the evaluation exchange

A PERIODICAL ON EMERGING STRATEGIES IN EVALUATING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

from the director's desk

Heather Weiss

As families face increasing pressures to find safe, productive places for their children to be during the nonschool hours, the need for high quality out-of-school time programs continues to expand. While investments in out-of-school time programs are rising in response to this demand, they do so against a heightened backdrop of accountability—in which programs are being asked to ratchet up their efforts to document progress and demonstrate results.

This is the third issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* dedicated to exploring the challenges and solutions associated with evaluating out-of-school time (OST) programs. It comes at a point in time when the need for credible OST research and evaluation information is at an all-time high, and when increased competition among nonprofits for scarce resources makes it more important than ever for OST programs to have the capacity to collect and use data for program accountability and improvement.

We focused this issue on what we see as necessary to continue to build the OST field's capacity on these topics. This includes articles on what we know from existing research and evaluation about the results that are possible from OST programming, expert commentary on what the future OST research and evaluation agenda should look like, and information about hands-on research and evaluation tools and resources.

Included are articles about the implications for OST programs of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—particularly its emphasis on scientifically based research. Knowing that many of us do not have time to track and read every new report that comes out, we asked several authors to summarize key research and evaluation findings about what works in OST programming. Our Questions and Answers feature with Michelle Gambone, for example, offers exciting new findings from the longitudinal research she and colleague James Connell are conducting about the relationship between youth supports and opportunities and long-term developmental outcomes.

This issue also includes a special four-page feature on the implications of the recently released 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) first year evaluation re-

port for future evaluation. Conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc., the evaluation examined the characteristics and outcomes of typical 21st CCLC programs. The first year findings, characterized as "disappointing" by the administration, were used to justify a proposed cut to future 21st CCLC programming.

This decision has stimulated renewed commitment to evaluation as well as efforts to examine this one evaluation in the larger context of other relevant evaluation and research. It also has catalyzed interest in developing a strong future research and evaluation agenda to support program development, improvement, and accountability.

Therefore, in this issue HFRP provides information about a number of ongoing evaluations and additionally offers a special set of expert commentaries from researchers, evaluators, and practitioners about new directions for research and evaluation in order to reframe the "gotcha accountability" game into one of learning for continuous improvement *and* accountability.

In a world where the principles of scientific research are increasingly invoked to guide policy, the decision to use part one of an ongoing evaluation to cut funding is stimulating considerable scientific scrutiny and critique of the study's methodology and findings. This scrutiny is crucial for scientific as well as policy advancement. Therefore, HFRP will publish an expanded set of commentaries later this spring that will be designed to examine issues in this particular evaluation and their implications for current policy as well as for future evaluation design, implementation, and use.

Responding to the many requests we receive for practical evaluation advice, we also included examples of evaluations in progress, information about HFRP's expanding online database of OST evaluations, and a tool for OST logic modeling.

Because the space available in each *Evaluation Exchange* is limited, we encourage you to visit HFRP's website (www.hfrp.org) for extra online information and resources. The online version of this issue includes an extensive New and Noteworthy section that we couldn't fit in the print version.

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> theory & practice

Does Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Activities Make a Difference?

Sandra Simpkins, HFRP Consultant and Research Investigator at the University of Michigan, integrates findings from academic research and program evaluation to provide a comprehensive look at the relationship between participation in out-of-school time (OST) activities and positive youth outcomes, and points to new directions for OST research and evaluation.

In the last few decades, there has been a surge of public and research interest in the impact of youth's participation in out-of-school time (OST) activities. Researchers and practitioners argue that high quality, structured OST programs are environments that have the potential to support and promote youth's development because they: (a) situate youth in safe environments, (b) prevent youth from engaging in delinquent activities, (c) teach youth general and specific skills, beliefs, and behaviors, and (d) provide opportunities for youth to develop relationships with peers and mentors. In fact, there is increasing evidence that youth's participation in quality OST activities influences their current outcomes, which, in turn, impact outcomes into adulthood (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002).

However, documenting the associations between youth outcomes and activity participation is challenging due to the diversity of OST programs and youth's experiences in those programs. First, youth participate in a wide range of OST programs, from large-scale mentoring programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters, to small-scale, single-site programs such as a school football team. Second, the amount of time youth spend in OST programs and the quality of these programs can vary dramatically within and across activities. Third, youth's reasons to participate and the role youth have in OST program activities (e.g., leader vs. participant) differ. Despite these challenges, there is a growing collection of academic research and program evaluations that converge on the same conclusion—youth's participation in OST activities *does* matter in important ways.

A Note on Methodology for This Review

Prior to presenting research and evaluation results that support the above statement, it is important to describe the set of studies included in this review. Over 75 published and unpublished papers, including program evaluations, were identified for possible inclusion. Screening for our first criteria, scientific merit, 25 studies were first selected because they either used complex designs (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, longitudinal) or measured an array of youth development or OST program indicators. From this set of 25 studies, 10 studies were selected to ensure that this review covers a range of youth development indicators, OST program and participation indicators, group differences (e.g., family income, grade levels), and evaluation and academic research.[1]

Participation Matters for Academic Success

Youth's participation in OST activities is often predictive of academic success as measured through test scores, absenteeism, school dropout rates, homework completion, and school grades (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Gore, Farrell, & Gordon, 2001; Marsh, 1992). For example, Posner and Vandell (1994) found that academic activities with adult OST staff predicted children's school grades for conduct and most subject areas. Results from program evaluations also suggest that these relationships are particularly consistent if the program focuses solely on academics or if it has a central educational component, such as homework help or educational enrichment activities (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000).

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[1] These 10 studies are denoted by an asterisk (*) in the reference list on page 21.

Participation Matters for Social Development

Indicators of academic success have received more attention than indicators of social, moral, and physical development. However, results from studies that examine nonacademic youth outcomes suggest that youth's participation in OST activities is related to multiple indicators of positive social development.

Several studies have noted that OST activity participation is associated with multiple aspects of youth's friendships, including the number of friends, the quality of those friendships, and who those friends are (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Grossman, Resch, & Tierney, 2000; Rodriquez, Hirschl, Mead, & Groggin, 1999). In addition, participation is linked to fewer feelings of loneliness and depression and less problem behavior (Grossman et al.; Gore et al., 2001), although some results suggest that sports participation is associated with higher alcohol use in adolescence (Eccles & Barber).

There is also evidence that OST program participation is related to other indicators of positive social and moral development, such as communication skills and values, but the number of studies examining each indicator is quite small (e.g., Rodriquez et al., 1999). Even though many programs are under increasing pressure to demonstrate measurable academic achievement results due to the No Child Left Behind Act, it is important to continue research in these and other critical non-academic areas of youth development.

Possible Factors

These studies also suggest that there are at least two factors which may affect the relationship between OST program participation and outcomes: age and socio-economic status (SES).

Age. The associations between activity participation and outcomes appear to be stronger for adolescents than elementary school children. For instance, Posner and Vandell (1994) found that third graders' participation in non-sports-related lessons was not significantly associated with math and reading grades, but was positively associated with conduct grades, work habits, and grades in other subjects besides math and reading. In addition to these findings, researchers have found that elementary school children's activity participation and academic achievement were positively related for children at some grade levels (e.g., third), but not others (e.g., second, fourth; e.g., Ross, Lewis, Smith, & Sterbin, 1996).

SES. The associations between youth's participation and positive youth development outcomes appear to be stronger for youth in low-income versus middle-income households (Marsh, 1992). This is not to say that activities for middle-income youth do not matter. On the contrary, the participation of middle-income youth has been found to be positively associated with peer relationships and beliefs concerning particular domains, such as interest and self-concept of ability in academics (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh). These outcomes, in turn, impact development through adolescence and into adulthood. Activities for youth in low-income households may have a larger impact because the alternative home and neighborhood environments are typically less enriching and more dangerous than for middle-income youth.

Directions for Future Research

Given what we know, what research would significantly contribute to our current knowledge about the impact of specific OST activities on positive youth development? There are numerous promising avenues that this research could follow. Four directions, in particular, have the potential to clarify and build on current findings.

Process. We need to use theory-driven hypotheses and analyses to examine the processes behind how activity participation and development influence each other. For example, do we expect activity participation to be related to youth's school grades because program youth gain new knowledge and cognitive skills, or because they have a mentor that inspires their educational goals and renews their commitment to school, or other reasons? Although research in this area is in its early stages, the theoretical and empirical work by Larson (2000) on adolescents' sense of initiative and emotional experiences and Eccles on identity and task beliefs (Eccles & Barber, 1999) have been very instructive.

Indicators of Participation. To date, many researchers have grouped youth into one of two categories: youth who participate in OST programs and youth who do not. Although these groups have been and will continue to be useful in our understanding of OST programs, they overlook many details concerning the quantity of youth's participation. For instance, some researchers have found it essential to conceptualize the quantity of program participation in terms of weekly or yearly "dosage" of participation, i.e., the amount of time youth participate (Huang et al., 2000; Ross et al., 1996). In addition, researchers have questioned whether there is a threshold or particular

Related Resources

Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press. This report explores the role of youth development programs and how best to design programs that enable youth to develop into healthy, happy, and productive adults. Policy, practice, and research recommendations to address the developmental needs of youth are included. www.nap.edu/catalog/10022.html

Harvard Family Research Project. Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html

Larson, R. W. (2001). How U.S. children and adolescents spend time: What it does (and doesn't) tell us about their development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*(5), 160–164.

How can research and evaluation improve practice regarding access and equity in out-of-school time programs?

The growing diversity of out-of-school time program participants nationwide has generated increased interest in understanding the issue of access and equity in youth programming. These issues refer to questions of who has access to and is attending out-of-school time programs, and whether different subgroups of participants (e.g., different ethnic groups, girls, youth with disabilities, etc.) are getting the services they need to be successful. Five experts in the field of youth development and out-of-school time programming offer their perspectives on how research and evaluation can improve access and equity in out-of-school time programming.

Yolanda George, American Association for the Advancement of Science

Researchers and evaluators should examine the impact of out-of-school time programs on different subgroups of students to find out what works for whom and in what context. This requires the collection of both demographic data on student achievement and data on process variables, such as curriculum, teaching practices, or types of intervention strategies that might impact achievement. Many studies provide achievement information on groups, dividing students along ethnic and racial lines and breaking down data by gender, but most do not examine process variables to determine whether specific strategies or practices are equally effective for all students.[1]

In addition, few research studies include state test scores for American Indians, students with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency, or students from migrant or homeless families. Students in these groups are excluded from state tests because they do not attend school often enough or they do not reside in the same district for a full academic year. In many studies data about these subgroups is not reported at all, or if reported, may not be reliable because the sample size of these populations is usually too small to report statistically meaningful data.[2] Before educators can examine what out-of-school time strategies work for these subgroups, they will need to find new ways to track and examine their academic progress.

