

Preface

The concern about what takes place during the nonschool hours, especially when there is no direct supervision of children, has led to the creation and development of many afterschool initiatives. The reasons behind the surge of interest in afterschool programs have to do with the culmination of many different factors. With welfare reform, the number of working mothers, double-parent families needing supervision of children, single-parent families, and violence in communities, low academic performance and juvenile delinquency in general have increased. Families, political parties, and communities are coming together to address a critical need for afterschool supervision of school-age children (Mott Foundation, 1999). This issue is indisputable, and everyone agrees that there is a need. A big question, however, is what to do during the nonschool hours and how to do it.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) are the most publicized federal initiative created for afterschool and summer school in a long time. The 21st CCLCs were created to provide safe and enriching environments for school-age children during the nonschool hours. They were conceived in an attempt to provide enhanced learning opportunities in a safe, drug-free environment for children during the nonschool hours, but the one stipulation was that the centers had to be housed in school buildings (de Kanter, Pederson, & Bobo, 1997). In a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Education and the Mott Foundation, money was made available to establish afterschool programs around the country in 1997, and 3 years later this effort is still being funded.

This book was conceived about 5 years ago after having several discussions with administrators, policymakers, principals, teachers, and researchers involved in afterschool programs. The administrators were applying for funding, policymakers were providing funding, the principals and teachers were receiving funding, and all were wondering what to do with it. Researchers were wondering, "What works?" Actually, this was the basic question on the minds of all the aforementioned stakeholders.

However, in the attempt to answer this question, it became clear that there was no simple answer. Before being able to answer the question about what works during the afterschool hours, it was important to investigate issues such as the needs and goals of the program, the goals and expectations of

the funders, the services provided in the various settings, the populations being served, the obstacles to implementation, and a combination of all these. The answer to the question “What works?” evolved from a few phrases to sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and eventually, this book. Investigating these questions was just the first step. Beyond this book, my ultimate goal as a researcher is to investigate afterschool programs that show either evidence of promise or evidence of effectiveness during the nonschool hours. Thus when I began my search, I asked various types of programs to provide program descriptions and evidence of effectiveness. From the program descriptions, it became evident that although there were numerous programs around the country, many had similar functions and structures, served similar populations, and had similar goals and intentions. However, they had varying evidence of promise or effectiveness. This book is structured so that if readers have specific questions about how to use afterschool programs, the titles of the chapters will lead them to the programs that will best benefit the needs of the population in question.

Overview of the Book

The first chapter details the steps taken to find and select programs reviewed in the book, provides a brief overview of the various programs, and presents the standards for determining whether a program is categorized as effective or promising. Finally, it explains the term *evidence of effectiveness* and encourages readers to structure the evaluation of their programs so that they are ultimately able to provide this information.

The second chapter explores language arts programs that have been, or could be, used during the afterschool hours. Over the past few years, a lot of emphasis has been placed on reading and writing during the school hours. There have been several debates in the field of literacy as to which approach is best suited for teaching reading. Rather than engage in a debate about phonics versus whole language, it is more practical to understand what concepts and skills are essential to developing as a fully equipped good reader. Phonemic segmentation, orthographic awareness, metacognitive skills, comprehension skills, and graphophonemic awareness (awareness of the relationship between graphemes and phonemes) are all equally important components of the reading process. It is valuable to focus on programs that have some or all of these components and how they can be used to effectively improve weak reading skills. To get the most out of the program, the instructors should find the areas in which their students or the current reading packages are lacking or weak and implement these programs in conjunction with the programs currently being used. For example, if a program does not teach comprehension skills, the instructors might decide to use a program that focuses specifically on this skill in its afterschool reading component that also teaches comprehension skills to complement the decoding, writing or other

skills being taught. Chapter 2 does not select one program over another but, rather, encourages the reader to select the program that best suits the needs of the students and teachers in the afterschool program.

The third chapter addresses academically oriented, enrichment, afterschool programs. These programs are unique in that they cover areas beyond the basics and tend to be nonremedial. These programs can be used to enrich students in the areas of science, reading, mathematics, and social studies. The programs covered in this chapter did not necessarily originate in universities or school settings. Rather, they were developed externally either by for-profit or not-for-profit organizations.

