

Mandated After-School Programs for Low-Performing Title I Schools

Ivy Sherman

C.W. Post Campus/Long Island University

Abstract

This policy brief emphasizes the need for mandated, quality after-school programs, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods where they can be instrumental in turning around our lowest-performing schools. [As the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \(ARRA\) of 2009](#) invests billions of dollars into improving our educational system through the [Race to the Top program \(RttT\)](#), the present model of six and one-half to seven-hour school days does not meet the needs of our most struggling students and the schools they attend. The majority of our lowest-performing schools are located in the poorest communities in our nation's largest cities. Research suggests that economically and otherwise disadvantaged children are less likely than their more-advantaged peers to have access to out-of-school or complementary learning opportunities and that this inequity substantially undermines their development and chances for school success ([Weiss, Little, Bouffard, Deschenes, & Malone, 2009](#)). By extending the school day for our most disadvantaged students, we can provide them with after school programs that will offer additional academic support, exposure to sports and cultural programs, and access to nutritious snacks and dinner. When examining the available resources, educators and policy makers have access to cost efficient programs that benefit all stakeholders, especially our children.

Keywords: disadvantaged students, low-performing schools, after-school programs, Race to the Top, community-based organizations

Mandated After-School Programs for Low-Performing Title I Schools

The majority of disadvantaged, at-risk students face challenges such as dangerous neighborhoods, poverty, poor health and nutrition, language difficulties, and boredom which can lead to risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, criminal activity, and dropping out of school, to name a few. Federal education legislation has long assumed that K-12 schools could operate alone to level the learning field for poor children ([Weiss, et al., 2009](#)).

As winning states prepare their implementation plans to address the four pillars of the [Race to the Top \(RttT\)](#) program, the critical issue of children living in poverty must be addressed in order to turn around our lowest performing schools. One of the most immediate issues our federal government can address is mandating quality after-school and summer programs for our most disadvantaged students. There are many cost effective solutions that will not burden our already drained state and local education budgets.

Over the last 15 years, documented research by policy organizations and foundations such as [RAND Corporation](#), [Center on Education Policy](#), [The William T. Grant Foundation](#), etc., as well as independent researchers such as [The Harvard Family Research Project](#), has been able to identify the qualities that contribute to effective after-school programs. The challenge is to make these programs available to all students who need and qualify for them. By developing uniform criteria to identify our lowest

performing schools first – Title I schools that have 90% or greater of the student population eligible for free or reduced lunch and more than 50% of the students not meeting or exceeding the standards - we can begin to develop an action plan for greater funding for these programs in various communities across the country.

By scaffolding on the existing not-for-profit funding sources solicited by community-based organizations (CBO's) that presently subsist in the largest cities across our nation, additional business partnerships can be accrued in order to expand upon these successful programs. All students in need must have the opportunity to participate in safe, quality, extended school day programs in order to better their future and the future of their schools.

OVERVIEW

In the 1990's our country saw a tremendous increase in the number of federally- and privately-funded after-school programs. Impoverished communities saw a tremendous rise in crime after 3:00 PM and local government agencies realized drug and alcohol use among school-age children was increasing. Too many children were left on their own after formal school hours and their time was being used unproductively. After-school programs began to take on a sense of urgency to keep children safe and well cared for ([Neuman, 2010](#)).

Today, more than eight million children in the United States are enrolled in after-school programs ([Afterschool Alliance, 2009](#)). Schools are the largest providers of these

after-school programs, followed by YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, religious organizations and private schools ([Neuman, 2010](#)). Such programs include simple after-school care services to support working parents, programs specifically structured to help reduce problem behaviors, programs that reinforce academic achievement, and programs that offer access to sports, arts, crafts, and other activities. Local service providers may be a combination of CBOs, city agencies, and intermediary organizations ([Bodilly et al., 2010](#)).

Recent studies indicate that high-quality, well-managed and structured after-school opportunities can help youth develop critical academic, social, and emotional attributes and skills, especially if offered consistently and persistently over time ([Laurer et al., 2006](#); [Anderson-Butcher, 2010](#); Bodilly et al., 2010). With a wealth of research to support the need for quality after-school and extended school day programs and the data to reinforce the variables necessary to be successful, our lowest-performing schools can be turned around with coordinated efforts.

With sustainable funding presenting the biggest challenge, it is time to reach out and guide those who have varied interests in public education to where their dollars will have the biggest impact – turning around our lowest performing schools. By providing well-rounded and varied opportunities for our nation’s disadvantaged youth, young minds can be opened to experiences they may never have had. When provided with supervised and quality extended day activities, at-risk students have a significantly greater chance of becoming productive members of society. School attendance increases and students

develop more positive attitudes about school which result in increased student achievement. When the cycle continues productively, increased student achievement leads to better self-esteem and more worthwhile and realistic expectations for the future.

