

***Beyond the Bell[®]:
A Toolkit for Creating Effective
Afterschool Programs***

Literature Review

January 2008

Jaime Stephanidis
Judith Murphy, Ph.D.



1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563-1486
800-356-2735 • 630-649-6500
www.learningpt.org

Copyright © 2008 Learning Point Associates. All rights reserved.

Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Methodology	1
Management	3
Communication	6
Evaluation.....	7
Linkages With the Traditional School Day.....	9
Collaboration and Community Building.....	10
Parent and Family Involvement.....	11
Program Delivery.....	12
Program Design	14
Conclusion.....	16
References	17

Introduction

As more of America's youth are being raised in single-parent and dual-earner families, quality afterschool programs are becoming a necessity. As afterschool programming moves into the forefront of people's minds, more research is generated on the components that make up quality programs and how youth benefit from these programs. In fact, Miller (2003) found that afterschool programs do have positive effects on youth outcomes (p. 6):

- “Youth benefit from consistent participation in well run, quality afterschool programs.”
- “Afterschool programs can increase engagement in learning.”
- “Afterschool programs can increase educational equity.”
- “Afterschool programs can build key skills necessary for success in today's economy.”

Beyond the Bell[®] is a suite of products designed by Learning Point Associates to help afterschool directors, coordinators, and staff create and sustain high-quality, effective afterschool programs. The suite provides afterschool resources and staff training that are practical, easy to use, and grounded in research and experience. Specifically, *Beyond the Bell: A Toolkit for Creating Effective Afterschool Programs* (3rd ed.) offers various tools that can be used in afterschool programming (McElvain, Caplan, Diedrich, Kaufman, & Walter, 2005).

The *Beyond the Bell Toolkit* is made up of eight chapters: “Management,” “Communication,” “Evaluation,” “Linkages With the Traditional School Day,” “Collaboration and Community Building,” “Parent and Family Involvement,” “Program Delivery,” and “Program Design.” Each chapter focuses on decision points as well as examples of how current afterschool programs are tackling universal operation issues.

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a synthesis of relevant studies to support the content of the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit* for afterschool programs.

Methodology

In 2007, staff at Learning Point Associates conducted an exhaustive review of the literature from 1996 onward that explored the various components of the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*. The process for collecting the literature included the following:

- Learning Point Associates staff conducted a search on ERIC and EBSCO databases as well as Google using the following keywords: “Beyond the Bell,” “logic model,” and “afterschool” and related terms (e.g., “youth development,” “program management”).

- Learning Point Associates staff also conducted a search on ERIC and EBSCO databases as well as Google using the following keywords: “family involvement” and “afterschool,” “community engagement” and “afterschool,” “evaluation” and “afterschool,” “program communication” and “afterschool,” and “advisory board” and “afterschool.”
- Learning Point Associates staff reviewed The Finance Project’s database for information on logic models and sustainability.
- Learning Point Associates staff reviewed the Harvard Family Research Project’s database for information on best practices in the field.
- Research reviews, meta-analyses, evaluations, conference presentations, and technical reports were examined.
- The endnotes and reference lists of relevant manuscripts were searched to locate additional studies, making a concerted effort to identify pertinent unpublished documents in order to avoid publication bias (Cooper & Hedges, 1994).

The following criteria had to be met in order for studies to be considered for inclusion in the review:

- Research had to be conducted in afterschool or out-of-school time programs directly.
- Research studies had to be conducted in the United States.
- Studies had to address at least one of the eight major topics addressed in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*.
- Qualitative and quantitative studies were included.
- Studies were included that identified practices associated with positive program outcomes.

Many studies examined positive effects on youth and secondarily noted the association of programmatic structure and organization as key aspects of “high-quality programs” and “promising practices.” These correlational studies were included in this review. Many afterschool program studies suffered from weak research designs or were descriptive rather than analytic in nature.

