Afterschool Alliance Backgrounder: Formal Evaluations of the Academic Impact of Afterschool Programs

Updated: March 2004

Although afterschool programs for children have been operating for many years in some communities, the afterschool movement – the great national awakening to the opportunity afterschool offers – is just a few years old. As public demand for afterschool has grown, so has the demand for accountability. That is particularly true in afterschool programs that spend public dollars. After all, where tax dollars flow, so must accountability to taxpayers.

The Landscape of Afterschool Evaluations

A number of different types of evaluations have been conducted over the last several years, assessing various aspects of afterschool programming. Some evaluations seek to gather data on whether programs have been structured as they were originally intended, how well they have done at meeting attendance and staffing goals, how they "fit" in the school environment and more. Others explore the effect afterschool programs have on the children who participate in them, their parents, and even the communities at large.

Both types of evaluations are of great value to afterschool providers and to policymakers, and when taken together the two types of studies help identify the particular program elements and approaches most critical to accomplishing program goals. It is useful, for example, to correlate information on student attendance at afterschool programs with student academic performance. Were an evaluator to conclude that attendance is key to academic gains, program designers might focus more energy on improving attendance for students.

Evaluations also differ by virtue of who conducts them. Many programs self-evaluate, providing useful data and satisfying the needs of their various stakeholders – parents, funders, partnering businesses, local public officials and so on. But for academics and large funders – the federal government, state governments, the Open Society Institute, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation or the Wallace Fund, for example – more exacting standards and greater independence is often required. Independent evaluations commissioned by such entities are the primary subject of this document.

Moreover, this compilation focuses chiefly on the impact of afterschool programs on student academic achievement. A second backgrounder, available from the Afterschool Alliance website at www.afterschoolalliance.org, summarizes findings related to student safety, behavior, substance-abuse-prevention, and discipline.

Summary Lessons from the Data

The data and conclusions from these studies amply demonstrate the positive effect afterschool programs have on student academic achievement. (Citations for the following are included in the detailed descriptions of afterschool studies that follow.)

- Evaluations of LA's BEST by the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation show that students' regular school-day attendance improved once they began participating in the afterschool program. That improved attendance led to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of math, reading and language arts. In addition, language redesignation rates favored LA's BEST students when compared with non-LA's BEST students.
- Children in the Ohio Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project (SACC) scored higher than non-participating students across the state, according to an evaluation by the University of Cincinnati College of Education's Evaluation Services Center. "SACC 4th grade students' scores exceeded the statewide percentages of students meeting proficiency standards in every subject area tested: writing, reading, mathematics, citizenship, and science. SACC 6th graders exceeded the statewide percentages of students meeting proficiency standards in four of the five areas: writing, reading, mathematics, and citizenship."
- An evaluation by the Department of Education, University of California at Irvine and Research Support Services, found that reading and mathematics gains of students in Los Angeles' YS-CARE program, aimed at children from families on TANF, outpaced those of non-participating students, as measured by SAT-9 scores.
- Policy Studies Associates' second-year evaluation of The After-School Corporation's (TASC's) program "found significant differences in proficiency-level shifts among active participants and nonparticipants who scored in the lowest proficiency level on the 1998-99 mathematics tests. In math, 31 percent of active participants scoring at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99 scored at a higher proficiency level in 1999-2000, compared to 23 percent of nonparticipants who demonstrated the same improvement. Two percent of these active participants increased their performance to grade level, compared to 1 percent of nonparticipants. A similar but less pronounced pattern was observed on the reading tests administered in grades 3-8. Among those scoring at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99, 45 percent of active participants improved their scores in 1999-2000 enough to move to a higher performance level, and 3 percent scored at grade level. Forty percent of nonparticipants who scored at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99 increased their scores enough to move to a higher proficiency level a year later, and 2 percent reached grade level."
- Reading scores for San Diego's "6 to 6" students improved, according to evaluator WestEd. Fifty-seven percent of students increased their reading scores over the course of the studied year, and SAT-9 reading scores increased. Nearly ten percent of children moved up into the 25th percentile or higher in 2000 by comparison to 1999 reading scores.
- A five-site evaluation of the Boys & Girls Clubs' national Project Learn program, found that "As program involvement increased, engagement in reading, use of verbal skills, writing, tutoring, and the study of geography all significantly ($p<.05$) increased as well." Further, "[t]here was also a direct and statistically significant ($p<.05$) relationship between program involvement and enjoyment of reading, use of verbal skills, writing, and geography." Further, "[a]verage grade increases over the 30-month study period were greatest for

program youth. Program youth increased their average grades by 11 percent from baseline to the 30-month measurement while BGC comparison youth and non-BGC comparison youth, over the same period, increased their average grades by .4 percent and .3 percent, respectively."