An excellent example of coordinating efforts is the work of [The Wallace Foundation](#). The foundation concentrates its efforts in New York City, Chicago, Boston, Washington D.C., and Providence, Rhode Island. Beginning in 2003 after many conversations with government and school officials, surveys and data analyses of existing after-school services in at-risk communities, a very well-coordinated endeavor was put into place. Planning grants were awarded to each of the five cities to ascertain the goals and needs of future programs and the gaps that were present in existing programs. From 2004-2010, the Wallace Foundation distributed over \$41 million dollars in implementation grants to the five cities. These funds were supplemented differently in each of the five cities. Depending on the locale, major sources of funding included a combination of private and public resources.

When students feel safe, connected to all peers, and are inspired to do their best, the long term results of mandated quality after-school programs should benefit all communities and increase achievement in our lowest-performing schools across the nation.

POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Since the overwhelming need arose for extended school day care and quality after-school programs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the federal government and private foundations have spent upward of one billion dollars on meeting this need. Foundations and government agencies have partnered with not-for-profit organizations, for example, [The After-School Corporation \(TASC\)](#) in New York City and the [21st Century Community Learning Centers Program](#), the largest federally-funded source of after-school programs in the nation, to ascertain needs and to implement extended school day programs. Because of the tremendous amount of money that has been invested, many effectiveness studies ([Kane, 2004](#); [James-Burdumy, S., Dynarski, M., & Deke, J., 2007](#); [Bodilly et al., 2010](#); [McCombs et al., 2010](#)) have been commissioned to policy organizations to determine the value of these programs. The studies have identified the differences in programs and the positive and negative dependent variables in each.

Research Results

Results of the impact of these after-school programs on student achievement have varied; however, different methods of collecting data were used. The array of researchers who conducted the evaluations used methods as simple as surveys, collecting information from students, parents, and school personnel to more detailed analyses of data by comparing academic achievement, suspension, attendance rates, homework completion, and parental participation in school activities to control groups or non-participants. In

addition, they compared baseline data to collected data after one year to three years in a program. Other regressors of the data analyses included gender, race/ethnicity, family structure, socioeconomic status, level of parent's education, mobility, prior school retention, and language spoken at home.

Although the evaluation data was not as promising as originally hoped for, the research has painted a very mixed picture of the effectiveness of these large scale after-school programs. One of the important outcomes of these studies has been valuable suggestions for program improvement. Different results are starting to become available as previous suggestions were put into place. The consistent findings across studies were the positive impact of regular attendance on academic achievement and increase in math scores was greater than English Language Arts scores.

Results from an after-school enrichment program in 24 Los Angeles elementary schools showed, for example, that 75% of the children liked school more after participating in the program. Their parents reported less tension at home, teachers reported improved student behavior, students' grades improved and school-based crime dipped by a striking 40 to 60% ([Afterschool Alliance, 2009](#); [Anderson-Butcher, 2010](#)).

Impact of Policy

Since the creation of this policy is regulatory – one that looks to mandate an extended school day with viable after-school programs for our lowest performing schools

- concerns by various groups are anticipated. The policy has many stakeholders who will be affected in different ways. Students and their parents will benefit instantly from free after-school programs. As shown in Table 1, free afterschool programs are not readily

[Insert Table 1 about here]

available to those students who would benefit from them the most. With the inclusion of enough programs to meet the needs of all students who attend low-performing schools, safe and supervised environments that provide quality enrichment and academic activities will help to change the face of poverty by addressing the whole child. The effect of quality after-school programs can take at least two years before they have an overall impact on student achievement ([McCombs et al., 2010](#)). State education departments, local educational agencies, and school administrators will feel longer-term effects, as more recent studies have shown, when student achievement begins to increase.

One of the strongest factors in improving student achievement outside the formal school day has been the impact of direct-teacher instruction or small group tutoring. Meta-analyses indicated small but statistically significant positive effects of after-school programs on both reading and mathematics student achievement and larger positive effects of programs with specific characteristics such as tutoring in reading ([Lauer et al., 2006](#)). Earlier evaluation studies ([Bodilly et al., 2010](#)), have found that when after-school programs are located in a child's home school, employing teachers from the school, there is a positive effect on the quality of instruction. With the inclusion of

certified teachers to implement an academic component, teachers can now be counted among the stakeholders who will benefit from additional compensation, unless of course, the school day is eventually extended, a recommendation of this policy, and has overall contractual obligations. The teachers' unions and the entire educational community will be impacted if the policy evolves into an extended school day for all students. State legislators will be responsible for passing the legislation that mandates after-school programs for our lowest-performing schools, therefore, making them key policy actors in this school reform agenda. Local educational agencies, community-based organizations, and individual school communities can also be counted as policy actors within this reform as they are ultimately responsible for implementing the mandate. It is expected that major funding will continue from non-government sources which adds them to the list of policy actors included in the implementation of this policy.

