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MAKING THE CASE:

A FACT SHEET ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL Time

National Institute on Out-of-School Time

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Children and youth today

There are approximately 60 million children and youth, ages 5-17, living in the U.S.[1]

The racial and ethnic diversity of America's children and youth (under 18) continues to grow. According to 2000 Census data, 68.6% were white, 17% reported Hispanic ethnic origin, 15.1% were black or African American, 7.6% indicated "other", 4% chose 2 or more races, 3% were Asian, and 1% were American Indian. [2]

In 2005 approximately 12 million children (17%) in the United States live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level of \$19,000 for a family of four. Research suggests that in order for families to meet their most basic needs families realistically need an income that equals nearly two times their current earnings. [3]

In approximately 60 % of married-couple families with children under the age of 18, both parents work outside the home. Among single-parent families in 2004, the mother was employed in 72% of those maintained by women, and the father was employed in 83% of those maintained by men. 55% of all children in low-income families have at least one parent who works full-time, year-round. Research on school-age children (those between the ages of 5 and 12) show that an estimated 4 million regularly spend time without adult supervision. [4, 5]

Children and youth spend time after school in a variety of ways

America After 3 PM reports that 11% (6.5 million) of the nation's youth are in afterschool programs and 25% (14.3 million) care for themselves in the afternoons. [6]

Nearly a million school-age children participate in afterschool academic enrichment programs and other youth development and support activities under the auspices of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center Program. [7]

Nearly 70% of children ages 6-14 have a television in their bedrooms and nearly 50% have video game systems in their bedrooms. According to Nielsen Media Research children in that age range watch an average of 23 hours of television per week, up from 21 hours in 1992. [8]

A study by Public Agenda showed that nearly 36% of kids report that they spend time home alone after school at least once a week. Sixteen percent (16%) spend at least three to four days a week alone and 13% spend five days a week alone at home after school. This same study reported that 57% of middle and high school students participate in some organized activity every day, or almost every day, after school. When surveyed, 85% of students say that kids who participate in organized activities during the after school hours are better off than those who do not. [9]

Researchers have associated watching violence on TV to an increased likelihood that children and teens will display physically aggressive behaviors, exhibit relational aggression (behaviors that harm others through damage or threat of damage to relationships, feelings, friendship, or group inclusion), and assume the worst in their interactions with others. [10, 11]

More than half of teens say they would not watch so much TV or play video games if they had other things to do after school. [12]

A poll conducted by Junior Achievement of 1,142 youth between the ages of 8 and 18 indicated that one-in-five youth are not interested in the types of programming offered at afterschool programs. Such research indicates

that there is not enough variety in programs to attract and retain youth participation. Youth who were surveyed reported that they would be more interested in attending programs that provided activities in the arts, spending time with mentors, and learning about careers and sports. [13]

Anderson-Butcher et al. reported that in a sample of 150 youth attending Boys and Girls Clubs of America, friendships were a major consideration when deciding whether or not to attend an afterschool program. [14]

When asked what they desire from afterschool programming parent reactions are mixed: 54% of parents feel that children need a break from academics during the afterschool hours while 38% of parents feel that children need afterschool programs that are focused on academic skills. [15]

In a survey of 94 cities conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, city leaders indicated that afterschool program capacity is growing but only about 35% of children needing afterschool care are actually enrolled in programs. [16]

Health and well-being

Rates of participation in physical activity have declined in the past 30 years for both children and youth. More than a third of young people in grades 9–12 do not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity. Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped to 28% in 2003. [17]

According to the Centers for Disease Control 61.5% of children ages 9-13 do not participate in any organized physical activity outside of school hours, and 22.6 % do not engage in any type of physical activity during their free time. Participation rates are even lower for urban children. [17]

The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled since 1980. Among children and adolescents aged 6-19 years, 16%—over 9 million young people—are considered overweight. Studies show that 70 percent of overweight kids aged 10-13 years will be overweight or obese as adults. In 2003, only 22% of youths ate the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. As a result of being overweight, children and youth are at an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, elevated blood pressure, and low self-esteem. [18-21]