Management

The first chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Management,” focuses on the decisions that are made throughout the start-up and running of an afterschool program. Afterschool programs are a manifestation of the idiosyncratic components of the community. When an afterschool program is initially planned, it is essential to contact community stakeholders, such as potential partners, parents, and community organizers and leaders. Incorporating the interests and perspectives of diverse community stakeholders will provide a solid basis for a quality program (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005). Participation of various representatives from the community will provide valuable information required to identify the needs the program will address and assist in determining the program’s vision and goals. Chapter 1 includes information on creating the program’s vision, goals, and theory of change, which experts agree is critical to the success of a program (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005).

Once the program’s goals have been set, a logic model should be developed to ensure that the goals are carried out and that the vision remains at the forefront of the program’s goals. Hamilton and Bronte-Tinkew (2007) state that logic models stimulate clear thinking, preparation, and organization by providing a map of how to achieve the program goals. Having a logic model in place also ensures that the program is on the correct path to sustainability. A clear set of program goals provides the basis for developing a vision statement that is shared by all partners. “A clear vision serves as both the glue that holds the partnership together and as a rudder that directs its actions. If all of the partners are committed to the same goals, then they are better equipped to negotiate the inevitable differences of perspective and opinion that arise as they work together” (Deich, 2001, p. 16).

According to Vandell et al. (2005), the theory of change for effective afterschool programs incorporates both structural and institutional features as well as process and content features. Structural and institutional features “include staff qualifications and support, program size and group configuration, financial and physical resources, external affiliations, and efforts to sustain the program” (p. 4). Process and content features are those practices that participating children and youth experience directly.

A theory of change acknowledges the uncontrolled, idiosyncratic variables that exist, such as socioeconomic issues, family configuration, and neighborhood factors. The representation of the Model of the Theory That Guides the Study of Promising After-School Programs in the study by Vandell et al. includes family background, child prior functioning, and program dosage. In that study, the combination of the aforementioned features led to intermediate outcomes, such as improvement in attendance, social interactions, and academic discipline as well as longer term outcomes including improvement in academic achievement and reduction in negative social behaviors. When programs are evaluated, failure to consider the structural, process, and content features can significantly influence the outcomes. “Too often in the past, narrowly defined interventions have not produced long-term change because they have failed to recognize the interaction among physical, economic, and social factors that create the context in which the intervention may thrive or flounder” (Brown & Richman, 1993, p. 8).

The structural, process, and content features of a quality program influence the recruitment and retention of participants. In order to attract and keep participants, a quality program provides physical and psychological safety, staff members who are capable of providing youth with supportive, caring relationships, and activities that are "...challenging, age-appropriate, and fun" (Lauver & Little, 2005b, p. 72). It is important to identify the recruitment population so that the program will better match its needs and interests. Identification of interests does not mean that the range of activities will necessarily be narrow. Provision of a diverse array of activities is common in high-quality programs. The use of focus groups, needs assessments, surveys, and participant requests are of tremendous help when making the kind of programmatic decisions that will attract and retain participants (Lauver, 2002).

Research shows that it is often helpful to have the school administration on board with the program to assist in creating and distributing a needs assessment within the school (Lauver & Little, 2005a). Conducting a needs assessment will ensure that the director and staff understand the afterschool activity interests of students in the school. It is also helpful to target specific populations when trying to retain participants (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). This is especially important when trying to retain at-risk youth.

As Otterbourg (2000) points out, the relationship between afterschool participants and the adults with whom they work is the single most important factor of a successful afterschool program. Directors need to focus on an intentional recruiting and hiring process, including a comprehensive job description and situation-based interview questions. One aspect of the afterschool profession that makes recruiting quality staff difficult is the fact that the positions are "mainly part-time..., [without] the benefits or earnings associated with a full-time job" (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006, p. 1).