Funding

Quality after-school programs are costly. There are many cost factors that impact the effectiveness of good programs. First and foremost is personnel. When certified teachers are recruited and paid wages similar to their contractual per-hour rate, costs are driven up. Many programs also include a snack and dinner. In addition, materials, off-site experiences, and transportation, when needed, can also greatly impact the cost of funding these programs.

This school reform strategy should be encouraged and supported through public funding, however, in these uncertain financial times there are other options. Since this is a redistributive policy as well as a regulatory one, a successful and viable solution for funding the resources needed to implement quality after-school programs have been the inclusion of not-for-profit business partnerships and charitable foundations. Presently, both large- and small-scale programs are run by community-based organizations which are financed through inducements and/or grants by these large investors. In addition, the inclusion of Title 1 funds can offset costs and can be used to help sustain the costs of quality programs. When low-performing schools receive their share of [RttT funds](#), the money can be used in lieu of Title I funded initiatives so Title I funds can be freed up to offset costs or enhance after-school programs. For example, Title I funding can pay for small group or one-to-one tutoring in an after-school program, which has already resulted in positive student outcomes. RttT funds are not identified for after-school use and, therefore, could possibly supplant Title 1 funds that are used during the formal school day. It is also imperative that [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) funding is distributed to all school districts that meet the criteria. The biggest challenge will be capacity-building so these programs can be sustained as long as necessary.

Implementation

The most important factor in implementing a quality after-school program is the coordination of efforts by the policy actors. Once interested CBO's are identified by local educational agencies and request for proposals have determined interested business

partnerships and/or private grants and foundations, the planning process can begin.

Collaboration between the individual schools and the CBO's must be strong.

Identification of the lowest-performing schools based on state test scores, attendance records, and Title 1 eligibility is next. For the purpose of this policy, we are using the following criteria:

- 90% of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- 50% or less have achieved proficiency in reading and/or mathematics

Needs assessments are done to determine the needs of the community and the local educational agency. Meetings between district and school officials, CBO's, parents and school staff is arranged and goals and implementation guidelines are established based on research. Programming begins and students and staff are recruited. Snacks, meals, and materials are secured. Means of assessment are established and on-going evaluations are built into the program guidelines in order to assess effectiveness and program goals.

Outcomes

Overall, if mandated after-school programs are implemented with integrity and adhere to the established research-based guidelines, the long-term effects can help to turn around our lowest-performing schools. Ultimately, the results can address the needs of at-risk families and those students living in poverty. Parents can work without worrying about the whereabouts of their children after 3:00 PM. Students will gain better attitudes about school and improve upon their goals for the future. Students will also gain exposure to non-academic experiences which have been proven to increase academic

achievement ([Laurer et al, 2006](#)). Because the research is vast, policymakers have the knowledge to make this work for all stakeholders.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The dire need and positive academic, social, and societal effects of after-school programs are well-documented. As [Fowler \(2009\)](#) states, successful policies are “well-mapped territories.” The following are recommendations to ensure policy success based on the analyses of trends in effectiveness studies:

- Parents who have eligible children who are recommended for the program must commit to their child’s attendance in the program. Duration and frequency are critical to a program’s effectiveness and to favorable student outcomes.
- National standards for after-school programs need to be established so there is consistency for all stakeholders. Schools must align their formal school day program with their after-school program so the school delivers one cohesive message that transitions seamlessly across the entire day.
- After-school programs must incorporate academic, cultural and sports programs into the extended-day curricula.
- Guidelines for program coordination among all policy actors must be clear.
- Schools must have late buses so no child is excluded due to distance or disability.
- Race to the Top funds should be permitted to support this reform strategy.
- Shared integrated data systems need to be in place so access to data is available to all stakeholders, program implementation and alignment is monitored, student

attendance and outcomes are consistently evaluated, and spending is appropriately supervised and supported. All aspects of the program must be transparent.