Lack of adult supervision and participation in self-care for both children and adolescents have been linked to: increased likelihood of accidents, injuries, lower social competence, lower GPAs, lower achievement test scores, and greater likelihood of participation in delinquent or other high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sex [22-25]. Teens who are unsupervised during afterschool hours are 37% more likely to become teen parents. [26]

The peak hours of juvenile crime are from 3:00 to 6:00 PM, and violent juvenile crime soars in the first hour after school gets out. These after school hours are also the peak hours for kids to get hooked on cigarettes, to be killed in a household accident, to experiment with dangerous drugs, to engage in sexual intercourse and to get hooked on violent video games. In addition, 3:00 to 6:00 PM is the prime time for 16- and 17-year olds to be in or cause a car crash, the leading cause of deaths for youth. [27]

Children and youth benefit from participation in afterschool programming

A properly designed afterschool program can have strong positive effects on children's academic, social, and emotional lives. This is especially true for students whose personal circumstances put them at higher risk of school failure. Some research even suggests that what students do during their out-of-school time hours has as much bearing on their success as what they do during the school day. [28]

Halpern reported that afterschool programs fill gaps in communities; they complement the institutions of family and school by providing opportunities and resources that these other institutions are unable to provide. This is especially true for low- and moderate-income children. Afterschool programs provide an environment that supports the social and interpersonal dimensions of a child's development by responding to the interests and concerns of participants [29]. According to Walker and Arbretton, it is important to provide children and youth with environments like this which cultivate social relationships and provide opportunities for participants to "hang out" during the non-school hours. [30]

There is growing evidence that quality out-of-school opportunities matter – that they complement environments created by schools and families and provide important "nutrients" that deter failure and

promote success – and that they matter in ways that are observable and measurable. [31]

Go Grrrls in Tucson Arizona is a preventative afterschool intervention program focusing on promotion of middle school girls' positive psychosocial development. In a random assignment evaluation, the intervention group reported significantly greater increases in body image, assertiveness, positive attitudes regarding attractiveness, self-efficacy, and self-liking and competence. [32]

Recent research by Gambone, Klem, and Connell identified two crucial elements to what matters most in helping youth reach healthy adult outcomes – the achievement of developmental outcomes such as learning to be productive; to connect with adults and peers; to navigate through diverse settings – and the availability of supports and opportunities such as supportive relationships with adults and peers; challenging activities and learning experiences; and meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership. [33]

Afterschool programs can increase engagement in learning by providing middle school students with opportunities to meet needs that schools often can't, e.g., personal attention from adults, a positive peer group, and activities that hold their interest and build their self-esteem (Vandell, et al. 1996; Garnezy, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Clark, 1987; Masten, et al. 1990; Comer, et al., 1984; Werner, 1993; Halpern, 1992; As reported in Miller, 2003). [34]

Afterschool programs can offer intangibles such as – the opportunity to engage in activities that help young people realize they have something to contribute to the group; the opportunity to work with diverse peers and adults to create projects, performances and presentations that receive accolades from their families and the larger community; and the opportunity to develop a vision of life's possibilities that, with commitment and persistence, are attainable. [34]

In New York City, afterschool programs started by Boys and Girls Clubs in selected public housing developments saw significant drops in drug use, presence of crack cocaine and police reports of drug activity. Drug activity decreased 22 %, juvenile arrests dropped 13 %, and vandalism in the public housing developments decreased 12.5%. At the same time, parental involvement increased, compared to public housing developments not selected to implement the afterschool programs. [35]

The Transition to Success Pilot Project, a collaborative evaluation which aimed to strengthen academic and social development by providing afterschool programming to at-risk children, found that those who participated in the afterschool programs were more likely to be promoted to the next grade than those who only received tutoring. Additionally the project found those who were enrolled in afterschool programs passed English, Language and Math classes at a higher rates and were absent from school fewer days than those who only received tutoring. [36]