Laurie Olsen, California Tomorrow

Diversity has become the norm in after school program enrollment nationwide. Young people's cultural, ethnic, racial, and other identities, and their family, language, and community background are *core* to who they are and how they learn, as well as to what support they may need. Yet many out-of-school time program staff members are now working with some youth with whom they do not share a background or identity. To develop quality programming, research is key.

First, it is imperative that program staff have access to research on how culture and language enter into the ways in which young people experience and process life, and to the findings and frameworks being created by the research community working on these issues. Second, in order to provide meaningful research that can inform programs on access, equity, and diversity, researchers need to incorporate questions, frameworks, and quality indicators that recognize the unique access and equity challenges in diverse communities. Third, program staff need the skills and practices to engage in research of their own—to structure inquiries and action research to better understand the young people and the community they serve. This includes systems for data collection and disaggregation of data to examine the different experiences of different groups of young people, a familiarity with how to structure and use various youth voice formats, and how to collect and make sense of data about the participation and experiences of young people in the program.

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[1] B. C. Clewell, P. B. Campbell, Y. S. George, and E. Jolly, National Science Foundation (personal communications, June 2000).

[2] Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Performance Management Service, U.S. Department of Education. (2002, March). *U.S. Department of Education strategic plan*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/annualreport2001/index.html.

Related Resources

Bhattacharya, J., Jaramillo, A., Lopez, L., Olsen, L., Scharf, A., & Shah, M. (2002, October 1). *Our roots, our future: Affirming culture and language in after school and youth programs*. Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow. www.californiatomorrow.org/publications/cts.pl?pub_id=24

Fancsali, C. (2002). *What we know about girls, STEM, and afterschool programs*. New York: Educational Equity Concepts.

Fink, D. B. (2001). *Making a place for kids with disabilities.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. www.includeallkids.com/mkpd

James, D. W., Jurich, S., & Estes, S. (2001). *Raising minority academic achievement: A compendium of education programs and practices*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. www.aypf.org/rmaa/index.html

Sanders, J., & Tescione, S. M. (2002). Gender equity and technology. In J. Koch & B. Irby (Eds.), *Defining and redefining gender equity in education*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing. www.infoagepub.com/koch.pdf (Acrobat file)

Jane Quinn, The Children's Aid Society

Research has already been helpful in improving both practice and policy regarding access and equity, and new researchers can learn from this work and build on it. Over 10 years ago, when I worked on the Carnegie Corporation of New York's study on youth development and community programs (*A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*[3]), I found several research studies that documented important problems related to equity and access, and these findings helped us make the case for expanding programs and services for low-income and minority youth.

For example, the federally sponsored *National Education Longitudinal Study* clearly established the fact that low-income and minority youth had much less access to youth development programs during nonschool hours than their more affluent peers.[4] A Chapin Hall study comparing the availability of youth programs in suburban and inner-city neighborhoods showed similar patterns of fewer programs with less substantive content.[5] More recently, Milbrey McLaughlin's research in several urban neighborhoods addressed a different part of the equity agenda. In *Community Counts*, McLaughlin noted a significant and consistent pattern of under-service to girls.[6] These studies show that serious, well-regarded researchers with an equity and access perspective to their investigations can provide reliable information to youth advocates to promote quality youth programming.

Liz Reisner, Policy Studies Associates

The evaluation of the After-School Corporation (TASC) programming has yielded findings that have helped the program better target and deliver its school-based, community-linked after school services.[7] The evaluation, which is assessing program implementation and student results in 96 TASC projects in New York City, has determined that TASC services are delivered in the schools whose students exhibit particularly serious educational needs. The evaluation has found that the projects are serving representative cross-sections of each school's population, in terms of prior achievement, family income, race/ethnicity, and gender and that projects do so without screening or using ability grouping.

TASC-related educational benefits include improvements in school attendance and math achievement among participants, especially among those who attend on a frequent, extended basis. Gains have been greatest among low-income students, African-American and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Although students with disabilities were initially underrepresented, their program enrollment has increased over time as projects have expanded their outreach to these students and made arrangements in some instances for specialized staffing.

The TASC program is using these results in both its training and technical assistance activities, and to inform school and project staff about the benefits of regular, multi-year participation, especially for students with the greatest educational needs. Evaluation results have given school principals and local nonprofit organizations the confidence to keep projects open to all students and to expand the model to additional schools, including the Chancellor's District schools, which have students with the most pressing educational needs.

Donna Walker James, American Youth Policy Forum

Over the past six years, the American Youth Policy Forum has collected youth program evaluations and produced three- to five-page summaries in readily accessible language. These summaries have been compiled in four compendia to date, with volumes in production on out-of-school time programs and family involvement.[8]

Our 2001 compendium, *Raising Minority Academic Achievement*, yielded important findings related to access and equity.[9] Practices that were effective in leading to improved academic achievement outcomes for African-American, Latino, and Native-American youth included quality leadership and implementation, academically demanding curriculum, professional development, family and community involvement, reduced student-to-teacher ratios (small classes, small schools, small learning communities, and extra help from tutors and mentors), individualized support, extended learning time, and long-term supports.

Our findings also indicate that research is critically important to quality programming and that access and equity cannot be ensured unless data are collected and made available to others. Only by disaggregating and sharing data on academic achievement and other youth outcomes can we be sure that programs are accessed by all population groups and that all groups are successful within the programs. As gaps are identified, long-term, individualized supports can be specifically targeted to ensure that access, equity, and academic achievement goals are met.

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[3] Carnegie Corporation of New York. (1992). *A matter of time: Risk and opportunity in the nonschool hours.* New York: Author.
[4] National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. (1990). *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: A profile of the American eighth grader* (pp. 50–54). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
[5] Littell, J., & Wynn, J. (1989). *The availability and use of community resources for young adolescents in an inner-city and suburban community.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago.
[6] McLaughlin, M. W. (2000). *Community counts: How community organizations matter for youth development.* Washington, DC: Public Education Network.
[7] Reisner, E. R., White, R. N., Birmingham, J., & Welsh, M. (2001). *Building quality and supporting expansion of after-school projects: Evaluation results from the TASC after-school program's second year.* Washington, DC: Author. A summary of this evaluation is included in the HFRP Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database, available at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html.
[8] The AYPF compendia are available in Acrobat format at www.aypf.org.
[9] Out-of-school time programs included in this compendium are Sacramento START and Boys and Girls Clubs of America; programs with out-of-school time components are Gateway to Higher Education, I Have a Dream, KIPP Academies, Sponsor-a-Scholar, and Upward Bound.

Evaluating the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program—A View From the States

Erin Harris and Priscilla Little, from Harvard Family Research Project, describe the implementation of the new 21st Century Community Learning Centers program's evaluation requirements in the context of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, which began supporting after school programs nationwide in 1998, now provides one billion dollars per year for out-of-school time activities for children and their families. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which significantly amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, contained a number of new provisions that specifically affected the 21st CCLC program. In addition to providing a stronger academic focus and expanding eligibility for the grant to community based-organizations, the new legislation turns over responsibility for administering the 21st CCLC program from the U.S. Department of Education (referred to hereafter as the Department) to the states.[1] These changes have implications for the evaluation of the 21st CCLC program.

21st CCLC Evaluation Requirements

The Non-Regulatory Guidance[2] for the 21st CCLC program helps states and potential applicants understand the legislative requirements of the program and directly addresses evaluation issues at the local, state, and national levels.

Local Evaluation According to the Guidance, local-level 21st CCLC grantees must conduct periodic evaluation of their programs and use the findings to refine, improve, and strengthen the programs and improve performance measures. Evaluation results must be made public on request. Local programs must meet Principles of Effectiveness as outlined in NCLB, which mandate that 21st CCLC program activities be based on:

- An assessment of objective data regarding need for programming in schools and communities
- An established set of performance measures aimed at ensuring high quality academic enrichment opportunities
- Scientifically based research that provides evidence the program or activity will help students meet state and local academic achievement standards (See the related article on scientifically based research on page 15.)

[1] The NCLB converts the 21st CCLC authority to a state formula grant. In past years, the Department made competitive awards directly to local education agencies. Under the reauthorized authority, funds will flow to states based on their share of Title I, Part A funds. States will use their allocations to make competitive awards to eligible entities. Current 21st CCLC grantees will continue to be administered by and receive funding through the U.S. Department of Education.

[2] Available on the Internet at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/21stcclc/21stcclcguidance2003.pdf (Acrobat file), the Non-Regulatory Guidance is a user-friendly document that translates the legislation into a more accessible format.

State Evaluation States must evaluate the 21st CCLC program to determine the status of the program and training needs within the state and to determine the effectiveness of the program statewide. States may use 3% of their 21st CCLC funding for evaluation, monitoring, and technical assistance activities. The state evaluation may use a sample of the state programs and may be contracted to an outside agency.

National Evaluation Finally, the Department contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. to conduct an evaluation of the 21st CCLC grants awarded by the Department from FY 1998 through FY 2001. (See the special report on the national 21st CCLC evaluation on page 11.) The Department intends to fund a national evaluation to examine the effectiveness of the

Evaluation Highlights From State RFPs

How much priority is given to the local-level evaluation?
Most states included points indicating the priority given to evaluation activities. States allocated anywhere from 3% of their total points to evaluation (Wyoming) to 25% (Indiana and District of Columbia). Evaluation criteria stress the need to address the NCLB Principles of Effectiveness.

Who is responsible for state and local evaluation?
Most states indicated that their state Department of Education is responsible for the statewide evaluation, and some identified an external evaluator who would be contracted. External evaluators identified include: private consultants, university-based researchers, state government departments, and nonprofit research organizations. Local grantees were often encouraged to identify a local evaluator in their application.

What tools are states using to evaluate?
Several states requested local evaluations use specific evaluation tools. For example, Massachusetts grantees are required to use the Evaluation Instrument developed by the Department and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (www.niost.org). In Hawaii, the state educational agency will collect baseline data for the 2002–2003 school year based on the Harcourt Educational Measurement testing (www.hemweb.com) that occurs in April 2003.

What data sources are states using to evaluate?
Data sources states identified include: needs assessments, participant surveys, self-assessments, site visits, participant/staff interviews, and measures of student achievement (e.g., test scores) and behavior (e.g., attendance records).

Improving Bradenton's After School Programs Through Utilization-Focused Evaluation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Community Partners Program is working to improve the quality of life in 26 U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Katherine Loflin of the Knight Foundation describes the utilization-focused evaluation efforts in one of Knight's communities.

Building on existing local capacity, the Knight Foundation and a local advisory group selected to invest $1.75 million in local partnerships in Bradenton, Florida over the next five years to improve positive youth development for students at two middle schools. The investment is in after school programs serving each of the middle schools. Goals of these programs are to: (1) increase youth school engagement, (2) decrease youth negative and violent behaviors, and (3) increase youth civic engagement.