Conclusion

Because of the inequities that exist between advantaged and disadvantaged students during non-formal school hours, the failure to redefine learning and where and when it takes place will prevent our country from truly educating all children. Good after-school programs provide experiences that are distinctive from the formal school day. They enable students to use their skills and talents in the practice of interesting activities ([Neuman, 2010](#)).

By developing legislation that mandates quality after-school programs in our lowest-performing schools, all stakeholders have ownership. After-school programs administered by CBO's help to increase community and business involvement. Not-for-profit organizations rely on large corporations and/or foundations for funding, and therefore, can increase career awareness and work opportunities. The investment will assist in facilitating a shared accountability within the community resulting in greater interest.

In order for all students to be college and career ready and globally competitive, the outcomes may eventually lead to a longer school day for all students – one that provides academic, social, and emotional equity for all.

References

Afterschool programs level the playing field for all youth. (2010, October 13).

Afterschool Alliance. Retrieved from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

Anderson-Butcher, Dawn (2010). The promise of afterschool programs for promoting school connectedness. *The Prevention Researcher*, 17(3), 11-20.

Bodilly, S.J., McCombs, J.S., Orr, N., Scherer, E., Constant, L., & Gershwin, D. (2010).

Hours of Opportunity: Lessons from five cities on building systems to improve after-school, summer school, and other out-of-school time programs (Vol. 1).

Retrieved from Rand Corporation website:

<http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1037.html>

Center on Education Policy. (2010, February). *Better federal policies leading to better schools*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Dietel, R. (2009, November). After-school programs: Finding the right dose. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(3), 62-64.

Fowler, F.C. (2009). *Policy studies for educational leaders* (3rd ed.). Boston,

Massachusetts: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

James-Burdumy, S., Dynarski, M., & Deke, J. (2007). *When elementary schools stay open late: Results from the national evaluation of the 21st century community learning centers program* (Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 2007 29:296). Retrieved from Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis website

<http://eepep.aera.net> doi: 10.3102/0162373707309077

Kane, T. J. (2004). *The impact of after-school programs: Interpreting the results of four recent evaluations*. Working paper of the William T. Grant Foundation, January 16, 2004.

Lauer, P.A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, S. B., Apthorp, H. S., Snow, D., & Martin-Glenn, M. L. (2006). Out-of-school time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 275-313.

McCombs, J.S., Bodilly, S.J., Orr, N., Scherer, E., Constant, L., & Gershwin, D. (2010). *Hours of opportunity: Profiles of five cities improving after-school programs through a systems approach* (Vol. 3). Retrieved from Rand Corporation website: www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR882.html

Neuman, S. B., (2010, April) Empowered – after school. *Educational Leadership*, 30-36.

United States Education Department. 2009. *Race to the top fund*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

Weiss, H., Little, P., Bouffard, S. M., Deschenes, S. N., & Malone, H. J. (2009, April). Strengthen what happens outside of school to improve what happens inside. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(8), (592-596).

Table 1.

A table indicating programs based on three key factors – cost, transportation, and room. The table is divided into three major categories – fee-based programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (federally-funded), and school- or district-operated after-school programs. Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast response Survey System (FRSS), After-School Programs in Public Elementary Schools, FRSS 91, 2008.

Percentage distribution of public elementary schools with various types of after-school programs reporting the extent to which various factors hindered students from participating in the program: 2008

Factor and extent to which it hindered student participation	Fee-based stand-alone day care that was operated by the school or district ¹	21st Century Community Learning Center ²	School- or district-operated after-school programs other than fee-based stand-alone day care, stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs, or 21st Century Community Learning Centers ³
Cost to parents			
Not at all.....	23	†	73
Small extent.....	39	†	14
Moderate extent.....	28	†	9
Large extent.....	10	†	3
Lack of/inadequate transportation home from program			
Not at all.....	46	53	43
Small extent.....	32	34	31
Moderate extent.....	15	9	13
Large extent.....	8	4	13
Insufficient slots in the program			
Not at all.....	68	50	48
Small extent.....	12	21	30
Moderate extent.....	12	15	9
Large extent.....	9	14	12

†Not applicable; question was not asked in survey.

¹Based on the estimated 10,500 or 21 percent of public elementary schools that had fee-based stand-alone day care that was operated by the school or district.

²Based on the estimated 5,000 or 10 percent of public elementary schools that had a 21st Century Community Learning Center at the school.

³Based on the estimated 4,400 or 9 percent of public elementary schools that had other school- or district-operated stand-alone or broad-based after-school programs at the school.

NOTE: Schools were not asked to indicate the extent to which various factors hindered students from participating in stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), "After-School Programs in Public Elementary Schools," FRSS 91, 2008.