

Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs

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Workshop Goals

- Why participate in OST programs?
- Why measure attendance in OST programs?
- How can you measure attendance in OST programs?
- A review of your own attendance data and how you can use it for multiple purposes
- Break Out Session



What Is “Participation”

Participation =
Enrollment + Attendance
+ Engagement



Participation Is Important for Academic Success

- Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations
- Better performance in school, as measured by achievement test scores and grades
- Higher school attendance (as measured by attendance and tardiness)
- Less disciplinary action (e.g., suspension)



Participation Is Important for Social/Emotional Development

- Decreased behavioral problems
- Improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with others (peers, parents, and/or teachers)
- Increased community involvement and broadened world view
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem



Participation Is Important for Healthy Physical Development

- Avoidance of drug and alcohol use
- Decreases in delinquency and violent behaviors
- Increased knowledge of safe sex and avoidance of sexual activity and pregnancy
- Increased skills for coping with peer pressure



Participation Is Important for 21st Century Skill Development

- ❑ Expert thinking: identifying and solving new problems
- ❑ Complex communication: eliciting critical information and conveying a convincing interpretation of it to others
- ❑ Proficiency in the “basics”



Why Measure Attendance in OST Programs?

- ❑ To fulfill accountability requirements
- ❑ To monitor the quality and effectiveness of an overall initiative
- ❑ To evaluate participant outcomes
- ❑ To support program-level planning and management



Why Measure Attendance in OST Programs? (cont'd)

- To facilitate case management/individualize program services
- To support student rewards, incentives, and sanctions
- To help gauge demand for services
- For staff reflection, training, and education
- To advocate for more funding or for the use of specific strategies



Example: Support Program Planning and Management

- Are we reaching the target youth? *Measure aggregate level of attendance*
- Is the program appealing across age levels? *Measure attendance by grade*
- Does the program schedule match family needs? *Measure attendance by day of week, weekly, and monthly, to assess what days, weeks, and months students actually attend*



How to Measure Attendance

- Participating vs. Not Participating
- Intensity
- Duration
- Breadth



Intensity

Definition:

The amount of time youth participate in an activity

Measurement:

- Hours per day
- Days per week
- Sessions per month
- Percentage of time



Duration

Definition:

- Youth's history of participation

Measurement:

- Number of terms
- Number of years



Breadth

Definition:

- The variety of youth's participation within or across programs

Measurement:

- Number of different activities within a single program
- Number of different activities across multiple programs



Intensity and Outcomes

- ❑ **Academic outcomes**
 - ❑ GPA, test scores
 - ❑ Homework completion
 - ❑ Feelings about school, goals, and educational aspirations
 - ❑ College attendance
 - ❑ High-school completion
- ❑ **Social outcomes**
 - ❑ Lower problem behavior
 - ❑ Higher community service
 - ❑ Better emotional well-being (e.g., happiness)
- ❑ **Participation Outcomes**
 - ❑ Higher intensity in elementary school is associated with higher attendance in middle and high school



Duration and Outcomes

- ❑ Duration is positively related to children's outcomes

- ❑ 4-H evaluation
 - ❑ Participants > Nonparticipants
 - ❑ Participation for more than 1 year > Less than 1 year
 - e.g., better at communicating, more successful at resolving conflict, had higher grades (Rodriguez, Hirschl, Mead, & Goggin, 1999)



Breadth and Outcomes

- Few studies on breadth

- Breadth within a program

- Participated in 3 or more activities > 1-2 activities, nonparticipants

- Grades and academic test scores (Baker & Witt, 1996)



Combining Indicators

TASC Evaluation

Combined

- Duration: 1 or 2+ years
- Intensity: nonparticipator (0 days per week), non-active participator (less than 3 days), active participator (3 or more days)

Results: Participation for at least two years on a regular basis lead to:

- Improved math test scores pre-K to grade 8
- Improved attendance grades 5-8



Combining Indicators

San Francisco Beacons

Combined

- Duration: number of sessions—fall, winter, spring
- Breadth: educational activities, other activities, or educational and other activities

Results

3 sessions plus educational and other activities lead to:

- Increases in leadership, non-family support for participants, school effort, and sense of efficacy

3 sessions plus educational only activities lead to:

