, and enrichment activities, less TV time vs peers
- School faculty say that students become more cooperative, handle conflicts, develop interests in reading, and get better grades due to participation in after-school programs
- Fewer missed days, better homework completion, school behavior, test scores
- Students who spend 1 to 4 hours per week in extracurricular activities are 49% less likely to use drugs and 37% less likely to become teen parents

Middle Childhood

Achievements middle childhood youth experience are:
- Practice of good health habits
- Able to play in groups
- Close friendships
- "Fitting into" peer groups
- Good capability as member of family, community, other groups
- Able to express feelings
- Belief in themselves
- Know what's right and wrong
- Aware of safety rules
- Ability to read, write and communicate complex, creative thoughts
- Responsible for homework
- School achievement

Tasks to work towards for a child
- Maintain healthy eating habits
- Practice excellent dental hygiene
- Participate in sports or exercise programs
- Maintain healthy weight
- Habit of wearing bicycle helmet, seat belt, safety sports equipment
- Evade alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Fight peer pressure to participate in risk-taking behaviors
- Resolve conflicts, manage anger
- Take responsibility for belongings, chores
- Interact well with siblings and peers

- Sports activity increases girls' self-esteem, positive body image, self-confidence, and sense of competence

Public support is strong:
- 92% of Americans believe there should be after-school activities for youth
- 75% willing to pay more taxes to provide good early childhood and after-school
- 86% of police chiefs view expanding after-school as crime-reducing
- 49% less likely to use drugs and 37% less likely to become teen parents
- Sports activity increases girls' self-esteem, positive body image, self-confidence, and sense of competence

Source: Fact Sheet on School-Age Children's Out-of-School Time: The National Institute on Out-of-School Time. January 2000. www.niost.org/factsht.html

- Communicate well with others
- Be productive in school

When youth take care of their health, they gain:
- Sense of personal ability
- Sense of self effectiveness
- Role in health supervision and promotion
- Most advantageous nutrition
- Good growth and development
- Great health habits
- Prevention of injury
- Personal safety
- Social awareness
- Promotion of family strengths
- Prevention of behavioral problems
- Improvement of parental involvement
- Success in school

Source: Bright Futures. Middle Childhood Developmental Charts. www.brightfutures.org/mc/mcindc.htm

Keep After-school Cool

Six or seven hours of intense, structured activity can build up lots of energy and emotion. After school, routine differences and boundary-testing can produce tensions and flare-ups between children and with caregivers. Several practical steps before and during sessions can help everyone work together, enjoy events, and grow as problem-solvers.

Anticipate Flash Points
To create a lower-stress, higher learning and laughing climate…
- ✓ Provide an engaging environment
- ✓ Set ground rules for cooperation
- ✓ Start up with de-stressing activities such as relaxation exercises, free time, exercise, humor and play
- ✓ Offer nutritious snacks to restore energy and emotional balance
- ✓ Talk and reflect with children individually to support and identify points of tension
- ✓ Recognize conflicts in the early stages and help kids problem-solve for themselves
- ✓ Keep a grab-bag of fun and engaging activities (chores, recreation, celebrations, learning and leading activities for individuals, small groups, or the whole group that offer constructive distractions or transitions in tense moments)

De-stressing Flash Points
To de-stress tense situations and work toward constructive problem solving…

- ✓ ***Stay Calm/Get Calm***. A leader's role model is a cue to children's behavior, so whether he/she is responding to an emergency, directing an activity, or observing events, taking a breath, sensing inner feelings, and sizing up the climate set the tone in the midst of conflict or crisis. For instance,
    - o When a child comes crying or complaining, identify the feeling you see:
      "I can see you feel sad that you can't play that game now."
    - o When a child hits or calls names, identify feelings without excusing behavior:
      "I see you are frustrated. Let's talk it out instead of using fists?"
    - o When a child has an accident, acknowledge feelings and reassure:
      "That looks like it hurts. It's scary to be cut, but we'll patch it up."
    - o When you find yourself in the middle of a conflict, note feelings and needs:
      "We're all feeling a little tense. Let's take a minute to calm down and we can find a solution that works for everybody."