In a meta-analysis of 56 studies of out-of-school time programs researchers at McREL found that out-of-school time strategies can have positive effects on the achievement of low-achieving or at-risk students in reading and mathematics; that the timeframes for delivering OST programs (i.e., after school or summer) do not influence their effectiveness; and that OST strategies need not focus solely on academic activities to have positive effects on student achievement. [37]

Adolescent mental and emotional well-being is associated with teens' environments. Links have been found consistently between teens' well-being and environments that are emotionally positive and warm and that provide support for developing adolescent autonomy. Some research suggests that positive experiences in one area (for example, in the family, among peers, at school, through youth community service...) may lessen the effect of negative experiences in other areas. Adolescents who spend time in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities for them experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development. [38, 39]

The Harvard Family Research Project has reported on several evaluations of afterschool programs focused on increasing the physical activity levels of children and youth. These evaluation results showed that the afterschool programs did increase levels of physical activity in participants. [40, 41]

The growing need for 21st century skills

There remains a profound gap between the knowledge and skills most students learn in school and the knowledge and skills demanded for the 21st Century. Students need to learn academic content through real-world examples, applications and experiences both inside and outside of school. [42]

Afterschool programs can serve as an entry-point for many children and youth to both develop 21st Century skills and expand their exposure to and increase their ability to navigate new forms of technology. [43] Kugler [44] notes that afterschool computer clubs are often the most popular after-school activities and can serve as an entry point to other academic learning experiences. Other research suggests that applications focused on multimedia projects, which are often highly attractive to teens, can lead to success in high-order thinking, problem solving, and synthesizing different points of view. [45]

Youth tend to be more engaged in technology-oriented programs when they are given choices in activities, when program staff provide technological support, and when they are given opportunities for reflection, discussion, and interaction. [46] In general, teens are more attracted to program approaches that attempt to infuse technology into all program activities rather than having a “technology component” in the program which focuses primarily on teaching technology skills. [47]

Using technology in out-of-school time programs is one mechanism for complementary learning in that technology can provide a vehicle for supporting school day learning. Recent studies suggest that technology can be used as a tool in afterschool programs for attracting and retaining youth, to promote learning and development and as mechanism to build program infrastructure. However implementation of such programs can provide some challenges such as needs for special staffing, programming issues, technology-related costs and maintenance. [48]

The use of technology in afterschool programs can facilitate skill building that may lead to higher academic achievement, while being engaged in projects that seem very different from their school day activities. Technology can benefit afterschool programs whether through utilizing technology for homework help, skills training, web development, or job searching for older youths. [47]

The out-of-school time workforce

According to a survey conducted by AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, the out-of-school time workforce lacks a clear professional identity. When questioned about their job title, 207 different titles were reported for 350 respondents. Direct line staff alone reported approximately 20 job titles including: child care worker, instructor/teacher, youth

worker/leader, and recreation specialists. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (97 %) of OST staff believe that working in the OST field is a profession. However, only 38% think that people outside of this field view it as a profession. [49]

The out-of-school time field lacks a national professional development system. However, several statewide initiatives are in pursuit of building components for a statewide system. Alaska, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New York are at various states of developing core competencies, career lattices, and school-age credentials. Indiana and Missouri have launched a combined school-age and youth development credential. Local efforts are also underway in Baltimore, Chicago, Kansas City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. [50]

The characteristics and capabilities of the youth worker are paramount to program success, and programs for youth are most successful when youth workers are creative, well trained, skilled at building relationships, and can make long-term commitments to programs. Finding and retaining the right staff is critical to helping youth participants develop and sustain an interest in program participation. [51]

The Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS) of 78 afterschool programs in ten geographically and economically diverse school districts in Massachusetts, found that programs with more highly educated staff, both at the program director level and direct service levels, were rated significantly higher on elements of program quality, such as staff engagement, youth engagement, activities, and homework assistance. Additionally, the study found that higher wages were linked with higher quality programming while high staff turnover was linked with lower quality ratings in both youth engagement and homework assistance. [52]