After consultation with local stakeholders, Knight contracted Philliber Research Associates (PRA)[1] to help plan and evaluate each after school program. Providers in the after school programs formed a working collaborative and, with Knight Foundation assistance, formulated a utilization-focused evaluation plan[2] that will use data collected from young people at both the school and program levels to inform program practice over the next five years.

A Utilization-Focused Evaluation Plan

The after school collaboratives, Knight, and PRA developed a school-wide survey that will be administered to all middle school students at the beginning and end of the school year for the next five years. The survey collects information on: demographics/family status, school engagement (asking questions such as: How important is it to you to do well in school? Do you have a quiet place to do homework?), school engagement indicators

[1] For more information, see www.philliberresearch.com.
[2] Defined as evaluation done for and in collaboration with the primary users (in this case, after school program providers) for specific and intended uses (in this case, to monitor and make program choices for the after school programs).

(such as frequency of truancy, not completing homework), risky behaviors (such as lack of supervision, substance abuse), self-concept, current after school involvement, and other extracurricular involvement (including volunteering, athletics, school clubs). Additionally, at the end of each school year, PRA will collect academic performance data for each child attending the after school program. PRA will join these two data sets with student program attendance data to analyze any changes and the potential impact of program attendance on the changes observed.

The school-wide survey, which provides baseline data on all potential program participants, was completed in December 2002. Baseline data at the school level are critical for two reasons. First, the data provide a starting point for after school program providers to fine-tune their services by showing the needs of program participants. Second, the after school collaboratives will use these data for program improvement and, in consultation with Knight, to develop future grant proposals that reflect program modifications.

Next Steps

PRA will continue to work with Knight's grant partners in Bradenton throughout the school year to monitor and evaluate the after school programs and to use the year-end school data to inform additional program modifications. Knight Foundation and its grant partners in Bradenton, with the help of Philliber Research Associates, will continue to build capacity for utilization-focused evaluation to improve after school program quality in Bradenton.

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View From the States

21st CCLC program as a state-administered program as well. These national evaluations are designed to be complementary to the required data collection on the program indicators developed by each state, and the Department's indicators of academic progress that are collected under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

Implementation of 21st CCLC Evaluation Plans

In their federal applications for Title I funds and their Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the local competitions, states have provided information about their plans for evaluating program performance statewide. Although most states adopted evaluation information straight from the Non-Regulatory Guidance, many provided additional detail. The box on page 6 highlights some of the ways states have addressed the evaluation issue.

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A conversation with
Michelle Gambone

Dr. Michelle Gambone is president of Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (YDSI), a youth policy and research consulting firm. Most recently, Dr. Gambone and her colleague Dr. James Connell, president of the Institute for Research and Reform in Education,[1] applied longitudinal research to their previous community youth development work to examine the relationship between supports and opportunities and long-term developmental outcomes for youth. These results were just released in *Finding out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development.*[2] Michelle spoke with us about her new research and its implications for quality youth programming.

Q **Research in the field of youth development is expanding rapidly. What was the impetus for your new longitudinal research on supports and opportunities for youth?**

A Much of the early work in youth development had already begun to shift the focus of youth development programs from reducing "high risk" behaviors to promoting healthy developmental outcomes for all youth (e.g., coping, decision-making skills, successful education, employment opportunities) that would subsequently lower the occurrence of negative long-term outcomes. This was a really good step, but there was still a question about whether or not you could expect any kind of a long-term payoff from taking a developmental approach, or if you would only get better short-term outcomes. Decision makers wanted to know what would happen in the long run. Would investing in strategies to provide all youth with positive developmental experiences lead to better short- *and* long-term outcomes?

While the field was pushing this question, Jim Connell and I were developing our Community Action Framework for Youth Development, which integrates basic knowledge about youth development and the community conditions that affect it with emerging hypotheses about what it will take to transform communities into places where all youth can thrive (see the figure on page 10).[3] The framework trans-

"Supports and opportunities do matter. They matter because they are things young people have the right to expect. And they matter because they get us to the community goals that we have for young people."

lates developmental principles into a systematic approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating activities and investments for youth. It connects shorter-term outcomes to longer-term outcomes, looking at the things that are needed to get to the developmental outcomes, like enhancing the supports and opportunities available to youth, and the community strategies that actually help build those supports and opportunities across settings. We tried to focus our framework on outcomes that were actionable—things that you could really be accountable for and take action to change.

In the course of trying to use that framework as another way to talk about a developmental approach, we kept running into the same question—We are happy to think about developmental outcomes as short-term goals, but can you show us that young people who have supports and opportunities and good developmental outcomes are better off as young adults?

To answer this question we secured W. T. Grant Foundation funding to accomplish two things: (1) conduct a literature review that focused on the outcomes in our framework to determine the strength of evidence linking supports and opportunities to short-term developmental outcomes and, in turn, to long-term outcomes, and (2) to acquire longitudinal data sets on the elements in our framework to tackle the question of long-term outcomes. The two data sets that best matched our framework were both collected by Dr. Jacque Eccles and her colleagues at the University of Michigan; both sets had data on young people from middle school through their mid-twenties.

Our study addressed three main questions:

1. How much evidence exists that links the specific outcomes in our framework to each other?
2. Are there high-quality, practical measures of the outcomes in this framework that can be used in community settings to assess how well youth are doing?
3. Can existing data on youth be analyzed in a way that shows

[1] Website: irre.org

[2] Gambone, M., Klem, A., & Connell, J. (2003). *Finding out what matters for youth: Testing key links in a community action framework for youth development.* Philadelphia: Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and Institute for Research and Reform in Education.

[3] Connell, J. P., Gambone, M. A., & Smith, T. J. (2000). Youth development in community settings: Challenges to our field and our approach. In P. L. Benson & K. J. Pittman (Eds.), *Trends in youth development.* Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Also in Public/Private Ventures. (Eds.). (2000, Fall). *Youth development: Issues, challenges and directions.* Philadelphia: Author. Available at irre.org/pdf_files/connell.pdf (110KB Acrobat file).

how well youth need to be doing on early outcomes in the framework in order for us to be confident they will succeed later in life; and can we show how much difference supports and opportunities and youth development outcomes make in achieving long-term success?

Q **What were the results of your longitudinal analysis of the data sets?**

A Using the data sets, we looked at three critical supports and opportunities: (1) supportive relationships with adults, (2) challenging and engaging activities, and (3) meaningful involvement and decision making. First, we developed thresholds or "tipping points" for the critical elements in our framework that predict later success. For example, we found that youth who have at least one highly supportive relationship with an adult will do better than youth who have none. Therefore, the tipping point for later success is youth having one or more supportive adult relationships. Then we determined how much difference it makes that youth hit these tipping points. Again turning to supportive relationships for an example, we found that young people who had good supportive relationships at the beginning of high school were twice as likely as average kids to have good developmental outcomes at the end of high school. Similar results were found for the other two supports examined.

We then looked at the next step in development—is not having good developmental outcomes at the end of high school connected to problems for young people when they are in their early twenties? We found that young people with poor developmental outcomes at the end of high school were one and a half times more likely than average to have poor early adult outcomes by their early twenties. Therefore, the chain of evidence was clear and convincing—if you look at the same young people from the beginning of high school on into their early twenties we can show that kids with sufficient supports and opportunities (as determined by tipping points) are doing well developmentally as young adults.

Our next step will be to partner with other researchers and do more sophisticated developmental trajectory models to be sure that our findings hold up, even controlling for preexisting differences between individual youth. But given the size of the effects that we found, we are quite confident they are not going to go away.

Q **What are the implications of your new longitudinal research for policy, practice, and accountability?**

A We need to move past the question of whether or not providing young people with experiences that give them

Michelle Gambone

good supports and opportunities is a good thing to do. We have shown that this strategy will get us to our long-term goal of getting kids to good positive adult outcomes. So we now need to focus on what this means for the way in which we provide services and create activities for young people.

A second implication is that a developmental approach means you need to focus on supports and opportunities at the community level. With rare exceptions, any individual setting that works with young people will not provide enough of what a young person needs by itself to get them to good outcomes. Programs, families, other adults in young peoples lives, schools, and after school programs contribute to, but do not determine, how young people will turn out as young adults. This has implications for accountability. The very first step in accountability ought to be to ask any of these settings, "Can you show that you are providing young people with these supports and opportunities? Are you contributing your fair share to youth development?"

Q **Have any youth-serving organizations used the Community Action Framework for program improvement and accountability?**

A Yes. We created a process with the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) in San Francisco where we took study data on the supports and opportunities and after school settings from youth development agencies in San Francisco and used it as the starting point for an organizational improvement process with agencies. First, we examined youth's program experiences through our survey of supports and opportunities based on the framework. Next, we provided data back to the agencies about these experiences and used the data to engage staff in a self-assessment process. Staff then developed an assessment and action plan that articulated what practices needed to be incorporated into their work or strengthened, and an implementation plan for improvement. Then agencies used these action plans as the basis for proposals to a core group of funders in California. This enabled the agencies to spend a full year implementing their action plans.

At the end of the year we resurveyed the young people to see whether or not there had been any change in the levels of supports and opportunities they were experiencing, and, in fact, there had been. There was some variation, but every agency improved in some area. It was very clear when we went back and looked at where agencies improved and where they did not that improvement was linked with the strategies they implemented.

Agencies and funders alike learned that you can reliably, and in compelling and meaningful ways, measure supports and opportunities for youth, and if you intentionally implement improvement strategies, you will get positive outcomes.

Q How can you bring this kind of organizational learning to scale?

A YDSI is creating a web-based assessment process that allows us to work with single agencies or groups of agencies in different places. Using our website we can orient agencies to the framework. We can do virtual training on the supports and opportunities survey, and we have created a low-cost way to collect and analyze data and report it back to programs. In Santa Cruz, for example, we are working with 14 agencies that are part of a youth development alliance to conduct an organizational assessment process. We will conduct, on-site, an introductory workshop and two other workshops over the course of eight months, but these will be the only times that we will have face-to-face contact. The rest of the work will be done by phone and using the website. This provides a low-cost alternative to hiring an evaluator and it addresses the unfairness of asking youth workers to add evaluation skills to all the other demands made on them.