- ✓ ***Clarify the Situation***. Gathering facts and hearing both sides of an issue keep everyone from emotional overreaction or jumping to conclusions. A leader's role model of openness, fairness, and logic helps children relax and reason. If possible, protect pride and privacy by talking with children alone. If not, ask the group to help by listening respectfully and perhaps offering suggestions or encouragement. Examples follow:
    - o When an accident occurs ask *"Where does it hurt?"* rather than *"Why did you do that?"* or *"Can't you learn to play safe?"*
    - o When children are fighting or injured, explore:
      "Tell me what you see…think…feel…want." rather than *"Whose fault is this?"*
    - o When children are calmed, let each tell his/her story in turn, asking one to repeat what the other said after each statement:
      "How did you see what happened?…Could you describe how your friend sees things." (vs. do you agree)

After School Cool (cont'd.)

✓ ***Share observations***. Most situations don't require advice, just understanding. Even contradictions *("At least one child was nice: Jenny volunteered to be your partner.")* are more readily accepted if offered as comments instead of judgments. Leaders model honesty and helpfulness when comments are brief and to the point (the lesson will be learned eventually).
- o When a child is out of touch with group rules note:
  "The snack line forms at the rear." rather than *"Don't cut!"*
- o When a child is not following instructions, don't assume it's on purpose:
  "I see the project report and photos, but not the record book."

✓ ***Encourage problem-solving***. Encouragement to work out problems for oneself communicates confidence ("*You can do it*!") and responsibility ("*It's up to you*!"). Children may need some help seeing the step-by-step sequence, generating a variety of action options, or risking a new approach (including apologies and restitution).
- o When children are struggling with a problem solving task:
  "Remember which edge you fold over first?." rather than *"Here, I'll do it."*
- o When children are struggling with a problem solving task:
  "If you don't have all the materials you need, what can you find around here?"

✓ ***Encourage affirmations***. Look for what's going right and encourage others to do so.
- o When a child is struggling with a step in the learning process:
  "You've come this far, so you can figure out the rest with a little effort."
- o When a group has completed a task together:
  "Let's name something each member contributed to our success."

Adapted from M.A. Pace-Nichols. (1994). Behavior management: The big stressor, In C.M. Todd (Ed.). *School-age connections, 3(3), 1-4,&* A. Faber & E. Mazlish. (1995). *How to talk so kids can learn*. NY: Avon.

Developmentally Appropriate School-age Care

Extension's National Network on Childcare [www.nncc.org] offers a variety of online resources for planning activities and selecting materials that fit children's developmental abilities and the after-school setting:

Randy Wong. (1996). "The happiest place on earth" or "What's developmentally appropriate?"
www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fc53_dev.approp.act.html

Carole L. Eller & Maureen T. Mulroy. (1993). Developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children. www.nncc.org/SACC/dev.approp.sac.html

Karen DeBord. (1995). Developmentally appropriate 4-H experiences for the 5-8 year-old.
www.nncc.org/Curriculum/devel5_8.html

Other useful sites include:

After School Alliance: www.afterschoolalliance.org/about.html

The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education
http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/ccdece/ccdece.htm
Technical assistance, training delivery, research, and information activities for systemic change
===

Learning by Play

"Play is the work of childhood" but many of us easily forget how much we learned about animals from a third grade trip to a farm or about people from a school play. Even when children "have fun on their own" they learn things from engineering (arranging and testing logs across a creek) to childcare (dressing or feeding a doll).

After-school programs that use children's ideas and experiential methods can foster competence and teamwork. **The project approach** popular with early childhood educators has even greater potential for elementary and middle school minds.