Respondents to the 2001 National Career Development Survey of early childhood/school-age staff reported that stipends, wage supplement programs, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs were among their preferred strategies to combating staff turnover. [53]

Highly trained and engaged afterschool staff are critical to building relationships with students, teachers, volunteers and parents. However, many OST programs do not have the resources or capacity to provide the training necessary to achieve the outcomes that many programs strive to attain. [54]

In a national survey of afterschool programs (n= 273), California Tomorrow found that 56% of responding programs enroll youth from more than one language group, and one in four serve English Language Learners (ELL). Very few program directors reported having enough bilingual staff to work with these youth in their home languages, and even fewer have staff that are trained to effectively serve youth who speak little English. Half the programs that enroll a significant number of English learners do not have any staff who speak the home languages of the participants and their families. [55]

Credentialing, a certification process that recognizes an individual's performance based on a set of defined skills and knowledge, has been shown to increase the likelihood that recipients will seek further education, show modest increases in compensation and demonstrate a remarkably high retention rate. In those states with supportive policies and funding, as well as involvement with higher education institutions, the impact of credentialing is greater. [56]

Economic costs and benefits

Most families pay, an average of \$22 per week, per child for afterschool programs. [57] Findings from the MOST Initiative evaluation estimated that a full year program costs approximately \$4,000 per child. Costs drop to \$3,000 when space and utilities are donated. Administrative time and other in-kind donations are excluded from these estimates. [58]

A recent report calculates the potential national cost of ensuring developmental opportunities and supports for school-age youth (6-17) would be 144 billion dollars annually. That is a cost of \$2.55 per hour or \$3,060 annually per youth. The resulting return on every dollar is a gain of \$10.51 for every dollar invested. [59]

A study by the Rose Institute pertaining to California's Proposition 49 concludes that afterschool programs in California are cost-effective. The study indicates that the return to taxpayers ranges from \$2.99 to \$4.03 for every dollar spent on afterschool programs and the benefit to students attending afterschool programs ranges from \$2.29 to \$3.04 for every dollar spent on afterschool programs. Expenditures produce benefits in the areas of reduced child care costs, improved school performance, increased compensation, reduced crime costs, and reduced welfare costs. [60]

Public support continues to grow

The presence of afterschool programs in public schools has risen. In 2001, 67% of principals reported that their schools offer optional afterschool programs and 60% reported that their programs began within the past five years. [61]

Public polling shows strong evidence of public support for afterschool. Across all demographic and party lines, Americans see afterschool as a necessity. Voters say afterschool programs are key to keeping students out of trouble, and they want governments at all levels to provide more funds for these programs. [62]

A post-election poll conducted for the Afterschool Alliance showed that eight in ten voters agree that elected public officials should increase funding for afterschool programs. Seventy-six percent said that they would even support a tax increase if it meant increased funding for such programs. [63]

In a random survey of 1178 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors, respondents were asked to rank the impact of several strategies to reduce youth violence and crime. By more than a 4 to one margin, respondents chose providing afterschool programs for school-age youngsters and more educational child care programs for preschool children rather than hiring more police officers as having the greatest impact in reducing youth violence and crime. [64]

A bipartisan group of all 14 of the U.S. Senate's women sent a joint letter to President Bush urging him to provide enough funding to permit the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative to grow in the next fiscal year. The letter comes as the Administration is preparing its FY 2007 budget proposal, with the future of afterschool funding in the balance. [65]

Trends in public funding

Federal funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program began at \$750,000 in 1995. The FY 2006 funding provides \$981 million for the 21st CCLC afterschool initiative, reduced by about \$10 million from FY 2005. [65]

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) represents a significant public investment -- \$5 billion in federal dollars and an estimated \$2.2 billion in state funds in fiscal year 2006. In addition to these figures,

many states are transferring significant amounts of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to CCDF, and are directly spending TANF on afterschool programs and child care. [66]

In fiscal year 2004, 36% of 1.7 million children receiving CCDF subsidies were school-aged. Another 10% were kindergarten-age. For school-age children receiving subsidies, over half were in center-based programs, a third was in family child care homes, and 11% were in the child's own home. [66]