We are also planning to use our web-based data collection system to compile a national data set on supports and opportunities that can link these outcomes with program activities. We are collecting data everywhere the survey is used so that, over time, YDSI can create field-building reports that can help prioritize youth development policies and practices that are tied to the youth experiences our research shows really matters.
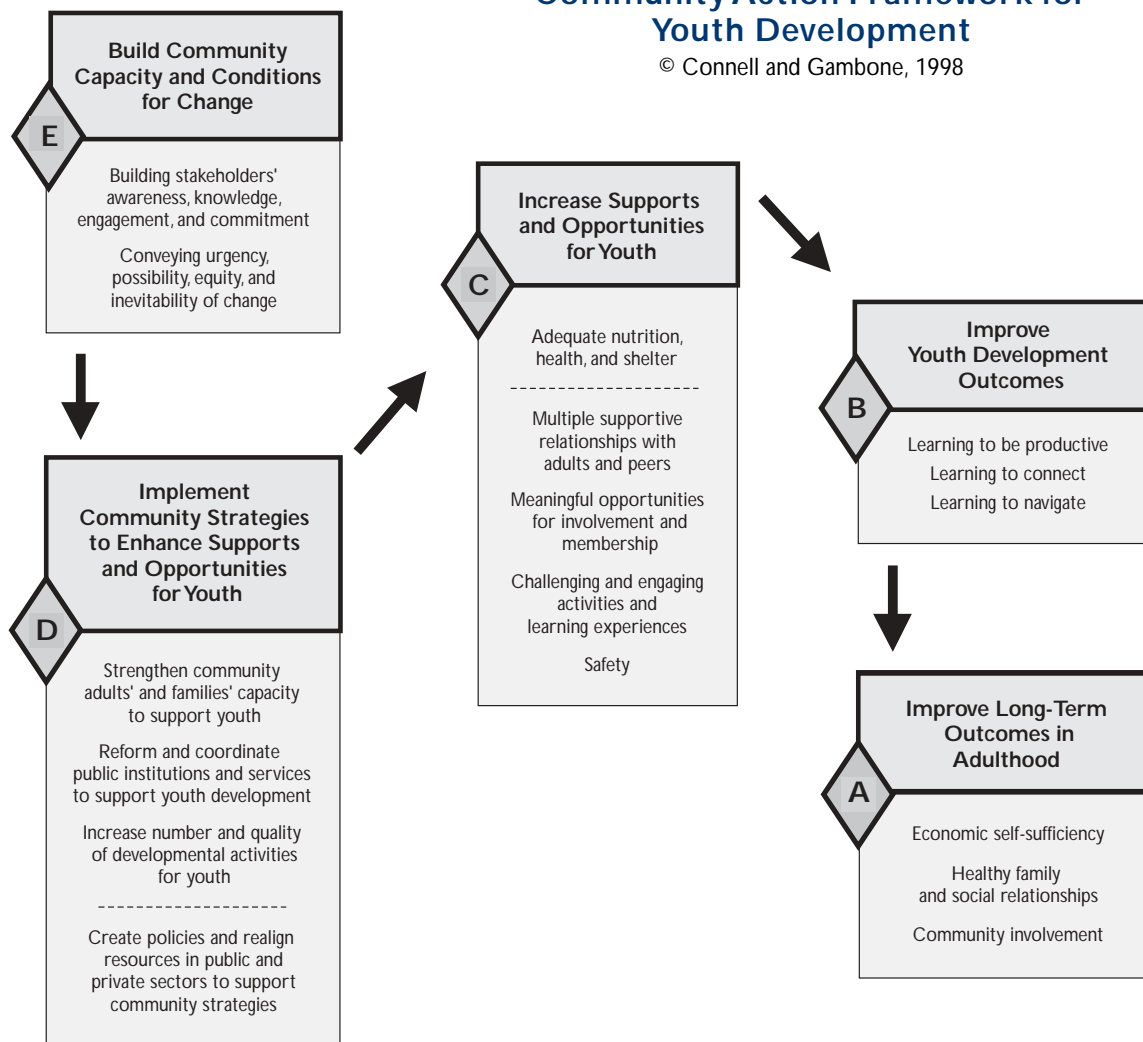
Q What is the most important message for our readership to take away from your research?

A That supports and opportunities *do* matter. They matter because they are things young people have the right to expect. And they matter because they get us to the community goals that we have for young people. The field now needs to determine how we deliver those supports and opportunities and make sure young people get more of those kinds of experiences in more settings.

Priscilla Little, Project Manger, HFRP

Community Action Framework for Youth Development

© Connell and Gambone, 1998

E Build Community Capacity and Conditions for Change

Building stakeholders' awareness, knowledge, engagement, and commitment

Conveying urgency, possibility, equity, and inevitability of change

D Implement Community Strategies to Enhance Supports and Opportunities for Youth

Strengthen community adults' and families' capacity to support youth

Reform and coordinate public institutions and services to support youth development

Increase number and quality of developmental activities for youth

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Create policies and realign resources in public and private sectors to support community strategies

C Increase Supports and Opportunities for Youth

Adequate nutrition, health, and shelter

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Multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers

Meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership

Challenging and engaging activities and learning experiences

Safety

B Improve Youth Development Outcomes

Learning to be productive
Learning to connect
Learning to navigate

A Improve Long-Term Outcomes in Adulthood

Economic self-sufficiency

Healthy family and social relationships

Community involvement

The Evaluation Exchange Special Report on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program National Evaluation

This special report offers expert commentary on the implications of When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, First Year Findings[1] for future evaluation and research. It includes a short summary of evaluation findings from that report (page 13) and we encourage our readers to read the full report, available at www.ed.gov/pubs/21cent/firstyear.

On February 3, 2003 the U.S. Department of Education released the first year findings from the national 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program evaluation. Conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., the evaluation examined the characteristics and outcomes of typical 21st CCLC programs. Citing the "disappointing initial findings from a rigorous evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program," the President's *Fiscal Year 2004 Education Budget Summary and Background Information*, also released February 3, decreased the request for funding for the 21st CCLC program by 40%.[2] According to the budget summary, "the evaluation indicates that the centers funded in the program's first three years are not providing substantial academic content and do not appear to have a positive impact on student behavior."[3]

The report's release, coupled with the decision to cut the 21st CCLC program by 40%, has sparked fervent debate among researchers, evaluators, advocates, practitioners, and others about the merits of evaluating first year programs, the ability to make generalized statements about program effectiveness given that this is one evaluation report, and the "fairness" of holding the original set of 21st CCLC grantees to the new standards of scientifically based research (SBR) set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act a full three years after many of the evaluated programs were operational. In response to this rising debate, HFRP sought commentary from seven experts from the field to help shed light on the following question: **Given the recent push for science-based research, coupled with the release of the first year evaluation findings from the 21st CCLC programs, where do we go from here to use research and evaluation to support the development of high quality out-of-school time programs?**

Steve Gunderson
Manager, Washington, DC, Office, The Greystone Group, Inc.
Former Congressman from Wisconsin

In 1996, as part of the Congressional reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I introduced legislation to create "community learning centers." Our goal was to find ways to more efficiently use school resources, especially in rural and inner-city areas, for all citizens all year. The Clinton administration strategically directed this broad language to create today's after school program, funded at $1 billion annually in FY 2003.

In the No Child Left Behind Act the law transitioned to a state grant program. Now, the administration seeks to add new standards to all federally funded programs which I call the "three A's"—academics, access, and accountability. We'd be wise to positively respond to this new focus. After school programming is an important and growing component in the development of today's youth. Yet we need to target these programs to those most in need, in ways that will enhance a student's academic progress, assuring limited public dollars meet the test of accountability.

New research and evaluation is desperately needed to improve federal support for this program. Certainly one study (Mathematica's) does not justify ending the program. But with limited resources and the new focus on academics, we must learn what works—especially for at-risk students. Then, we must restructure our programs to best achieve this goal. So, let's get on with improving a good idea rather than defending the status quo. To do anything less is to contribute to the death of the most significant expansion in federal support for any K–12 education program in recent years.

Kathleen McCartney
Professor, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Hard-won lessons of evaluation research[4] have been lost in the administration's response to the Mathematica evaluation of the 21st CCLC program. To evaluate the administration's response, ask yourself these five questions.

1. W*ere the findings used as part of an ongoing innovation cycle?* The answer is clearly no. Many child advocates had hoped that this evaluation would be used to promote continuous improvement. Instead, the administration has acted based on first year data, collected during the implementation phase of the study.

2. *How were the effect size data interpreted?* The Mathematica researchers highlight in their executive summary that the small effect sizes were most likely due to the low attendance rates, the length of the follow-up period, and the lack of sustained, substantive academic support in most programs. Although it is easy to dismiss the effects as small, this conclusion is no doubt premature, especially in light of the fact that this is an ongoing evaluation.

3. *Were the findings from the Mathematica study synthesized with existing data on after school programs in order to make an informed decision?* No, again. Instead, the administration embraced the Mathematica report as providing the only relevant information with which to inform funding considerations.

4. *Did the administration have fair and reasonable scientific expectations?* Scholars agree that no one should expect the 21st CCLC program evaluation to yield short-term effects on tests scores, echoing Zigler's early warnings concerning Head Start.[5] By what criteria are the findings "disappointing?"

[1] U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary. (2003). *When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program, first year findings.* Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/21cent/firstyear.

[2] U.S. Department of Education. (2003, February 3). *Fiscal year 2004 education budget summary and background information.* Retrieved March 24, 2003, from www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/Budget04/04summary/section2a.html#clcs

[3] Ibid.

[4] McCartney, K., & Weiss, H. (2003, March). Data in a democracy: The evolving role of evaluation in policy and program development. Paper presented at the Festschrift in honor of Edward Zigler. In *Child development and social policy: Knowledge for action.* Georgetown University, Washington DC. Publication forthcoming.

[5] Zigler, E., & Muenchow, S. (1992). *Head Start: The inside story of America's most successful educational experiment.* New York: Basic Books.

5. W*ere the findings subjected to professional scrutiny?* Given that the administration's recommendations coincided with the release of the report, the answer is no. This is the most troubling aspect of the administration's response. Policy recommendations should not precede reactions from the scientific community.

Accountability efforts and SBR can either be used to generate knowledge that informs effective practices or to serve as a political lever to cut programs and expenditures on child and family services. Here we have a sad example of that latter—another case of death by evaluation.[6]

Karen J. Pittman
Executive Director, Forum for Youth Investment, Baltimore, Maryland

The administration's proposed cut to the 21st CCLC budget is not surprising. It is a rare elected official who expands rather than downsizes the pet programs of a predecessor from the opposing party. Dozens of social programs will suffer cutbacks in the next budget. What is surprising is that the administration has broken its own rules for bringing science into policy discussions. By announcing the cuts just as it released the report, opportunities for the research and policy community to conduct a "rigorous, objective and scientific review" (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title IV), discuss the findings, and debate responses in light of findings from other equally scientific studies were effectively cut off.

Research *should* play a more central role in decisions to expand, redefine, or reduce programs. When used correctly, it can be a powerful counterweight to limit the big pendulum swings frequently associated with popular programs, to accelerate the growth of effective programs, and even to curtail the expansion of popular but ineffective programs. The Mathematica report includes promising findings and valuable lessons that can inform both practice and policy. This and other studies should serve as platforms for much needed conversations about how to augment program quality and encourage longer and more intense participation. By using the study to justify cuts, the administration has curtailed conversation about a range of responsible strategies for improving the program, given these and other findings. Our concern should be the same if the proposed program budget had been doubled.