Afterschool professionals enter the field through different paths, which can make training and professional development difficult; however, training and professional development have been shown to be two key features to retaining successful, high-quality staff members (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005), and program directors should devote time to plan in this area. Bowie and Bronte-Tinkew (2006) discuss the value of professional development as follows (pp. 2–3):

- "Professional development improves program quality." Staff with the proper skills can have a positive effect on the long-term achievements of the youth in the program.
- "Professional development affects the survival of providers in the field." Providing training to afterschool staff allows them to be better equipped to deal with the youth in their program.
- "A comprehensive professional development agenda is vital to enhancing and sustaining a cadre of quality youth workers." It is important for afterschool staff to have some recovery time between stressful situations to reduce burnout and lower turnover in afterschool programs.
- "Professional development benefits the individual." It is important for afterschool staff members to be flexible and adaptable; professional development can help provide these skills.

- “Professional development benefits the program.” Through training, afterschool staff members will learn about best practices in the field.
- “Professional development benefits the field.” As more courses, certificates, and degrees are offered in the field, afterschool professionals acquire the leverage needed to compare with people in other fields.

Successful programs also focus on hiring “staff members that reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students” (McNeir & Wambalaba, 2006, p. 22). Retaining qualified staff is also an important factor for directors. Not only are trained staff more likely to stay in a program, but Bowie et al. (2006) found that student outcomes were greater when working with trained, as opposed to untrained, staff.

Communication

The second chapter of the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Communication,” focuses on developing a communication strategy and the most effective communication methods. It is important to decide how to reach specific audiences, how to work with the media, and how to measure the effectiveness of communication strategies. Having an informed advisory board in place is a great resource for an afterschool director. Advisory board members can provide essential information and outside perspectives and spread the word about the program (Dennehy, 2006).

For each overarching program goal, there should be a complementary communication goal. A key feature that Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke (2005) found in successful programs was intentional relationship-building, which involves fostering positive relationships with school personnel. To be successful, the afterschool staff must assess how best to communicate goals, needs, and successes with the school-day staff and parents and families.

Not only is it important for the afterschool staff to communicate with school-day personnel, but Birmingham et al. (2005) found that it is also important for directors and coordinators to communicate with the direct line staff in the program. The lines of communication should be kept open both informally (e.g., thanking everyone for their hard work during staff meetings and asking for feedback on the fly) and formally (e.g., distributing surveys for anonymous feedback on program quality issues).

Evaluation

The third chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Evaluation,” covers the process of analyzing data to assess what works and what does not work in achieving goals. This is often a part of program start-up, planning, and maintenance that directors dread; however, evaluations should be seen as something that can provide the proper information to fine-tune a program on a daily basis.

Evaluations are divided into two categories: process evaluations and outcome evaluations. Process evaluations focus on whether or not a program was implemented as planned, whereas outcome evaluations focus on the expected changes and whether or not and to what extent they occurred (Metz, 2007). Start-up programs may find it helpful to utilize process evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the program implementation, and more mature programs may find outcome evaluations helpful to gain outcome data on participants. Although afterschool staff raise concerns about implementing evaluations (e.g., evaluations will take focus away from programming, evaluations will produce negative results), Metz (2007) and Little, DuPree, and Deich (2002) discuss the following reasons to conduct evaluations in afterschool programs:

- A program evaluation assists administration in determining “what works” and “what does not work.”
- A program evaluation can showcase the effectiveness of a program to the community and funders.
- A program evaluation can improve staff’s frontline practice with participants.
- A program evaluation can increase a program’s capacity to conduct a critical self-assessment and plan for the future.
- A program evaluation can build knowledge for the out-of-school time field.
- A program evaluation may enhance sustainability funding by providing information on the effect the program has on participants and the community.

A good way to start an evaluation is to determine what questions need to be answered. There may be certain grant requirements in an evaluation; however, directors should also refer to the program’s logic model, as it clearly states the program’s goals and objectives (Hamilton & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs is a great resource for setting goals in an afterschool program. This piece, produced by the C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, outlines more than a dozen potential afterschool goals with examples of program elements, desired outcomes, and data sources and performance measures for each. High-quality programs are able to prove and document the quality of their programs, thus enabling them to seek funding from varied sources (The Finance Project, n.d.). Clearly stated evaluation goals that are aligned with the program’s logic model, “...will help change a culture to be focused on achieving results...and help staff members at all levels of the program align their actions and decisions and help make progress measurable” (Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, 2001, p. 3).

