
Students Continually Learning Throughout the School Day and the School Year

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This review....

- OST programs are part of a system of complementary learning supports across ages and settings
- Outcomes associated with participation
- Program quality and its links to outcomes
- The OST-school connection

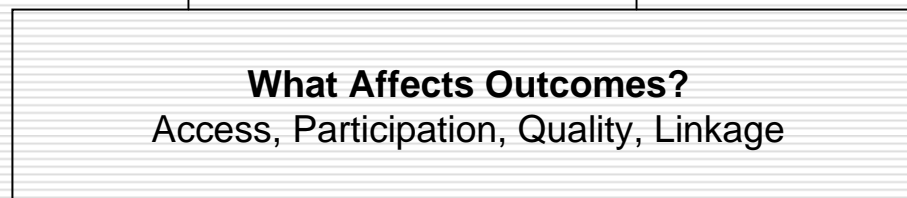
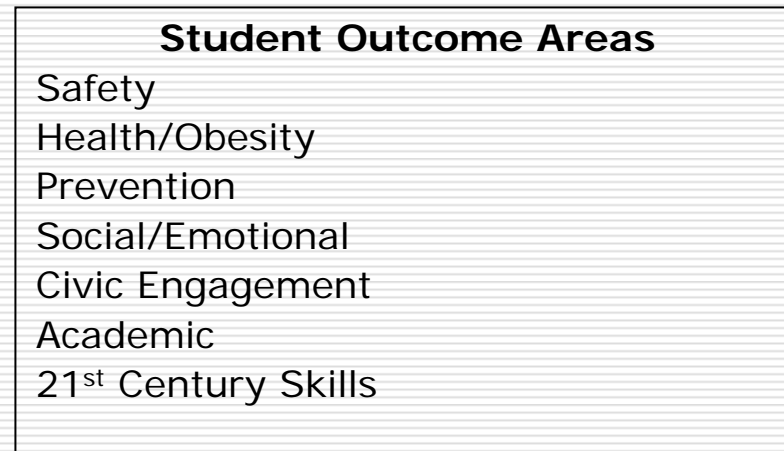


OST Programs Can Support School-Age Transitions

- Home-school, across the developmental span
- Early care to school-age care
- Elementary to middle school
- Middle to high school



What We Know About Student Outcomes



Safety Outcomes

- Peak hours of juvenile crime between the hours of 3pm and 6pm; at a minimum, afterschool programs can keep children and youth off the streets
- Teenagers more likely to have sex between 3 – 6 pm.



Health/Obesity Outcomes

- Decreased Body Mass Index
- Increased acceptance of overweight peers
- Less likely to be eating!



Prevention Outcomes

- Avoidance of drug and alcohol use
- Decreases in delinquency and violent behaviors
- Increased knowledge of safe sex and avoidance of sexual activity and pregnancy



Social/Emotional Outcomes

- Decreased behavioral problems
- Improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with others (peers, parents, and/or teachers)
- Increased community involvement and broadened world view
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Development of initiative
- Improved feelings and attitudes



Civic Engagement and Participation

- Involvement can lead to increased newspaper reading and attention to campaign coverage
- Increased civic knowledge and efficacy
- Increased problem solving and conflict resolution



21st Century Skill Outcomes

- Expert Thinking: Identifying and solving new problems
- Complex communication: Eliciting critical information and conveying a convincing interpretation of it to others
- Proficiency in the “basics”



Academic Outcomes

- Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations
- Higher school attendance (as measured by attendance and tardiness)
- Less disciplinary action (e.g., suspension)
- Better performance in school, as measured by achievement test scores and grades
- Greater on-time promotion
- Improved homework completion
- Engagement in learning



What Affects Outcomes?

- Access to Programs
- Participation in Programs
- Program Quality
- Linkage to Families, Schools, and other Components



PROGRAM ACCESS INFLUENCES OUTCOMES

- ❑ Availability of quality programming
- ❑ Many children and youth are in self-care
- ❑ Resources for after-school do not meet the demand, especially in low-income communities



PARTICIPATION INFLUENCES OUTCOMES

Participation =
Enrollment + Attendance
+ Engagement

For more information on participation, see: Weiss, H., Little, P., and Bouffard, S. (2005).
Participation in youth programs: Enrollment, attendance, and engagement. *New Directions in
Youth Development*, No. 105. <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0787980536.html>



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Enrollment---Getting youth in the door

- Contextual/external predictors
 - SES, gender, ethnicity, community resources
- Overcoming barriers to participation
 - Desire to relax/hang out; need to work; family responsibilities; boredom; safety/transportation
- Program quality features
 - Activities + staff + safety
- Program recruitment strategies
 - Youth voice is key



Contextual Predictors of Enrollment

□ Family Disadvantage Matters

- Family demographics provide a consistent picture of “winners and losers” when it comes to OST participation. In general, lower-SES and ethnic-minority children are at risk to lose out on these opportunities.

□ Neighborhoods Matter

- These neighborhood conditions explain, in large part, why lower-SES and ethnic-minority children often lose out on OST activities, particularly during the elementary school years.

□ Parenting Matters

- Across families, neighborhoods, and both early and late adolescence, parent support, stimulation, and involvement promote OST participation.



Attendance

- ❑ Participating vs. Not Participating
- ❑ Intensity (number of hours per week/month)
- ❑ Duration (history or participation)
- ❑ Breadth (number and variety of activities within and across programs)



How Participation Matters...