As of now, none of these programs has solid evidence of effectiveness, but they are included in this book because they are widely used, and some of the programs are undergoing preliminary evaluations. School-based afterschool programs intending to adopt these programs might find this chapter and Chapter 7 on evaluation particularly helpful.

The fourth chapter addresses tutoring programs. This chapter differs from others in that it specifically addresses volunteer tutoring programs, with the exception of Project IMPACT, which is a study skills program. This chapter was added because many programs receiving afterschool funding often find themselves underfunded and understaffed. They are usually in need of additional instructors or tutors, to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio, and cannot always afford to pay the stipends that should be paid to credentialed teachers. Some programs choose to hire well-intentioned volunteers, who are willing to perform the duties of tutors with minimal pay. Although this idea may seem noble, programs must be careful, because good intentions do not always lead to good outcomes. In fact, Wasik (1997) showed that very few volunteer tutoring programs have solid evidence of effectiveness. This does not mean that programs should not consider using volunteer tutors but, rather, that they should train them and ensure that they are able to provide effective services. The chapters on creating an effective afterschool program and on evaluation address this topic. Some of the programs in Chapter 4, such as Howard Street Tutoring Program, are comprehensive programs, and others, such as Reading Recovery, focus on individual skills.

The fifth chapter addresses community-based afterschool programs. Some of the most widely known and funded programs, such as the New York City Beacons program and the Los Angeles's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST), are community-based programs housed in schools. Such programs have social, community, and academic goals and components as a part of their main infrastructure. For newer programs attempting to follow in the footsteps of some of these already established programs, Chapter 5 provides a brief description of these components and evidence of evaluation or effectiveness.

Chapter 5 also addresses community-based afterschool programs such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Boys and Girls, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. These programs are included because, although many

afterschool programs may have academic foci, the chapter on building effective afterschool programs addresses the relevance of additional components of afterschool programs, such as recreational, cultural, and character development programs. For schools seeking additional components to add to their programs, this chapter provides some information on additional programs that could provide services to the students and their families beyond academics during the school year.

Chapter 6 was written as a result of several requests from principals, administrators, teachers, and the publishers. The main topic of concern was “How do we create an afterschool program now that we have the money?” However, the creation and planning of afterschool programs begins long before the program receives funding. In other words, if programs wait until after they have received funding to begin to plan and create the program, then they will end up having to play catch-up. This chapter begins with the needs assessment and ends with the effects of the various types of programs on children. School-based programs intending to create afterschool programs should use this chapter as a resource and also especially examine the section on training, obstacles to success, and the importance of creating the various components.

The seventh chapter addresses the topic of evaluation, which harks back to the basic question that fueled this book: What works? The initial literature search disclosed that there were few programs with evidence of effectiveness during the afterschool hours, and thus the mission to broaden the search began. One of the constant threads across the various studies was that although the programs may have undergone evaluation, the evaluation designs were not rigorous. The goal of Chapter 7 is to guide afterschool-funding recipients as to how to conduct evaluations of their programs. This chapter covers the relevance of evaluation, different types of evaluation, various design models, and, finally, the limitations of program evaluation. The chapter concludes by encouraging readers to use the best components of evaluation that will complement and ultimately improve their programs.

The eighth and concluding chapter discusses the factors that make afterschool programs successful. Components such as specific goals, professional development, training, and evaluation are identified. This chapter also addresses barriers to participation in afterschool programs, with the most frequent barriers being transportation, cost, and, sometimes, responsibility for siblings.

Chapter 8 revisits the topic of what works and challenges readers to discover what works for their programs. In actuality, there is no single program that will address the needs of every community, but there are some underlying components such as planning, training, evaluation, structure, and content that are critical factors for success, regardless of the goals of the afterschool program. The answer to what works really depends on what the community needs. The readers are invited to take the components of the program that might work for them and use these to create or improve and evaluate

their own afterschool programs—so that they will ultimately be able to create sustainable, effective, and replicable programs that can provide evidence of effectiveness. This chapter concludes with advice to invest more funding not only in afterschool program implementation but also in afterschool evaluation, for it is only when programs are able to show evidence of effectiveness that they can definitely expect to sustain themselves beyond the pilot stage.

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