For a more detailed version of this commentary, visit the Forum for Youth Investment website at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/ resspeech.htm.

Mindy DiSalvo
Program Director, Family Technology Resource Center, Decatur, Georgia

Because we want to know if our after school programs are the best that they can be, we eagerly welcomed the opportunity to be a part of the national evaluation of the 21st CCLC program. From the onset of the evaluation we were candid about our strengths and weaknesses, providing honest information about a program in its infancy. As a participant in the evaluation, I have two concerns related to the emphasis and use of the evaluation results.

First, there were very positive findings in the 21st CCLC evaluation—findings that could serve as a road map to improve existing and new programs, *not* close the doors to them. Based on our concurrent evaluation data, we expanded our curriculum, developed a parent/teacher/student homework completion policy, translated materials into two languages, extended hours of operation, and hired a nurse. We learned how to make our program better by using data. Therefore, it seems that the emphasis should be on *how* we can learn from the new evaluation report, and not what the report told us about academic impact.

Second, student achievement isn't, and never will be, solely a result of after school programs. Student achievement isn't a result of textbooks either, but we spend a fortune on them and no one is talking about cutting them from a budget! Improved student achievement is a result of a combination of components in a child's life, including how they spend their nonschool hours. Before student achievement becomes a priority for many of our after school programs, a safe place with a caring adult, friends, a healthy snack, and a promise of security comes first.

Our metropolitan Atlanta programs provide safe, high quality after school programs where children in over 10,000 families have developed both academic and social skills. Our evaluations, both internal and external, show an increase in student and family participation, parent involvement, perceived feelings of safety in the school and community, student attendance, student behavior, and student achievement. It is these victories we should celebrate. We should place the new 21st CCLC report in the larger context of successful after school programs nationwide and continue efforts to learn what works.

Tiffany Berry
External Evaluator, LA's BEST, Los Angeles, California

LA's BEST uses evaluation data by transforming program outcomes into organizational tools for program improvement. Since the program's inception in 1988, LA's BEST has placed a high priority on evaluation and we encourage feedback from the program's diverse stakeholders. Monitoring of program quality has been accomplished by leveraging internal sources (e.g., random site visits by the board of directors, site activity logs, opportunities to communicate between field and management staff, etc.), as well as data from external sources (e.g., the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA). These data sources have yielded valuable insights, which have been fed back into program operations.

One of the most robust findings of the LA's BEST program relates to the duration and intensity of participation. Our evaluation reports indicate that when compared with nonparticipants, LA's BEST participants have fewer days of absences from their regular school, higher achievement on standardized tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts, and higher language redesignation rates to English proficiency.[7] In addition, we have found that the relationship between participation intensity in one academic year and academic achievement was mediated by regular school attendance. This suggests that participating in LA's BEST resulted in better school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement.

The implications of these findings are important—provide a stimulating environment that makes children want to attend, and then keep it fresh and exciting to keep them coming back. The challenge is to create a cognitively stimulating environment that en-

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[6] Datta, L. (2001, January). *Avoiding death by evaluation in studying pathways through middle childhood: The Abt evaluation of the Comer Approach.* Paper presented at the MacArthur Invitational Conference on Mixed Methods Research, Santa Monica, CA.

[7] Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Kim, K. S., Lee, C., & Baker, E. L. (2000, June). *A decade of results: The impact of the LA's BEST after school enrichment program on subsequent student achievement and performance.* Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, Center for the Study of Evaluation.

hances the curriculum of the regular school day, cultivates children's creativity, and entices all children to return every day. One way LA's BEST meets this challenge is by using evaluation data to help identify the educational tools that field staff need to develop programs around the personal interests, individual talents, and academic needs of all children. The administration could follow the example of how LA's BEST uses its evaluation data to improve, rather than cut funding for, its programs.

James P. Connell
President, Institute for Research and Reform in Education, Toms River, New Jersey

Common sense tells us that public investment in programs serving youth should start with a research-based rationale, or theory of change. This theory should tell us how and why the proposed activities, in this case after school programs, can reasonably be expected to produce the designated academic and social outcomes.

In the absence of alignment between program activities and expected outcomes, the failure of the 21st CCLC program to produce its desired outcomes was virtually preordained. Two remedies present themselves: start with the outcomes you want and change program activities to those with a reasonable shot at achieving the outcomes, or start with the activities you have and adjust your expectations to outcomes they can achieve.

Either course makes some sense. The 21st CCLC evaluators call for remedy number one—enriching after school programs with more research-based activities tied to the desired outcomes. Many commentaries on the evaluation make energetic pleas for remedy number two—holding programs accountable simply for providing positive activities for young people while many of their parents are at work.[8]

The following steps could lead to better alignment between after school programs, academic outcomes, and evaluation: (1) develop educational and recreational activities to help students meet a small number of broad academic standards that reflect the schools' goals for their students, (2) give staff the resources to actively engage young people in these activities in different ways, and (3) assess the quality of implementation of these activities, their intended outcomes, and the connection between the two. We have seen such a theory of change approach help bring both realism *and* accountability to the work of changing public education. We expect it could do the same for after school programming.

Jacquelynne S. Eccles
McKeachie Collegiate Professor of Psychology, Women's Studies and Education, University of Michigan

As Chairperson for the National Research Council (NRC) committee that produced *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*,[9] my comments reflect my concern over the administration's decision to cut the funds for the 21st CCLC program based on one evaluation report. This seems a very strange decision for an administration that stresses both the need for evidence-based practice and the importance of supporting healthy adolescent development. Our comprehensive report outlined the characteristics of many programs shown *scientifically* to have positive effects on many different aspects of adolescent development and provided examples of many high quality programs with rigorously demonstrated effectiveness.

[8] See, for example, commentaries posted on the Afterschool Alliance website at: www.afterschoolalliance.org/voices_budget_cut.cfm.
[9] Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

The National Evaluation of the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers Program, First Year Findings[*]

Research Design
The quasi-experimental research design included a nationally representative sample of 4,400 middle school students, made up of 21st CCLC participants and matched comparison students. The experimental component of the study included 1,000 students from seven elementary school districts, randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group. Baseline and follow-up data were collected in the 2000–2001 school year.

Selected Implementation Findings
Attendance – Participants attended the programs an average of less than two days per week. Many centers' policies allowed students to participate on a drop-in basis.

Program Staff – About one-third of coordinators and three-fifths of other staff members were teachers. Survey data showed that middle school teachers believed that, as a result of working with students at the centers, they improved their teaching skills and had better relationships with some students.

Collaboration – In general, centers contracted with community agencies to provide specific after school sessions rather than as partners with shared governance or combined operations.

Selected Impact Findings
Academic – Overall, programs did not tend to have any effect on homework completion, grades, or test scores. However, teachers reported slightly increased classroom effort by middle school participants compared to nonparticipants. However, African-American and Hispanic participants showed some significant academic successes compared to their nonparticipant peers, especially for gains in math achievement.

Supervision – The program changed the type of care students were in and shifted care from parents and older siblings to program staff.

Safety – Participants' feelings of safety did not differ significantly from nonparticipants.

Parent Involvement – Parents of middle school participants were more likely to be involved in their child's schooling than parents of nonparticipants. Centers serving elementary students significantly increased the percentage of parents helping their child with homework at least three times in the last week, as well as increased their involvement in after school events.

Youth Development – Programs had little influence on developmental outcomes (e.g., students' ability to plan, set goals, or work with a team).

[*] Presentation of these summary findings is based solely on information from the first year report and does not reflect HFRP's interpretation or endorsement of Mathematica's methods or presentation of results.

We also discussed what is needed for adequate evaluation to improve these programs and make sound policy decisions. We proposed that the real challenge for the field is to increase the availability and sustainability of high quality programs, especially in the context of unpredictable funding streams. We concluded that increased funding for the 21st CCLC program was one step the federal government could take to help increase the predictability of funding.

Consequently, I was appalled at the decision to cut these funds based on one quite limited evaluation. Very little attention was paid in this evaluation to the characteristics of the programs being evaluated. Instead great attention was paid to the quasi-experimental and experimental evaluation designs used. As we discussed in the NRC report, these designs are powerful methodological tools, but they are not particularly useful if we do not know the quality of the programs being evaluated. If members of this administration truly value evidence-based practice, then they should pay more attention to the evidence-based reports that are so carefully put together by the NRC rather than use the results of one report to justify funding cuts. The existing evidence suggests to me that the administration should increase the funds for 21st CCLC, but require better specification of the exact characteristics of the programs eligible for funding.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Heather Weiss, Director, Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts

We are now playing in a "new evaluation game" with new players and new rules. The game is different because not only is research and evaluation helping to shape policy, but the reverse also is true. Evaluation has always been played out within a political frame, but the No Child Left Behind Act helped define that frame by setting new rules or standards for research and evaluation with its five principles for SBR in education.

Not everyone has agreed that the new evaluation game is being played with the right set of rules. Some would argue that even if the end goal is to comply with this set of rules, there needs to be a learning curve where programs are held incrementally accountable for implementing the new scientifically based standards. For example, the Mathematica impact evaluation, underway well before the new SBR principles were signed into legislation, was prematurely subjected to the new rules and the result has had potentially dire policy

consequences. As Pittman, Eccles, and McCartney point out in their commentaries, using one evaluation report to justify a policy decision runs counter to the new rules of SBR—in fact, they argue that subjecting the impact report to the new rules violates some of those rules' very premises. Further, as Connell points out, in order to accurately assess program impact, there must be alignment between program activities and desired outcomes. In the case of the 21st CCLC programs, old programs were held accountable for new outcomes, thereby almost "preordaining" failure. Moving forward, all players must strive for alignment between desired outcomes and program strategies.

Despite disagreement over the rules, we are now in a position where, like it or not, the new rules are in play and we have to learn how to "get in the game." So how do we play in this new game? There are at least two approaches.

First, as Gunderson points out, "we must learn what works," and we must acknowledge that the new game rules require after school programs to be accountable, demonstrate results, and improve their quality. However, as noted evaluator Mark Lipsey points out, "individual evaluation studies, however useful they may be to sponsors and stakeholders, yield approximate estimates of intervention effects and the relationships of those effects to the features of the program under assessment."[10] Further, he points out that perhaps the most useful and informative contribution to program managers and policymakers alike may be the consolidation of our piecemeal knowledge into broader pictures of the program and policy spaces at issue, rather than individual studies of specific programs.[11]

Second, we need to shift from a system of "gotcha accountability" to a system of learning for continuous improvement. This means that the new evaluation game requires new players or new skills of old players. Our two practitioner commentators (Berry and DiSalvo) agree that, even in the context of heightened accountability, to be good evaluation players requires a commitment to using data for continuous improvement as well as to show impact. A thorough reading of the Mathematica report reveals many promising implementation findings that need to be brought into the light and used for program improvement.