An important question to consider when planning an evaluation is who is going to do the evaluation. The decision to utilize an internal or external evaluator is one that administrators struggle with on a regular basis. Internal evaluators are familiar with the program and are able to recognize how resources are being utilized and the treatment fidelity of an intervention that is provided over time and across staff members (Nellie Mae Educational Foundation & Policy Studies Associates Inc., n.d.). Although internal evaluations have been perceived by some as lacking objectivity, it is estimated that 75 percent of evaluations in North America are conducted by internal evaluators (Conley-Tyler, 2005).

Linkages With the Traditional School Day

The fourth chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Linkages With the Traditional School Day,” covers an important aspect of a successful afterschool program; these connections can enhance the positive results of the afterschool activities (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005). The afterschool program should connect with the school-day curriculum without duplicating what goes on during school hours. When establishing these linkages, staff must understand that it will take time to build trust, mutual respect, and a common purpose between the afterschool program staff and the school-day staff.

Birmingham et al. (2005) found that successful afterschool programs have close working relationships with their host schools. The most successful partnerships contained the following elements: “Mutual respect between the project coordinator and the principal; shared teaching and paraprofessional staff members; appreciation that students benefited from the afterschool experience; and flexibility among schools’ teaching, custodial, cafeteria, and security staff” (p. 11).

A recent national evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers utilized an experimental design to examine 12 school districts and 26 afterschool centers. The results indicated that there were no effects for homework completion, academic achievement, or improved behaviors. The authors posited that one possible reason for the outcomes could rest on the fact that “...there was no evident coordination between afterschool programming and the regular school-day curriculum” (James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke, 2007, p. 314). When asked about the need for such coordination, the staff noted that they were aware of the importance of the linkage but had difficulty facilitating the communication. One benefit of utilizing teachers as afterschool staff was that the linkage was easier to maintain.

The school administration can be a significant asset in this process and can help get the school-day staff on board with the afterschool program (Lauver & Little, 2005a). Having this support from the teachers and other school-day staff not only keeps the lines of communication open regarding the school-day curriculum and homework but also facilitates the effective sharing of resources and facilities, which is an essential part of a successful afterschool program (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005).

Collaboration and Community Building

The fifth chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Collaboration and Community Building,” focuses on bringing people together. The ultimate goal of collaboration is to create a successful partnership that is stronger than any individual part. To do this, much time and effort must go into the structure and environment of the partnerships.

Research shows that a key feature to a successful afterschool program is the program’s partnerships (C.S. Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Otterbourg, 2000) and use of community resources (Briggs-Hale, Judd, Martindill, & Parsley, n.d.). Most successful programs develop activities that meet the particular needs of the communities that they serve. Otterbourg (2000) found that this was especially true for sustaining arts learning. It is essential for partnerships to promote learning and community engagement. Hamilton and Bronte-Tinkew (2007) point out that logic models can help facilitate collaboration by outlining the specific goals of the program. When the goals are clearly stated, it is easier to articulate how other organizations can fit in with the program’s vision, mission, and goals.

Families are often busy, and it is important for afterschool programs to partner with community-based organizations to provide a wide array of activities to youth. This has been found to be especially useful for English language learners (ELLs) whose parents, even when actively engaged, may not be able to provide the necessary resources for a well-rounded education (McNeir & Wambalaba, 2006). The Finance Project (n.d.) found that meaningful community engagement, especially local support, along with collaborative partnerships is essential for the sustainability of a quality program.

Many successful programs benefit from becoming “a unique niche in the community” (Sandel, 2007, p. 7). Creating this niche for the program helps to ensure long-term sustainability. If people in the community believe that they cannot live without the program, it is more likely that they will fight for continued program funding. Creating a logo for the afterschool program is a great way to stand out and increase recognition. The logo, when placed on all correspondence and fundraising materials, will increase visibility within the community (Sandel, 2007).