San Francisco Beacons

Combined

- ❑ Duration: number of sessions—fall, winter, spring
- ❑ Breadth: educational activities, other activities, or educational and other activities

Results: 3 sessions plus educational and other activities lead to:

- ❑ Increases in leadership, non-family support for participants, school effort, and sense of efficacy

3 sessions plus educational only activities lead to:

- ❑ Increases in school effort only



Engagement

- More than just “being there”
- Behaviors such as persistence, effort, and attention
- Emotions such as enthusiasm, interest, and pride in success
- Motivation
- Active cognitive involvement



How Engagement Matters...

Beeper Study

- School: high concentration/challenge, but low intrinsic motivation; this pattern increases with age, with 15 year olds lower motivation than 10 year olds
- Time with Peers/other leisure activities: low concentration/challenge, but high intrinsic motivation
- Structured voluntary activities (sports, art, hobbies, community-based organizations): high concentration/challenge AND high intrinsic motivation; pattern increases with age, with adolescents reporting increases in both over time in this context



PROGRAM QUALITY INFLUENCES OUTCOMES



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Two Aspects of Program Quality

- *Structural* features include child-to-staff ratios and group sizes; program management; and, staff qualifications, educational level and training, and length of time in service. In part, the indicators of these features have been informed by in-school classroom practices.
- *Process* features examine aspects of the program that directly affect a participant's experiences, such as youth-adult relationships and interactions, variety in program offerings, availability of activities that promote sustained cognitive engagement, opportunities for autonomy and choice, and, the organizational supports necessary to promote effective staff practices.



Youth Development Community's Definition of Quality

- ❑ Physical and psychological **safety**
- ❑ Appropriate **structure**
- ❑ Supportive **relationships**
- ❑ Opportunities for meaningful **youth involvement**
- ❑ Positive **social norms**
- ❑ **Learning-oriented**, with skill-building activities
- ❑ Balance of **autonomy and structure**
- ❑ **Connections** with school, home, and community

From Eccles & Gootman (2002) *Community programs to promote youth development*; Washington, DC: National Academy Press



Research indicates that certain aspects of program quality are significantly related to the following student outcomes:

- feelings and attitudes
- behavioral adjustment
- academic and school performance
- School attendance
- misconduct
- task persistence
- work habits
- peer relations
- long-term developmental trajectory



Aspects of Program Quality Which Research Indicates Have a Positive Impact on Outcomes

- Using evidence-based approaches to skill-building
- Appropriate supervision and structure
- Positive staff-child and peer-to-peer interactions
- Continuity of programming
- Opportunities for choice
- Staff characteristics/staffing
- Intentional linkage to the school day



Effects of Poor Quality

- ❑ Increased cigarette use among teens in settings removed from direct or indirect adult contact
- ❑ Self-care adolescents whose parents know their whereabouts are less susceptible to peer influence
- ❑ More time socializing with peers, coupled with a lack of adult supervision, impacts problem behavior.
- ❑ Participation in unstructured youth recreation centers related to more offenses as a juvenile and an adult



LINKAGE TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS INFLUENCES OUTCOMES



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Why Take a Complementary Learning Approach?

- Research-base is mounting that linkage matters (see the Evaluation Exchange, Vol XII, Nos. 1 & 2 in your binders)
- Linkage to...
 - Families
 - Community Institutions
 - Higher Education
 - Schools



Linkage to Families

- ❑ Can provide a new entry point for families to link to other components, such as schools
- ❑ OST-family linkage is considered a program quality standard
- ❑ Youth are more likely to participate in OST programs when their families are involved in their schools, and vice versa
- ❑ Family participation in OST programs can lead to improved family relationships



Linkage to Community

- Can provide more choices for youth
- Can leverage additional resources
- Can offer employment and training opportunities for older youth

BUT...community context affects participation

- Lower participation rates in OST programs and activities among low-income children is partly explained by where they live
- Lower participation rates is also partly explained by the influence that neighborhoods have on parenting behavior



Linkage to Higher Education

- ❑ Can facilitate transition to post-secondary experiences
- ❑ Participation in OST activities is associated with young people exploring post-secondary opportunities
- ❑ Young people want OST programs that focus on “future goals and aspirations”
- ❑ OST-higher-ed linkages begin in middle school



Linkage to Schools



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TASC Evaluation – Features of High-Performing After School Programs*

- ❑ Varied enrichment activities
- ❑ Experiences for mastery and skill building
- ❑ Intentional focus on relationship-building
- ❑ Strong leadership, staff, and supports
- ❑ **Sponsoring organization support**



Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS)*

- Staff engagement
- Youth engagement
- Communication with families
- Staff training and education
- Strong relationships with schools**

*Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study at
<http://www.wcwonline.org/mars/marsfinal.pdf>



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Recruitment and Retention*

- In HFRP's review of promising recruitment and retention strategies, OST-school linkage was a determining factor in participation, with **strong linkages to school resulting in higher levels of participation.**

*Lauver, S., Little, P., and Weiss, H. (2004). Moving beyond the barriers: Attracting and sustaining youth participation in OST programs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.



Five Strategies for OST-School Linkage

- Shared Space
- Shared Staff
- Supportive leadership
- Curriculum Alignment
- Shared Vision and Messages