Years of evaluation research have taught us lessons that are too expensive to learn again, such as don't make large-scale investments in evaluation unless you are learning about program implementation along the way and don't evaluate a program until it is proud.[12] Moving forward, our responsibility as evaluators is to take advantage of the unintended window of opportunity provided to us by the administration to engage in a dialogue about how to apply these lessons to the new game to ensure that future research and evaluation of after school programs is used to improve the overall quality of after school, not only to justify program reduction.

This special report was compiled by Priscilla Little, Project Manager at HFRP. She can be contacted by email at priscilla_little@harvard. edu.

Related Resources

The **Afterschool Alliance**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness for and advocating on behalf of after school programs, has compiled reactions to the administration's 21st CCLC budget decisions from voices across the nation, including their own Executive Director, Judy Samelson. To view this, as well as other relevant after school evaluation information, go to www.afterschoolalliance.org/voices_budget_cut.cfm.

Harvard Family Research Project is preparing an *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation* brief on this same topic, with expanded evaluation resource information. Check for it on our website at www.hfrp.org in early May 2003.

[10] Lipsey, M. (1997, January). What can you build with thousands of bricks? Musings on the cumulation of knowledge in program evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation, 76,* 7–23.
[11] Ibid.
[12] For a review of these and other lessons learned from evaluation, see McCartney, K., & Weiss, H. (2003, March). Data in a democracy: The evolving role of evaluation in policy and program development. Paper presented at the Festschrift in honor of Edward Zigler. In *Child development and social policy: Knowledge for action.* Georgetown University, Washington DC. Publication forthcoming.

Doing What Works:
Scientifically Based Research in Education

In the midst of recent education reform policies, a new phrase has taken center stage. Since its numerous appearances in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the phrase "scientifically based research" has sparked fervent questions among researchers, educators, and policymakers. What exactly is scientifically based research? What are the implementation challenges? How can research and evaluation respond to these new demands? Suzanne Bouffard, consultant for Harvard Family Research Project, examines the new science-based research standards.

According to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), all federally funded education programs, including out-of-school time programs that are funded under Title I,[1] must be based on research studies that meet scientific standards. Government publicity materials (see www.nochildleftbehind. gov) refer to this as "doing what works." These user-friendly versions of the law cite the metaphor of medical research to explain how practice should be informed by experimental studies (i.e., studies in which participants are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups).

The primary goal of scientifically based research (SBR) is to ensure that programs for children are based on methods that have been proven effective and are therefore more likely to benefit other children, with a corollary goal of increasing the overall quality of education research. According to NCLB legislation, the following principles define scientific quality:

- Use of the *scientific method* with an emphasis on experimental *control (or comparison) groups*
- *Replication* of results, using multiple studies by different investigators
- Ability to *generalize* results from one sample to other children in the general population
- Fulfillment of *rigorous standards* with an emphasis on *peer review*
- *Convergence (or consistency) of results* between studies

Challenges to SBR Implementation

There is consensus that education research should follow the same general principles as other sciences, yet experts note some unique challenges to implementing SBR in educational contexts, including the realm of out-of-school time. For example, diverse values and goals for education provoke debate, and randomizing students to treatment and control groups poses ethical

[1] Title I refers to the set of programs in NCLB that relate to improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. As the largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education (funded at $10.4 billion in FY 2002), Title I targets these resources to the districts and schools where the needs are greatest. Title I provides flexible funding that may be used to provide additional instructional staff, professional development, extended-time programs, and other strategies for raising student achievement in high-poverty schools.

problems (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Experts also question whether scientifically based research necessitates a specific research methodology, with many believing that scientific quality is determined not by a particular methodology, but by the *appropriateness of the methodology for the research question*. In fact, a recent report on SBR in education by the National Research Council (NRC) explicitly discourages the exclusion of non-experimental studies, with the explanation that descriptive studies may first be necessary in order to design effective experimental interventions (Shavelson & Towne); furthermore, random assignment to experimental groups is necessary only to establish *causality*. For some questions, for example how family relationships affect school achievement, random assignment may be neither desirable nor ethical (Raudenbush, 2002).

What Can Researchers and Evaluators Do?

The call for scientifically based research has been met with a number of responses. The NRC report recommends choosing a research method based on the kind of question being asked (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Appropriate methods might include surveys, observations, or experiments. Other experts have pointed out that improving education research requires more than a strong methodology, and underscore a need for the collaboration of professionals from various jobs and disciplines. Some state that the best research is conducted by people with direct experience in the educational system (Gardner, 2002), with teachers providing valuable insight into questions concerned with activity in the classroom (Olson & Viadero, 2002). Others highlight how research from cognitive and developmental psychology can inform classroom instruction (Hirsch, 2002).

Experts also emphasize the role of a strong research community in increasing the quality of education research. Debate, discussion, and the peer review process are important, but researchers additionally stress the need for the accumulation of studies in order to establish scientific certainty. They caution that this process will require public patience and support, and should neither provoke discouragement nor overshadow existing research (Raudenbush, 2002). The challenge is to increase the quality of work while using the research that is currently available.

Toward this goal, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences has created a new "What Works Clearinghouse" of high-quality research studies (see www.w-w-c.org) and the independent, nonprofit Education Quality Institute will publish a collection of policy briefs on education research (see www.eqireports.org). These initiatives have resulted from an increased dialogue between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Some feel that this dialogue, along with the

Understanding Family Strengthening to Promote Youth Development

Dr. Geri Lynn Peak, a consultant and formerly the Managing Director of the Center for Applied Research and Technical Assistance, describes the evolution, practice, and potential assessment of a family strengthening approach to promote positive youth development.

Family strengthening to promote youth development (FSYD) is *an approach* to positive youth development where the involvement of families is purposefully woven into a program's mission and practice. FSYD strategically ties the success of youth to the health and well-being of their families, to their connection to a network of caring adults, and to their integration in a vibrant community. In so doing, FSYD targets family outcomes directly, along with youth outcomes. FSYD is not a specific intervention or program, but a mindset where the essential importance of families is affirmed.

FSYD is at an initial stage of development and is gaining momentum as a successful way of thinking about positive youth development. While many youth programs show concern for family needs in an ad hoc way, programs benefit youth more when they intentionally incorporate family involvement. FSYD provides a needed catalyst to build family and community capacity to support the transition to adulthood. Programs integrating FSYD principles can:

1. Improve the ability of families and family members to meet their own needs.
2. Increase the capacity of families to meet the needs of young people as they navigate adulthood transition.
3. Help family members reinforce and facilitate the development of positive youth development skills and competencies.

Evolution of FSYD

FSYD evolved when the Annie E. Casey Foundation encouraged experts to examine innovative, successful positive youth development programs to document whether and how families were engaged. This led to an initial "practice" framework, which the Center for Applied Research and Technical Assistance (CARTA) refocused to emphasize the importance of motivational factors that drive programmatic activities and outcomes.[1]
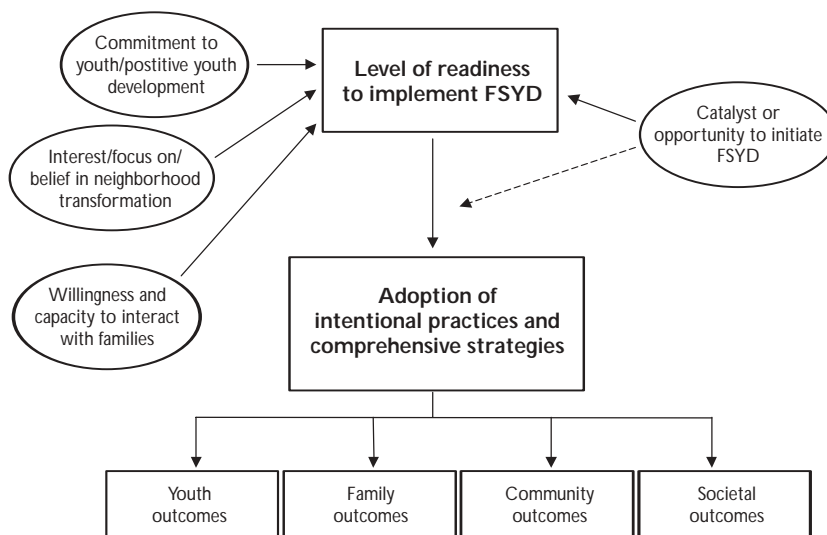
CARTA then developed a theory of action framework to illustrate how programs can include family-centered activities in their work by integrating the FSYD mindset (see diagram below).[2] Ideally, programs will develop comprehensive approaches that target youth *and* their families, allowing them both to:

- Have access to more caring and supportive social and institutional networks.
- Have access to a wider range of engaging activities.

[1] See Berglund, M. L. (1999). *More than a youth program: A best practices assessment of family-centered positive youth development (FC-PYD) approaches.* Seattle, WA: Social Development Research Group.
[2] Peak, G. L. (2001). *Family-strengthening youth development: A position paper.* Baltimore: Center for Applied Research and Technical Assistance.

Family Strenghening Youth Development (FSYD) Theory of Action

- Make meaningful contributions to their programs, families, and communities.
- Increase their capacity to become more self-sufficient, better aware of community challenges, and empowered to become actively involved in community change.

FSYD in Practice

Currently, the Casey Foundation is working to encourage the integration of FSYD into programs throughout their Making Connections network and beyond.[3] Programs are encouraged to develop customized strategies to implement FSYD; then programs initiate or formalize ongoing activities that target family outcomes. Family strengthening program activities fall into four categories:

Mentoring   Traditional adult-child relationships and broader mentoring approaches, such as intergenerational and adult/adult mentoring.

Monitoring   Collective responsibility, commitment, and accountability for the well-being of youth. Adults in the community are aware of what youth are involved in and feel responsible to engage young people who are not positively involved.

Mobilizing   Families, including adults and youth, engage in community organizing and community-building activities.

Management   Assisting families with accessing and coordinating needed resources and services.

Assessing FSYD

Supporters of FSYD anticipate positive short- and long-term outcomes, yet any tangible effects of integrating this mindset have not yet been determined by systematic study. Programs that intentionally adopt FSYD need to monitor and assess their work in order to determine its value. Evaluators must document not only *what* programs are doing, but also *why* they are doing it and *whether* their activities are linked in some way to anticipated outcomes. It is still unclear what outcomes will result or what value is added when these approaches with families are put into place. The potential for success has led CARTA to expand their efforts with FSYD. Their most recent work focuses on assessing the value of integrating FSYD with programs that serve vulnerable youth within public systems of care and aligning FSYD practice with family development theory.

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[3] The 22 Making Connections cities nationwide strive to strengthen neighborhoods by connecting families to organizations and networks that provide economic, education, safety, and healthcare opportunities.