Parent and Family Involvement

The sixth chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Parent and Family Involvement,” introduces ways to get parents involved in afterschool programming. This is one of the most important aspects of a strong afterschool program because, as the Harvard Family Research Project (2007) points out, youth who have disengaged or restrictive parents are less likely to participate in afterschool programs. Horowitz and Bronte-Tinkew (2007) discuss the significance of family involvement in afterschool programs (pp.1–2):

- “Family involvement can help children’s relationships and academic performance.”
- “Family involvement can help reduce teens’ risky behaviors.”
- “Family involvement can lead to better programs.”
- “Family involvement can help parents do a better job of parenting.”

Part of being intentional about family involvement is determining what level of involvement is needed from parents. The Build the Out-of-School Time Network (n.d.) suggests three levels for parents and families: involvement, engagement, and leadership. These levels range in family participation from merely registering the child for the afterschool program (involvement) to volunteering in the afterschool program (engagement) to the ultimate of taking responsibility for the direction of the afterschool program (leadership). Afterschool staff should gear their efforts toward the desired level of participation for parents and families.

It is projected that 40 percent of the school-aged population in the United States will be language minority students by the 2030s, so it is important to consider the ELLs in afterschool programs (Thomas & Collier, 2002). McNeir and Wambalaba (2006) found that many successful programs for ELLs intentionally incorporated family literacy programs and involved parents during the out-of-school time.

When the afterschool program reaches out to engage family members as well as youth, there are multiple benefits. Correlations have been found between family involvement and an improvement in academic achievement, social skills, school attendance and graduation rates, and postsecondary education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The benefits are not limited to the school. At home, research has shown that families who are involved in out-of-school time programs noted an improvement in child/parent relationships, particularly in the areas of communication and trust (Intercultural Center for Research in Education & National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2005). Finally, the benefits extend to the afterschool program itself. Programs that improved the level of engagement with families provided evidence of improved program quality as well as a positive impact on youth outcomes (Bowie et al., 2006; Harris & Wimer, 2004).

Program Delivery

The seventh chapter of the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Program Delivery,” focuses on the aspect of the program that most people see: the activities that are offered. It is an important aspect of the program, not only because it involves the most visible elements but also because a structured afterschool program that maximizes student participation, thus providing a positive use of free time, can help improve academic performance (Baker & Witt, 1996).

Durlak and Weissberg (2007) found in their meta-analysis that there are specific program elements, referred to as the SAFE components, associated with successful afterschool programs (see Table 1 for an explanation of the SAFE components).

Table 1. Evidence-Based Training

Training Process	Sequenced	Did the program use a sequenced set of activities to achieve the objectives related to skill development?
	Active	Did the program use active forms of learning to help youth learn new skills?
Program Content	Focused	Did the program have at least one component devoted to developing personal or social skills?
	Explicit	Did the program target specific personal or social skills?

Durlak and Weissberg found that programs containing all four components were successful and those programs missing one or more were not successful on any outcomes measured. This is great evidence to suggest that afterschool directors and staff must be intentional in their program delivery to achieve the desired outcomes.

Afterschool activities should be enriching but fun because they are separate from the school day. The social interaction that takes place after school allows students to form stronger relationships with adults and peers (Briggs-Hale et al., n.d.). The activities in an afterschool program should not only provide opportunities for skill building and mastery, but there also should be a broad array of enrichment opportunities (Birmingham et al., 2005). This is especially important to keep in mind when there are so many external pressures for afterschool programs to provide homework help on a daily basis. One study on afterschool programs found that successful programs focused on “youth-centered, developmentally responsive activities first and academic support second” (Birmingham et al., 2005, p. 6). When homework help is offered, research shows that it is most successful when it occurs in small groups and is managed by knowledgeable college students or teaching specialists (Birmingham et al., 2005).