Project-based approaches are…
* *structured* by adults (vs. spontaneous play, which is internally-shaped by the child) to promote academic, practical, and social growth goals as well as fun
* *open-ended*, with many ways of doing the task(s) and many potential outcomes
* *challenging* to imagination and critical thinking (not just drill or time-fillers)
* *experiential*, hands-on, focusing on practical tasks (arranging the room, checking for germs, landscaping) or contrived (scavenger hunt, obstacle course)
* *individual or collaborative* developing personal talents or teamwork

Ideas for activities can come from adults, children themselves, books or the Internet…
* Science: design a paper plane that can carry a pencil or paper car that rolls in a wind
* Art: build a sculpture from trash
* History: write and illustrate a children's story about growing up 100 years ago
* Drama: role play characters from a favorite book or story
* Sports: plan and build (with help from teens and adults) a skate park
* Community Service: sewing and distributing sleeping bags to the homeless
* Language/Social: maintain a bulletin board or newspaper

Key components of adult involvement are…
* encouraging the child to talk about what he or she is planning to do
* helping break the project into manageable chunks of activity
* suggesting strategies or skills for accomplishing a task
* supporting and applauding efforts (including allowing children to make mistakes)
* assisting when children get "stuck" at one point in the project process
* reflecting with children on what was learned and how they might do things differently

Sources: David Alexander. (2000). The learning that lies between play and academics in after-school programs. National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), The Wellesley Centers for Women www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC More activity ideas are available at www.schoolagenotes.com and www.theactivitiesclub.com

Informal routines complement structured activity for varied fun and learning…
* Outdoor recreation: organized games or free play
* Reading time: reading aloud or personal quiet reading time
* Computer/Internet activity: open use of games, simulations, creative arts, or exploration

No More School: Effective Homework and Tutoring

Completing homework or remediation in after-school programs helps children stay on task, access expertise and resources, and build relationships through learning. Homework centers also help families focus on practical and relationship priorities after "pick-up," keeping dinner time, family time, bath time, and bed time ON TIME.

Making homework time a success

- *Create a learning center:* Reduce distractions and concentrate resources by arranging tables and materials (books, paper, pencils, calculators, etc.). Children can identify 3-4 key rules ("quiet, please") and appropriate décor to help promote learning. A check-off log provides a practical "ticket" to post-homework tutoring, recreation, or project activities. The study place (with their own creative name) might contain books for casual reading, problem solving games, or relaxing music with headphones. Flashcards, reading and math games, book-writing activities, and academic contests provide a variety of learning approaches and resources.

- *Tutoring center*: A place for children to get help from peers, teen mentors, or adults may be included in a learning center or separate to reduce distractions. Volunteer or paid tutors should be screened (for content knowledge and mentoring potential), trained (in communication and learning skills), and supervised (observed, coached by an adult). A tutor helps best when aiding organization, study habits, problem-solving, and providing encouragement to 1-4 students. A homework log tracking assignments, goals, progress, and improving grades can help both tutor and tutee structure their activity. When students need exceptional attention (e.g., physical, behavioral or learning disabilities), centers should work in concert with school personnel rather than trying to meet all needs by themselves.

- *Computer center*: Sometimes it is advisable to place computers near a tutoring center to access software or Internet sites for homework help. At other times, separating the two activities maintains a quiet homework environment. Different locations also permit use of a computer center for specialized activities (courses or structured events) for small groups. Software from outside the center should be screened for technical and developmental appropriateness. A center code on use of e-mail, Internet sites and printers should be posted and enforced.

- *Supervise lovingly.* The adult staff or volunteer should know something about learning skills, organization, coaching tutors and volunteers, and balancing warmth and discipline with children. If possible, a center supervisor who is in touch with or accessible to teachers and counselors

- ➢ For additional activities on homework help and learning games, see
  www.tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13 BJ Pinchbeck's Homework Helper
  www.ash.udel.edu/ash/index.htm Alphabet Superhighway games and learning

David Alexander. (2000). The learning that lies between play and academics in after-school programs. National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), The Wellesley Centers for Women.