Doing What Works

chance to improve the quality of education research and practice, may prove to be one of the greatest opportunities resulting from the new focus on scientifically based research.

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For more information on scientifically based research in an out-of-school time context see Evaluating the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program—A View From the States *on page 6.*

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Extra Online Resources From HFRP

Our latest *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation* brief is an **expanded version of our *Evaluation Exchange* special report** on page 11. It includes a summary of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers report, expert commentary about its implications, and an expanded list of resources related to promoting quality out-of-school time programs through research and evaluation. This brief will be available free or charge (with all of the previous briefs in the series) on our website at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources.html. To be notified when we post the new brief on our website, sign up for the OST notification email at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/subscribe.html.

We compiled an extensive list of **"new and noteworthy" out-of-school time publications and resources**, but could not fit them in the issue. However, they are available on our website at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue21.

> promising practices

The Challenges and Strategies of Evaluating Community-Wide After School Programs

Drawing on their experiences from the Municipal Leadership for Expanded Learning Opportunities project, Mark Ouellette and Audrey Hutchinson of the National League of Cities reflect on the challenges of evaluating citywide after school programs and the strategies that cities have adopted to meet these challenges.

In a majority of the eight cities involved in the Municipal Leadership for Expanded Learning Opportunities project,[1] no one organization has authority over the after school programs run by the various providers in the city. Most of these communities have created collaboratives comprised of diverse stakeholders to provide some type of governance structure for after school programs. Representatives include businesses, school personnel, municipal officials, youth-serving organizations, and community and faith-based organizations. But the role of the collaboratives is limited to providing direction for after school programs, increasing awareness of the importance of out-of-school time, and raising new funds for local initiatives. The governing bodies do not usually have any direct control over program staff, curriculum, or services offered.

The collaborative nature of these municipal efforts poses two main challenges for evaluation:

1. *Identifying evaluation goals.* The principal challenge with evaluating this type of collaborative is identifying the goals of the evaluation. Certainly different audiences—researchers, service providers, and legislators—require different standards of evidence, and what satisfies one will frequently be unsatisfactory or confusing to another.
2. *Financing the evaluation.* Financing an evaluation is another major obstacle with new funds typically being used to expand or create new after school programs rather than to support new research efforts to examine already established programs.

[1] The aim of the Municipal Leadership for Expanded Learning Opportunities project is to help city leaders increase the availability, and improve the quality, of expanded learning opportunities during the nonschool hours for children and youth. The eight cities involved in this 30-month project are: Charlotte, North Carolina; Fort Worth, Texas; Fresno, California; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Lincoln, Nebraska; Spokane, Washington; and Washington, District of Columbia. The project began in June 2001 through support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Related Resources

National League of Cities. Expanding Afterschool Opportunities Action Kit. www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/files/reports/afterschool.pdf (Acrobat file)

Strategies for Addressing the Challenges

Many of the collaboratives, however, know they need local evidence to demonstrate to the public that after school programs are a worthwhile investment and are having a positive impact on the children and youth in their communities. In the absence a "logic-model-driven" evaluation,[2] seven of the eight cities in the Municipal Leadership for Expanded Learning Opportunities project are documenting the effects of their collaboratives.[3] They are using three strategies:

1. *Present data to make the case for the collaborative.* Several communities have collected data on program availability as measured by the number of slots available for children and youth. In Indianapolis, Indiana data collected by the United Way showed that in one year, program availability increased by 71 percent as a result of three new collaborative projects: (1) a new 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, (2) the first-time provision of services by the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, and (3) other providers expanding their programs into new areas as a result of a needs assessment conducted by the collaborative.
2. *Use an evaluation from one of the partners to demonstrate the value to the community.* All eight of the Municipal Leadership for Expanded Learning Opportunities cities have on their own received a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The cities use the data collected from these grants to demonstrate to the public the positive impact that after school programs across the collaboratives have on children and youth in their communities.
3. *Partner with local organizations that can evaluate after school programs.* Several communities have sought assistance from local nonprofits for help in evaluating their after school and summer school programs. In Washington, D.C. the collaborative secured the assistance of the Urban Institute to evaluate programs operated within the District of Columbia.

It is never easy to establish the causal link between the activities of the after school program and positive outcomes for children and youth. Evaluating community-wide systems of after school programs is even more challenging because the evalua-

[2] The authors use this phrase to refer to an evaluation that has clearly articulated goals, indicators, and outcomes. For more information on using logic models for evaluation, see *Logic Models in Out-of-School Time* on page 22.

[3] Fort Worth, Texas is an exception and has been engaged in an evaluation of their after school programs since the programs' origin. The city of Fort Worth and the Fort Worth Independent School District jointly funded 52 after school programs (which operate under the umbrella of Fort Worth After School or FWAS), and hired an independent evaluator to demonstrate FWAS' impact on children and youth in the community. See the related article, *Learning From Evaluation: Lessons From After School Evaluation in Texas*, on page 19.

Learning From Evaluation:
Lessons From After School Evaluation in Texas

Dr. Peter A. Witt, the Elda K. Bradberry Recreation and Youth Development Chair at Texas A&M University, reflects on seven years of evaluating city after school programs in Texas.

Over the last seven years, the external project team that I lead has been involved in evaluations of after school programs at various school campuses in urban areas in Texas, including Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston.[1] Reflecting on the project team's evaluation experiences across these sites, a number of key lessons emerge as central to conducting after school evaluation.

Meet the Information Needs of Multiple Stakeholders

Most programs have multiple stakeholders, many of whom emphasize different goals in their support of, and expectations for, program outcomes. In these cases, means have to be found to collect data honoring the differing stakeholders' perspectives. For example, the Fort Worth After School project has to answer to its funders, the Fort Worth Independent School District and the Fort Worth Crime Prevention District, its manager, a Coordinating Board made up of city and school district representatives, and the staff who manage the day-to-day administration and oversight of the program. Other interested parties include the 11 service providers used by the program, the principal at each school who chooses the service provider for their site, and, of course, the parents and students.

As with any project, these various stakeholders have different expectations for the program. Parents, for example, want their children to be in a safe environment, to complete their homework, and to undertake activities beyond watching television; children want to have fun and be around program staff and other participants they like. The two major funders are interested in ensuring that children are in a safe environment, that they increase their educational performance, that they increase their social and physical skills, and that crime in the community is reduced. Thus the evaluation process has to include variables and information that enables each of the stakeholders to see if their goals are being met.

Related Resources

To read Dr. Peter Witt's full evaluations of after school programs in Austin, Dallas, and Fort Worth see: www.rpts.tamu.edu/Faculty/Witt/pubs.htm.

A summary of the evaluation from the Austin after school program is available in HFRP's Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html. A summary for Fort Worth is coming soon.

Use an Organizing Framework to Set Program Goals

Using an organizing theory or framework helps all stakeholders agree to a set of program goals, which serves as the basis for determining the targeted outcomes for the evaluation. Before the after school program began in Fort Worth, the city was already invested in a Developmental Assets Model[2] so framing the evaluation in these terms provided useful ties between the after school program and other projects for children in the community. In addition, the Assets framework helped avoid two particularly sticky issues that plague a number of after school program evaluations: demonstrating increases in educational test scores and reducing crime. Using the Assets framework enabled measurement of the precursors to academic improvement and reduced crime, without having to provide direct measurements in these two areas.

Use a Participatory Approach to Evaluation

After school programs are best served by a participatory, ongoing evaluation process. While the evaluators need to retain their impartiality and objectivity to gain access to insider information, it is best if stakeholders see the evaluators as an integral part of the overall project team. In addition, including an evaluation component as a part of the program for multiple years as well as maintaining consistency in the evaluation team helps identify longitudinal changes in the program and its outcomes.

Help Program Organizers Match Goals to Outcomes

One of the most interesting challenges is to help after school program organizers understand that the program they are providing must match the goals they are seeking to achieve. In other words, the content of the program must be consistent with what stakeholders want the project to accomplish. Unfortunately this is often not the case and there is a mismatch between a program's marketing description and what really occurs in the program. An external evaluator can help bring these discrepancies to the attention of the program organizers.

Tailor Reports to Meet Stakeholder Needs

Evaluators often want to demonstrate that they have earned their money by presenting an overly detailed and complicated report. However, most stakeholders want the results boiled down to a couple of pages, with bulleted findings and recommendations. In the case of the Fort Worth After School program, we produced a fully developed executive summary as well

[1] The programs had a variety of different sponsors, including the Parks and Recreation Departments, local school districts, and a County Commissioners Court. In most cases the evaluation process was guided by a risk/protective factors/resiliency framework or the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Model (www.search-institute.org/assets).

[2] Developed by the Search Institute, this model identifies 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development. For more information see www.search-institute.org/assets.

> promising practices

NSACA Accreditation: Building Capacity for Continuous Improvement in After School Programs

Mark Carter, Executive Director of the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA), describes how the NSACA accreditation process helps after school programs build evaluation capacity.

For the past decade, the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA) and its planners have focused on accrediting after school programs—to assure parents, children, policymakers, and funders that after school program quality meets clear developmental and safety standards. Currently, over 400 programs nationwide hold NSACA accreditation. The key to accreditation is an ongoing self-study process requiring a serious effort to explore how the entire program delivers services to children.

The NSACA accreditation process, developed jointly with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and the U.S. military, involves a formal, structured sequence of discussion, analysis, and improvement planning, which involves parents, representative community members, staff, host agencies, and others. NSACA supplies manuals and instruments for this self-study, which guide these participants through the 36 NSACA Keys to Quality (see box below). The purpose of the process is to install self-conscious evaluation as part of program management to address various problems and mobilize broad organizational participation. The ultimate goal of the NSACA accreditation process is to build capacity for program improvement.

Accreditation for Program Improvement

NSACA accredited programs regularly report how the accreditation process requires real collaboration, genuine creativity, and cross-disciplinary decision making. Involving participants

of a program in its self-study creates an interpersonal network that accommodates change, supports children, and respects the contributions of each member of the team. As one program reports, "Staff feel valued and included, two important factors in staff retention and performance."

The ultimate goal of the NSACA accreditation process is to generate a sustainable self-improvement process for out-of-school time programs. In this regard it shares many similarities with evaluation for continuous improvement. Reflecting on the guiding questions provided in the accreditation tools, program stakeholders, including staff, families, and participants, ask themselves the following questions about each standard:

- Why is this standard important?
- What are we currently doing to meet this standard?
- What do we wish we were doing to better meet this standard?

This process engages stakeholders, collects data to answer key stakeholder questions, and then provides a platform for using the results to improve the program—all key elements of continuous improvement. Through the NSACA accreditation process, programs build the internal capacity they need to begin this self-reflection process and continue to use data for program improvement long after they have earned accreditation.