- Increases in school effort only

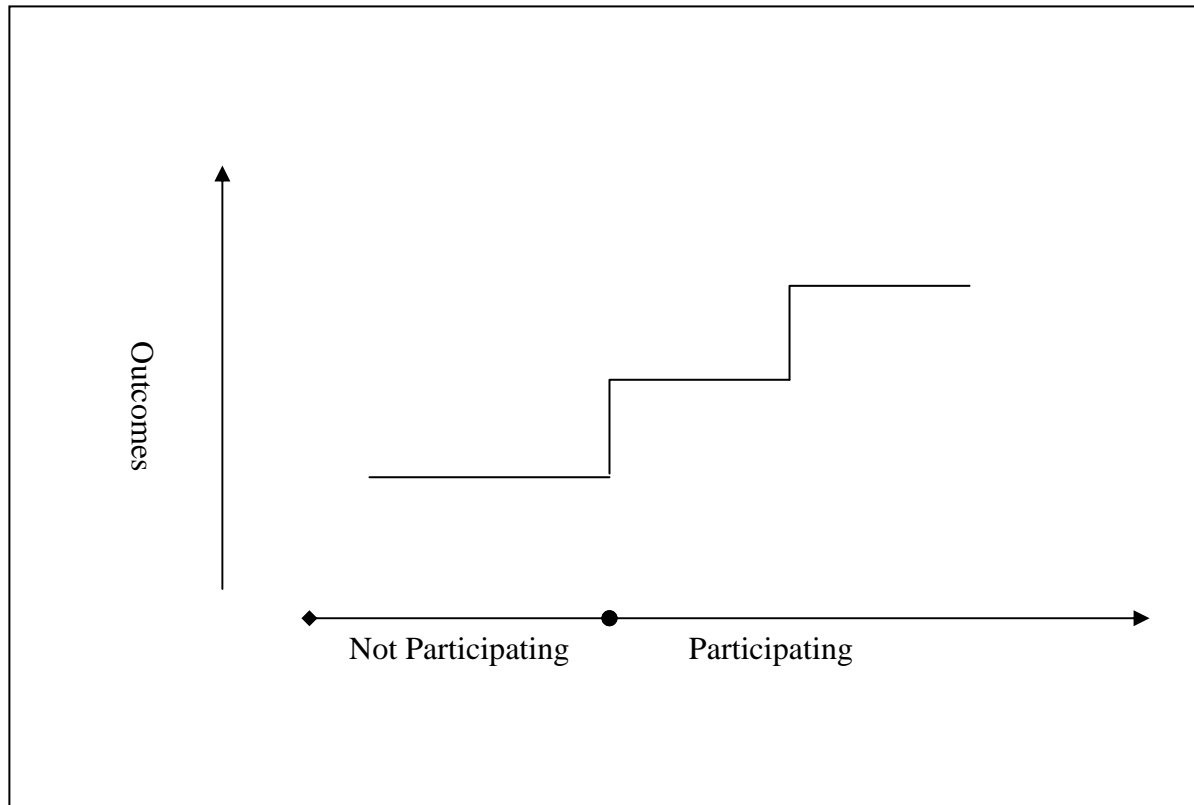


How Much Is Enough?

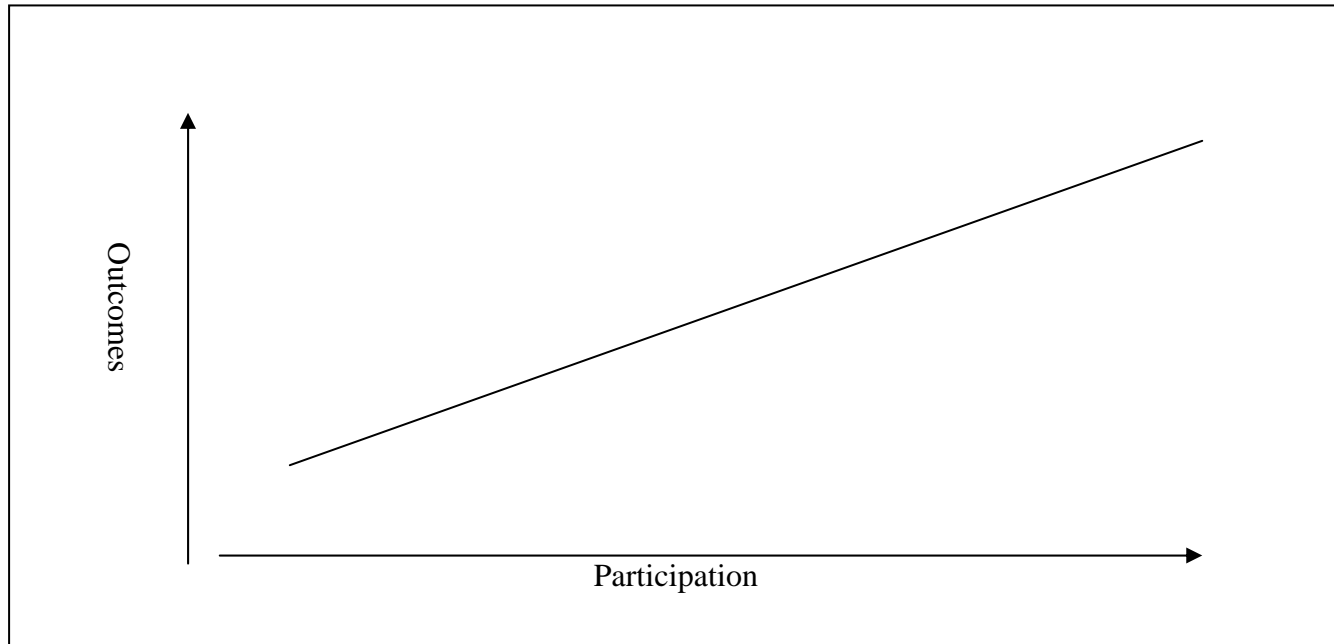
Three Models to Explain How Attendance Relates to Outcomes