So much school time is now devoted to test-taking and raising standardized test scores, and afterschool has become the place for arts and enrichments. Afterschool activities allow youth to make connections between academic content and culture, art, technology, careers, and their own community (Briggs-Hale et al., n.d.).

Youth development principles provide the framework for many successful afterschool programs. These programs help youth to grow and mature in positive ways that will allow them to be successful when facing life challenges. Programs that have this framework, particularly in regards to quality adult-adolescent relationships, have been shown to produce better outcomes (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (1998) noted that the most effective programs provided multiple opportunities for adult-youth relationships and constructive social activities. The programs also recognized that adequate time in the program was essential to provide evidence of lasting change.

Program Design

The eighth and final chapter in the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*, “Program Design,” covers effective program design and implementation techniques. Program design varies widely from program to program based on the needs of the youth, parents, and community. While the type, balance, and number of activities offered in a program should be responsive to participants’ needs, it is important to keep in mind that effective programs have been designed to combine academic, enrichment, cultural, and recreational activities to guide learning and engagement. An essential aspect to these programs is that the activities complement the school-day learning, utilize project-based activities, and explore new skills and knowledge (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Heath, 2007).

Successful implementation of a new program is challenging and has only recently begun to appear in the research on afterschool programs. There are six key stages to successful implementation: exploration, preparation, early implementation, full implementation, sustainability, and innovation (Metz, Blase, & Bowie, 2007). Program directors will want to ensure that the programs being implemented do not fall under the category of “implementation as usual” but rather “implementation for impact.” Implementation as usual is characterized by either paper (a program’s new policies and procedures are on paper only and are not meaningful to people who would be instituting the program) or fragmented (new operating structures are put into place, but they do not match up with the new practice to be implemented) implementation. Implementation for impact occurs when “implementation strategies are aligned at all levels (organizational and practice)” (Metz et al., 2007, p. 3).

Six drivers of successful implementation appear in the literature. These should not be seen as “stages” of implementation, but simply represent six components demonstrated by research to be critical for successful implementation” (Metz et al., 2007, p. 4). The drivers, as outlined by Metz et al. (2007), are as follows (pp. 4–6):

- “Staff recruitment and selection.” This includes the staff that will be carrying out the new program, as well as staff that will be managing the program.
- “Preservice or inservice training.” This should be offered to staff involved in the program at all levels and should include background information of the new program, components of key practices, opportunities to practice skills, and opportunities for quality interaction.
- “Coaching, mentoring, and supervision.” This is an important aspect because many skills in this profession must be learned on the job.
- “Internal management support.” This refers to the things that happen within a program to ensure implementation (e.g., having the right structures in place to support the implementation).
- “Systems-level partnerships.” This refers to developing and maintaining partnerships to ensure that the implementation can be broad reaching and have sustained support.
- “Staff and program evaluation.” This allows the program director to assess how the program was implemented and whether the desired outcomes were achieved.

Afterschool programs are expected to fulfill many roles: academic, social, and recreational. Allotting adequate time to a variety of activities can be challenging. Programs that are required to address academic issues, such as reading improvement, find themselves trying to be all things to all participants. Assessment of student and family needs and preferences provides helpful information to program directors. James-Burdumy et al. (2007) in a national evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers discussed the importance of determining student needs and maintaining a vision of the program's goals in order to achieve positive academic outcomes. "Programs that assess student needs and focus on strengthening lagging competencies during afterschool time could possibly improve academic outcomes more than programs that provide many types of activities that may be appealing to a range of students, but do not focus on particular skills areas" (p. 314). Identification of specific needs allows the program to spend academic time wisely and still provide a variety of activities to maintain student participation in the program.

Otterbourg (2000) found that students who are consistently involved in music and theater show significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by Grade 12. In many school districts, there is not enough time for students to be consistently involved in the arts due to the pressures of standardized test scores and schools' need to meet adequate yearly progress requirements. Effective afterschool programs are essential to fulfill this need in communities. In addition, Walsh (2007) found that physical activity-based programs can be enriching for participants when the philosophy, goals, and strategies are in line with youth development principles.