Despite increased funding, disparities in access and quality still persist. Programs in affluent or middle class neighborhoods were more likely to include direct instruction in the arts, enrichment activities, and sports, and are more likely to provide snacks or meals than programs in poorer neighborhoods. Wealthier communities are also more likely to have computer labs, playing fields, and gyms, open enrollment slots, and resources for art and enrichment materials. Programs in low-income areas have much tighter budgets, more facilities in need of repair, longer wait lists to get into the program, and higher staff-to-youth ratios. [55]

Strengthening the field

The MARS study enabled us to see the relationship between program characteristics and program quality and these findings can guide programs in creating and sustaining high quality programs. Some practical findings include: 1) programs need enough staff to provide youth with small groups and individual attention; 2) strong preparation by staff and good working conditions provide higher quality programming; 3) programs with good relationships with school personnel tend to be higher quality; 4) programs that were well-paced throughout the afternoon are more likely to have higher staff engagement and higher youth engagement. [52]

The delivery of program activities and opportunities to high school age youth during out-of-school time would be enhanced by a systemic approach with infrastructure elements, such as (a) funding collaborations; (b) planning and cooperation among stakeholders; (c) formal linkages between high schools, community, and local government organizations; (d) high school age program standards; (e) an agreed upon set of objectives; and (f) designated citywide leadership. [51]

Available evidence suggests that the best program and policy ideas are unlikely to be effective if they do not

include proper staff training, a well-developed infrastructure, and buy-in from parents and teens, including involving teens in program development. [67]

Developing a theory of change can help guide the identification of program goals, program elements, desired participant outcomes, and measures and data sources. A critical feature of developing a theory of change is to engage local afterschool partners, including program staff, program participants, families, and other community members in the development process. Getting buy-in from all program stakeholders ensures that the program will be grounded in the ideas, beliefs, and principles of the community. [68]

Programs that offer staff at all levels to have access to comprehensive training and educational opportunities enable them to strengthen their skills, develop their knowledge base, and advance along their chosen career path. Many innovative training and professional development initiatives exist. What communities, cities, and states need is an infrastructure that builds on and weaves together these often disparate efforts by creating a coherent system of support for out-of-school time professionals while improving services to young people. [69]

The explosion of before- and afterschool programs across the country are a verification of the growing demand for these types of supervised environments for children and youth among working parents, educators, child-welfare advocates and public officials. However, according to Proscio and Whiting, there are few well-established, coherent city-wide systems to support these programs on a funding, promotion, or regulatory basis. At least four cities (San Diego, Los Angeles, New York and Chicago) have laid the groundwork for a deliberate, organized system of out-of-school time programs and each of the four emerging systems are now more routine, better supported, and more important to the local community that they have been in the past. [70]

Afterschool programs should complement, rather than duplicate, services offered in the school and community in order to reach more students and sustain funding. Yet, after school programs should be familiar with the local school improvement plan in order to enhance program quality. [71]

The National Afterschool Association Standards “are designed to describe the best practices in out-of-school time programs for children and youth between the ages of five and 14.” The Standards are used by the National Afterschool Association and out-of-school time

programs throughout the country as a basis for a self-study process and program accreditation. For many out-of-school time programs having a national set of standards is viewed as a way of nurturing program improvement and maintaining quality care. Program standards can be a very powerful accountability tool for all out-of-school time and youth development stakeholders. [72]

The National School Board Association published a report on the value of afterschool programs developing connections with local school boards. A profile of eight school districts indicated that these connections can be very effective. In order for these connections to be as successful as possible, the NSBA recommends that school districts do the following: 1) conduct a needs assessment to find out the needs of the local community; 2) make a commitment to provide long-term programming to children and youth; 3) decide what you can realistically provide; 4) open yourself to community partnerships; 5) concentrate on quality programming; 6) connect with participants' parents; 7) evaluate and fine-tune your plans; and 9) keep moving forward. [73]

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