

## **Effect of After-School Programs**

### **The Issue**

After-school programs are not new, but they are increasingly more prevalent and popular. Parents of more than 15 million children say their child would participate in an after-school program if it were available in their community. Almost 90% of Americans support funding for good after-school programs in low-income neighborhoods. Both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives recently formed Afterschool Caucuses. What does current research tell us about the efficacy of such programs?

### **The Research**

High-quality research data are scarce. Researchers at Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), in a meta-analysis of available studies, found the following for after school tutoring:

- There were small but statistically significant effects on achievement in mathematics and reading.
- The time when programs were scheduled – before or after school or during the noon hour – did not have a significant influence.
- The programs were more effective at some grade levels than at others. The largest effect in reading was at grades K-2, while the largest effect in mathematics was at the high school level.
- The effect on student achievement was greater for programs that served students for at least 45 hours; however, the effects dropped off considerably when the programs exceeded 100 hours in math or 200 hours in reading.

Researchers for the RAND Corporation, in a review of the effectiveness of out-of-school programs, reported conclusions similar to those of the MCREL team. Their report also identified program components that were associated with desired outcomes. These included the following:

- A clearly stated mission that established high expectations.
- An environment that was safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally.
- A stable staff adequately trained to deliver the program and meet the needs of students.
- Inclusion of families and the community as partners in the program.
- Ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the program.

### **Practical Implications**

A survey of successful after-school programs conducted by the American Association of School Administrators found certain commonalities across those programs. A school community planning to initiate a new program or retool an existing one can benefit from these conclusions.

- Leadership – the center based staff, and all after-school staff – are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are committed to the task.
- Personnel in the after-school programs are well qualified and adequately paid.
- Programs contain both academic and non-academic content
- Discipline policies in the after-school program are consistent with those under which students operate during the school day.

### **Questions to Consider**

- What are the goals for the after-school program and how will providers measure whether they are meeting those goals?
- What procedures will promote a seamless flow between school-days and the activities and academics addressed in the after-school program?

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