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For more information about NSACA, the NSACA standards, and NSACA program improvement and accreditation, visit nsaca.org or call at 800-617-8242. For more information on continuous improvement evaluation see The Evaluation Exchange, *Vol. VIII, No. 2, Fall 2002. Archived issues are available at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/archives.html.*

Learning From Evaluation

as an easy to read and accessible "report card." In this way even the final evaluation report served multiple stakeholders.

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NSACA Accreditation Standards: 36 Keys to Quality

The NSACA standards were written to describe the best practices in out-of-school time programs for children aged 5 to 14. They are intended for use in group settings where children participate on a regular basis and where the goal of the program is to support and enhance overall development. NSACA standards are organized into 36 Keys to Quality, under six categories: (1) human relationships, (2) indoor environment, (3) outdoor environment, (4) activities, (5) safety, health, and nutrition, and (6) administration. For each key NSACA has developed guiding questions, specific standards, and concrete examples. For a complete listing of the standards, see www.nsaca.org/standards_glance.htm.

Youth Participation
continued from page 3

amount of time that is necessary for programs to have an impact (Gambone et al., 2002).

Program Quality. OST programs include multiple activities and qualities. We have yet to understand which aspects of the program account for the relationship between participation and outcomes. Researchers have begun to look at which qualities are associated with youth's experiences in activities (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996) and youth development (Beckett, Hawken, & Jacknowitz, 2001). For example, some researchers have examined the effects of interventions on staff quality, such as coaches' behavior. Findings suggest that interventions on coaches' behavior change youth's enjoyment of and persistence in sports activities (e.g., Smith, Smoll, & Christensen, 1996).

Research Design. Many studies of OST programs are cross-sectional and correlational. These types of studies and other non-experimental evaluations contribute to our understanding of the associations between program participation and outcomes, program quality, and continuous program improvement. However, more rigorous designs are essential to addressing selection effects and differentiating program effects from normal development (Beckett et al., 2001). Like other social science disciplines, in order to understand the *impact* of activities on outcomes, the field needs to continue to use rigorous designs, such as experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal studies.

See also in this issue Doing What Works: Scientifically Based Research in Education *(page 15) and* The Evaluation Exchange Special Report on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers National Evaluation *(page 11). We plan to publish an expanded version of this paper, with a more comprehensive review of research and evaluation on the relationships between activity participation and youth outcomes, on our website in July 2003. To be notified when it is available, sign up for our OST notification email at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/subscribe.html.*

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Challenges and Strategies
continued from page 18

tions must focus on a variety of after school providers operating different programs, different times of the day, and providing different dosages, and different services (e.g., academic, enrichment, recreational) for children and youth. However, the strategies that the Municipal Leadership sites have developed can help other city collaboratives in their efforts to assess the impact of their programs.

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Logic Models in Out-of-School Time

In the Spring 2001 issue of **The Evaluation Exchange** *(Vol. VII, No. 2), Harvard Family Research Project examined logic model basics. Now, we revisit this topic in the context of out-of-school time programs. Julia Coffman describes one approach programs can take to develop a logic model.*

Many of us at one time or another will be asked to help develop a logic model. Their use as a convenient tool for strategic planning, evaluation planning, grantmaking, and communications has proliferated in recent years.

Logic models are a concise way to show how a program is designed and how it will make a difference for a program's participants and community. A logic model summarizes the program's key elements, reveals the rationale behind its approach, articulates its intended outcomes, and shows the relationship between the program and those outcomes. A logic model also can help identify the core elements of an evaluation plan.

There is no one "right" way to construct a logic model. There are many approaches and a logic model can take on many forms. One possible approach that out-of-school time programs (and others) can use is shown on the next page.[1] The example offers a picture of the logic model's structure, along with examples often associated with out-of-school time programs.

First Column: Describing the Program

The program side, or first column, of the logic model has four elements.

1. **Desired Results**   The overall long-term vision or goal for children, adults, families, or communities. A program *alone* usually cannot accomplish the desired results, but it should contribute to them.
2. **Motivating Conditions and Causes**   The conditions, causes, circumstances, factors, issues, etcetera that need to change in order to achieve the desired results. The program probably will address *some* of these conditions or causes, but not all of them.
3. **Program Strategies**   The broad approaches that the program uses to affect the conditions or causes behind the program's existence. They are the general methods or processes used to achieve the desired results or vision.
4. **Program Activities**   The individual services or interventions the program uses to implement its strategies.

Second Column: Identifying the Outcomes

The second column, or outcome side, of the logic model defines the program's *measurable* results. The program elements in the first column should drive the development of elements in the outcome column. The program acting alone expects to produce these changes.

5. **Performance Measures**   Measures that assess the program's progress on the implementation of its *strategies and activities*.

    Measures of Effort   Also commonly known as outputs, measures of the products and services generated by program strategies and activities.

    Measures of Effect   Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors in the program's target population(s).

6. **Indicators**   Measurable elements of the program's *desired results or vision* that reflect substantial changes in people, policies, or systems across an entire community. The program acting alone usually cannot achieve changes in indicators; they also require efforts from other programs or institutions working toward similar results.

    Interim Indicators   Measures of short-term community-wide progress toward the program's desired results.

    Ultimate Indicators   Measures of long-term community-wide progress toward the program's desired results. They usually require significant resource investments to affect. Performance measures and interim indicators should contribute to movement on the ultimate indicators.

Third Column: Planning Evaluation and Learning

The third column puts in place elements needed for data collection on the measures identified in the second column, and indicates how that data will be used for learning and decision making.

7. **Data Sources and Methods**   Where the data needed to track the performance measures and indicators will come from, and the methods needed to track them.
8. **Evaluation Questions**   Questions about the program that can be answered by the evaluation, or strategic decisions that can be based on it.
9. **Stakeholders**   Individuals or organizations with a vested interest in the program and who need to be involved in learning from the evaluation.
10. **Mechanisms for Learning**   Opportunities for stakeholders to come together, learn, and make decisions based on the evaluation.

For a more a more detailed description of how to develop this type of logic model, see the brief Learning from Logic Models in Out-of-School Time *on HFRP's website at www.gse.harvard. edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/learning_logic_models. html.*

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[1] This logic model is based on: Watson, S. (2000). *Using results to improve the lives of children and families: A guide for public-private child care partnerships*. Washington, DC: Child Care Partnership Project. Available at www. nccic.org/ccpartnerships/resource.htm#resultspdf.

Examples of Logic Model Components
for Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs

ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL "The Program"	AS MEASURED BY "The Outcomes"	EVALUATION AND LEARNING
1. DESIRED RESULTS • Improve the physical, social, and emotional well-being of children. • Improve children's academic development and performance.	**6. INDICATORS** *Ultimate Indicators* • Reduced substance use rates among teens • Reduced teen pregnancy rates • Reduced numbers of violent acts among adolescents and teens • Reduced dropout rates • Increased percentage graduating from high school • Increased percentage attending college	**7. DATA SOURCES & METHODS** • Standardized tests • State/local government databases • Surveys • Focus groups • Interviews
2. MOTIVATING CONDITIONS & CAUSES • Many parents working outside of the home • Children with unstructured and unsupervised time after school • Low academic performance among low-income children • Lack of positive adult-youth relationships • Youth at more risk for crime and substance abuse after school	*Require community-wide effort to affect* *Interim Indicators* • Improved test scores in reading, math, or science • Reduced numbers of antisocial behaviors or behavior problems • Decreased student suspensions • Improved grades	**8. EVALUATION QUESTIONS** • Has the program achieved its intended measures of effort? • Have the measures of effect changed as anticipated? • If the measures of effect have changed, are the indicators moving? • If the measures or indicators are not moving, does that mean the OST program needs to be modified?
3. PROGRAM STRATEGIES • Youth development and leadership • Academic enrichment • Curriculum development and enrichment • Collaboration	**5. PERFORMANCE MEASURES** *Measures of Effect* • Development of emotionally supportive relationships with adults • Higher self-esteem • Improved study habits • Improved peer relationships • Improved attitudes toward school • Improved school attendance	**9. STAKEHOLDERS** • Program staff • Collaborators/partners • Program participants • Parents • Program funders • Board members • Community members
4. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES • Homework help and tutoring • Mentoring • Rap sessions • Arts activities • Recreation activities • Technology training • Literacy activities • Career counseling and development • Community service or work projects • Intergenerational activities • Conflict resolution training	*Can be affected by the OST program* *Measures of Effort* • Number of children served in the OST program and participant demographics • Number of classes/sessions/trainings • Number and type of products developed • Measures of program cost-effectiveness • Parent and child satisfaction rates with the OST program	**10. MECHANISMS FOR LEARNING** • Regular evaluation reports (in different and accessible formats for different stakeholders) • Designated periodic "learning meetings" to talk about evaluation results with stakeholders • Staff meetings • Strategic retreats

The Out-of-School-Time Program Evaluation Database

To meet the rising demand for information on out-of-school time (OST) evaluation, Harvard Family Research Project created the Out-Of-School Time Program Evaluation Database with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. This online resource is designed to provide information in an easily accessible format, with the goal of supporting the development of high quality evaluation and programs in the OST field. The database now includes information on three dozen program evaluations and we add and update evaluations quarterly.

Types of Programs Included in the Database

Our OST database offers a range of evaluation work from large-scale national OST investments (such as the national 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation) to small-scale local program evaluations (such as the Thunderbirds Teen Center program in Arizona) and programs that focus on after school as well as on the broader out-of-school time. It also includes evaluation work of initiatives that have strong OST components, such as community schools and mentoring initiatives. Evaluations included in our database must meet three criteria:

1. The evaluated program operates during out-of-school time.
2. The evaluation aims to answer a specific evaluation question or set of questions about a specific program.
3. The evaluated program serves children between the ages of 5 and 19.

Included evaluations represent a variety of designs, methodologies, and findings to serve multiple stakeholder needs.

Organization of the Database

Information in the database is presented as profiles of individual programs. Each profile is divided into two main sections:

(1) program and (2) evaluation. The program section includes information about the program's goals, scope, funding, duration, participants, components, and contact information and a brief overview of the evaluation(s). The evaluation section provides detailed summaries of each evaluation study, including the evaluation purpose and questions, design and sample, data collection methods, and findings. Information in each of these sections is searchable along key attributes, allowing users to access information tailored to their own needs.

Practical Applications

The database is envisioned as a program-building tool. By providing detailed information about evaluation designs, methods, and data collection approaches, the database enables program staff, funders, and evaluators to learn about how others have approached evaluation. The database is also envisioned as a field-building tool. By bringing together information about evaluation investments and findings across the OST field, the database helps OST program staff to better understand the "yield" from current and planned knowledge investments, to understand what is known about findings from evaluations of OST programs, and facilitate strategic investment of evaluation resources.

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The database can be accessed at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/ projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html. For information about how to submit an evaluation for inclusion in the database, please contact Chris Wimer by telephone at 617-495-9108 or by email at wimer@fas.harvard.edu.

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