Although one of the goals of implementing enriching activities is to connect to the school-day learning, Lauver and Little (2005) also point out that the program should not feel like school. The afterschool program should provide a safe and nurturing environment and "an opportunity to integrate rich content into fun, experiential learning fueled by the imagination and enthusiasm of the young participants" (YouthLearn, n.d.). There is often significant external pressure for the afterschool program to be strictly academic focused and to ensure that participants finish their homework every day (Birmingham et al., 2005); however, successful programs find a way to balance this community need with the overall development of the youth.

Conclusion

Afterschool programs have sparked much interest in recent years and are under increasing pressure to demonstrate outcomes. Due to this rising interest in quality afterschool programs, more research has been conducted on the elements of such programs and the ways they should be implemented, but much of the available research lacks the research design that is necessary to draw strong conclusions.

The studies that are available for review, however, do seem to support the components of the *Beyond the Bell Toolkit*. Afterschool directors, coordinators, and staff view the toolkit as a valid and helpful resource to support start-up initiatives in implementing new programs and assist mature programs in ensuring that they are following best practices in the field.

References

- Baker, D., & Witt, P. A. (1996). Evaluation of the impact of two afterschool recreation programs. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 14(3), 23–44.
- Birmingham, J., Pechman, E. M., Russell, C. A., & Mielke, M. (2005). *Shared features of high-performing after-school programs: A follow-up to the TASC evaluation*. Austin, TX: The After-School Corporation and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Bowie, L., Garrett, S. B., Kinukawa, A., McKinney, K., Moore, K. A., Redd, Z., et al. (2006). *Program implementation: What do we know?* Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2007_06_01_FR_PrgmImplementation.pdf
- Bowie, L., & Bronte-Tinkew, J. (2006, December). *The importance of professional development for youth workers* (Research-to-Results: Practitioner Insights No. 2006-17). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.p21.us/resources/Professional_Development_Insight.pdf
- Briggs-Hale, C., Judd, A., Martindill, H., & Parsley, D. (n.d.). Afterschool mathematics practices: A review of supporting literature. Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/Afterschool/7895TG_AfterschoolMathematicsLitRev.pdf
- Brown, P., & Richman, H. (1993, November). *Communities and neighborhoods: How can existing research inform and shape current urban change initiatives?* Background memorandum prepared for the Social Science Research Council Policy Conference on Persistent Poverty.
- Build the Out-of-School Time Network. (n.d.). *Engaging families in out-of-school time programs toolkit*. Boston: Author. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://pucc.com/matriarch/documents/EngagingFamiliesToolkit.pdf>
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (1998). *Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Social Development Research Group. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/PositiveYouthDev99/>
- Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement. (2001). *Use of continuous improvement and evaluation in after-school programs*. Twin Cities, MN: College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://cehd.umn.edu/CAREI/Reports/docs/MottFinal.pdf>

- Conley-Tyler, M. (2005). A fundamental choice: Internal or external evaluation? *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 4(1&2), 3–11. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.aes.asn.au/publications/Vol4No1_2/fundamental_choice.pdf
- Cooper, H., & Hedges, L. V. (1994). *The handbook of research synthesis*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice. (2005). *Moving towards success: Framework for after-school programs*. Washington, DC: Collaborative Communications Group. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.publicengagement.com/Framework/images/framework_61505.pdf
- Deich, S. (2001). *A guide to successful public-private partnerships for out of school time and community school initiatives*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project.
- Dennehy, J. (2006). *Preparing the early education and care workforce: A guide to conducting a study of the capacity of higher education institutions*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/27/fd/4d.pdf
- Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.
- The Finance Project. (n.d.). *Sustaining 21st Century Community Learning Centers: What works and how policymakers can help*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Hamilton, J., & Bronte-Tinkew, J. (2007). *Logic models in out-of-school time programs: What are they and why are they important?* (Research-to-Results Brief No. 2007-01). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2007_01_05_RB_LogicModels.pdf
- Harris, E., & Wimer, C. (2004). *Engaging with families in out-of-school time learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot4.pdf>
- Harvard Family Research Project. (2007). *Findings from HFRP's study of predictors of participation in out-of-school time activities: Fact sheet*. Cambridge, MA: Author. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/factsheet.pdf>
- Heath, M. (2007). *Technology for afterschool programs: A research synthesis*. Austin, TX: National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning at SEDL.

- Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>
- Horowitz, A., & Bronte-Tinkew, J. (2007). *Building, engaging, and supporting family and parental involvement in out-of-school time programs* (Research-to-Results: Practitioner Insights No. 2007-16). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2007_06_19_RB_ParentEngage.pdf
- Intercultural Center for Research in Education, & National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2005). *Pathways to success for youth: What counts in afterschool: A report of the Massachusetts After-School Research Study*. Boston: United Way of Massachusetts Bay. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.supportunitedway.org/MARS-Report.pdf>
- 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*, 29(4), 296–318.
- Lauver, S. (2002). *Assessing the benefits of an after-school program for urban youth: An impact and process evaluation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- Lauver, S., & Little, P. M. D. (2005a, May). Finding the right hook: Strategies for attracting and sustaining participation in after-school programs. *The School Administrator*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=2522>
- Lauver, S., & Little, P. M. D. (2005b, Spring). Recruitment and retention strategies for out-of-school time programs. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 105, 71–89.
- Little, P., DuPree, S., & Deich, S. (2002). *Documenting progress and demonstrating results: Evaluating local out-of-school time programs*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project and Washington, DC: The Finance Project.
- McElvain, C. K., Caplan, J. G., Diedrich, K. C., Kaufman, S., & Walter, K. E. (2005). *Beyond the bell: A toolkit for creating effective afterschool programs* (3rd ed.). Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.
- McNeir, G., & Wambalaba, M. (2006). Literacy in afterschool programs: Focus on English language learners. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Metz, A. J. R. (2007). *Why conduct a program evaluation? Five reasons why evaluation can help an out-of-school time program* (Research-to-Results Brief No. 2007-31). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2007_10_01_RB_WhyProgEval.pdf

- Metz, A. J. R., Blase, K., & Bowie, L. (2007). *Implementing evidence-based practices: Six “drivers” of success* (Research-to-Results Brief, No. 2007-29). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2007_10_01_RB_6SuccessDriversRev.pdf
- Miller, B. (2003). *Critical hours: Afterschool programs and educational success*. Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Critical_Hours_Full.pdf
- Nellie Mae Educational Foundation & Policy Studies Associates. (n.d.) *“A” is for assessment: A primer on program evaluation*. Quincy, MA: Author. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.nmefdn.org/uploads/EvalGuide.htm>
- Otterbourg, S. D. (2000). *How the arts can enhance after-school programs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education National Endowment for the Arts.
- Roth, J., Brooks-Gunn, J., Murray, L., & Foster, W. (1998). Promoting healthy adolescents: Synthesis of youth development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 8, 423–459.
- Sandel, K. (2007). *Snapshots of sustainability: Profiles of successful strategies for financing out-of-school time programs*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project.
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students’ long-term academic achievement* (Final Report, Project No. 1.1). Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=crede>
- Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., Brown, B. B., Dadisman, K., Pierce, K. M., Lee, D., & Pechman, E. M. (2005). *The study of promising after-school programs: Examination of intermediate outcomes in year 2*. Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/childcare/pdf/pp/year2_executive_summary_and_brief_report.pdf
- Walsh, D. S. (2007). Supporting youth development outcomes: An evaluation of a responsibility model-based program. *Physical Educator*, 64(1), 48–56.
- YouthLearn. (n.d.). *Afterschool & technology: Advancing content-rich learning* (Website). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.youthlearn.org/afterschool/>