Resources for Afterschool Issues and Programs

Organizations/Online

National School-Age Care Alliance
www.nsaca.org
Supports quality programs for school-age children

National Child Care Information Center
www.nccic.org
Provides links on information to help promote the child care delivery system

After School Site
www.after-school.gov
Information on finding federal dollars and building programs; links to web sites for all ages

National Performance Review
www.after-school.gov
Shopping Web site for parents, teachers, after-school providers, and kids for after-school resources

U.S. Dept of Justice Justice for Kids and Youth Home Page
www.usdoj.gov/kidspage
Provides information on crime prevention, staying safe, community service and criminal justice

U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services
www.hhs.gov
Info, curriculum stats, funding, policy data

U.S. Dept of Education
www.ed.gov
News on issues; reviews education-related publications and statistics

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care
http://nrc.uchsc.edu
Information on state regulations for child care centers, links on specific health and safety issues

Partnership for Family Involvement in Ed.
http://pfie.ed.gov
DoE publications on family and community involvement, including after-school

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
www.naeyc.org
Resources dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education (0-8 yrs)

Policy

Extension Cares Initiative
Multi-state project seeking to increase the quality, affordability, accessibility, availability, & sustainability of child care program through partnerships. For more information, explore:
www.reeusda.gov/extensioncares/

Air Force-USDA Initiative
Contracted project to improve training and quality of care produced resources & internships.
www.its.uidaho.edu/airforce/

Quality Guidelines

1. Safety: license or accreditation; check-in and check-out procedures; telephone for emergency; safe play areas; adequate adult supervision; age appropriate equipment; hazardous materials locked up; smoke-free facility; first aid/CPR trained staff; emergency instructions
2. Health and nutrition: water available at all times; nutritious snacks, meals; age-appropriate physical activities for all
3. Organization: develop goals; research-based; community-centered; coordinated with school; open communication; involving parents; engaged in evaluation; open to suggestion about program
4. Program staff: skilled/ qualified; meet child-adult ratio (1/12); patient, fair; contact parents regularly; sensitive to diversity; good conflict resolution, discipline; praiseful; challenge students to try new activities; good role models
5. Space: inviting and warm places, equipment for all types of activities and child needs
6. Activities & Time: variety; family like climate; age- & interest-appropriate challenges, options, skill training; convenient hours; affordable tuition

Source: Schwendiman, Jed and Jennifer Frager. *After-School Programs for Kids, Good for Communities*. NW Regional Ed. Lab Jan. 1999.
www.nwrel.org

Paradoxes: A Parting Thought

Sorting Out the Dilemmas of Afterschool Programming

Inferiority Complex: Comprehending linkages between youth clubs, tutoring, study projects, crime prevention, community service, arts options and entrepreneurial skills is a humbling experience (most don't want to work that hard or feel that overwhelmed). Yet grasping these connections (one at-a-time) and building a community-wide support network enhances the diversity of learning and service opportunities for youth.

Creative Financing: Rural and inner city communities with the fewest resources (funding, people, and activity options) most need investments in youth. Embracing these limits as challenges rather than deficits can spark creativity, resourcefulness, and collaboration (e.g., start with using youth as leaders and action-agents!)

Paradigm Paralysis: Each organization interested in afterschool will be tempted to shape the time in its own image: schools to offer more classes or support services, recreation to offer more sports or crafts, youth clubs to place all kids into project activities. Working together, and listening to youth themselves, an afterschool program can become something new, unique, and custom-fit to the kids and communities it serves.

Connect/Disconnect: When a program meets critical needs in a community (especially when there's lots of money and credit to pass around), everyone wants to be leader. Yet the most diverse, effective, and sustainable projects involve *collaboration* among all interested persons and groups. This seems like more hassle than it's worth to begin with and like an indispensable partnership once the ball is rolling.

Brainstorms or Headaches?: Expanding an existing program or initiating a new one raises new issues: recruiting youth or staff, risk management, training and quality activities, space, furniture, financing, etc. etc. Yet issues of recruitment, transportation, support, and parent involvement MUST be addressed for programs to reach the most at-risk youth and families.