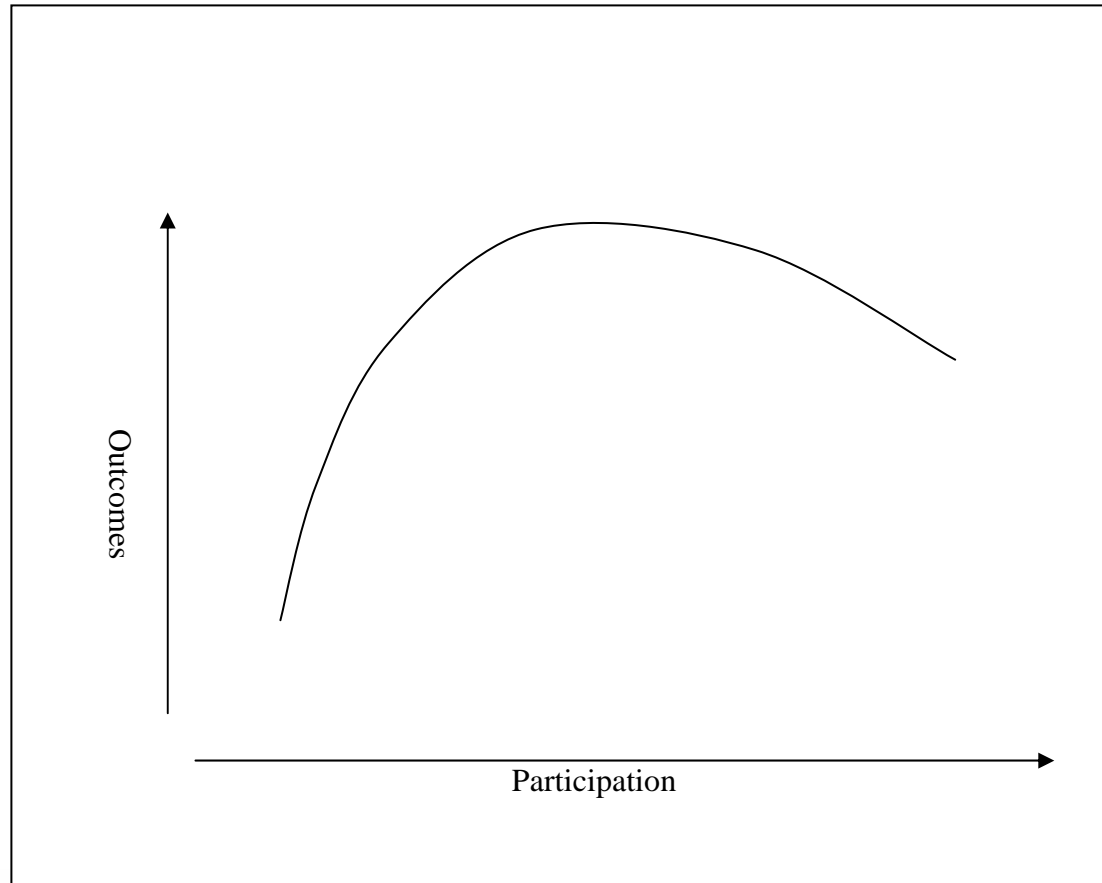
Threshold Model



Linear Model



Curvilinear Model



How Much Is Enough for Your Program and Its Participants?

- ❑ No single dosage across OST program will provide a magic bullet—tailor intensity, duration, and breadth benchmarks to your program goals
- ❑ Variety is the spice of life—more does not always lead to better
- ❑ Benchmarks may vary by outcomes assessed—homework completion vs. cooperation with peers
- ❑ Attendance is necessary but not sufficient—consider engagement as a key component of participation