- A statewide evaluation of California's After School Education and Safety Program (formerly the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, ASLSNPP) by the University of California at Irvine demonstrated mathematics gains closely related to individual students' level of participation in the program: "Among students who participated for more than 150 days (approximately 7.5 months), there was an increase of 4.9 percent in students above the 25th percentile, an increase considerably larger than that found statewide. *The scores suggest that, particularly for students who participate in the ASLSNPP for substantial periods of time, there is a closing of the gap in Math achievement between low-income and other students.*" [Emphasis in original.]
- Forty-four percent of students in San Diego's "6 to 6" program increased their SAT-9 math scores, according to an evaluation by WestED.
- Policy Studies Associates' study of TASC's third year of operation concluded: "Students who participated in TASC after-school activities the most consistently and for the longest period of time experienced the greatest math gains, when compared to similar nonparticipants. Among students who participated actively in TASC projects in each year of their enrollment, students participating for two years gained an average of four scale-score points more on the city-wide standardized tests than similar nonparticipants. Among active participants, students participating for three years gained six points more than similar nonparticipants. Demonstrating the value of even higher levels of participation, students classified as 'highly active' (participating 80 percent or more of the days they were enrolled in the year and at least 80 days) gained six scale-score points more than similar nonparticipants after only two years of TASC participation."

The Mathematica Study

Recent years have seen dozens of rigorous studies of afterschool programs. Although specific findings vary depending on the programs studied, the evaluation measures applied, and the design of the studies, most reach the conclusion that afterschool programs help keep children safe and help them succeed in school. In February 2003, the first phase of a three-phase, federally funded study offered strikingly different conclusions, and immediately became the subject of great controversy.

Conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. on a contract from the U.S. Department of Education and with supplemental funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the study was originally intended as a tool for improving the quality of afterschool programming. The Bush Administration's release of the first phase of the study just hours after submitting a budget calling for a 40-percent cut in 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, and the study's subsequent use by the Administration as the sole justification for the cut, set the tone for its reception. In fact, Mathematica's conclusions included no budget recommendations one way or the other. But the study did include a number of negative findings based on data-collection

and evaluation methods that many in the research community deemed flawed, and that much of the afterschool community found lacking in credibility.

In the study, Mathematica researchers separately examined elementary and middle school 21st Century-funded programs, relying on data from the 2000-2001 school year, and using control and comparison groups. Among the controversial findings the authors and the Department of Education spotlighted was that the first year of the evaluation found no statistically significant across-the-board academic gains, even though certain subgroups of students did show gains.

Other more positive findings received less attention from the authors and the Administration, and consequently from the media:

- African American and Hispanic students participating in afterschool programs showed significant academic gains. African American students in programs had higher scores on standardized math and reading tests, a reduced incidence of being absent or tardy for school, and were judged to have shown increased effort in the classroom. Hispanic students had higher math scores and reduced absence and tardiness.
- Girls in 21st CCLC programs showed significant gains in mathematics and in class participation – two areas that have long worried educators.
- Student participation in afterschool produced greater involvement by parents of participating students – improving parents' participation rates generally and by as much as 40 percent in some areas. Parental involvement has long been regarded as one of the keys to improved academic performance, and afterschool programs around the nation typically work to bring parents and other adults into the school building during the afterschool hours. Advocates say the Mathematica study's finding regarding increased parental involvement, even at this early stage of the research, suggests that this program design is yielding important benefits.
- Many trained, experienced teachers work in afterschool, bringing their skills and expertise to these programs. One-third of the program coordinators and three in five program staff members at programs in the study were school-day teachers. The middle school teachers who worked in afterschool programs noted that, as a result of working with students at the afterschool learning centers, they improved their teaching skills and had better relationships with some students – another significant benefit of the program design.

Controversy over the study was not solely the product of the startlingly negative conclusions highlighted by researchers. Their methodology also came under fire from fellow researchers, including several who served on an advisory committee to Mathematica on the study. Among the methodological and conceptual problems:

- The emphasis of the 21st CCLC program changed after the study began — becoming more tightly focused on academic achievement. In its reporting requirements for grantees, the Department of Education did not begin requiring data on student grades and achievement-test scores until the 2000-2001 school year. As a result, many programs did not particularly emphasize academic achievement. In fact, three in ten of the studied middle-school programs described improving academic performance as a "minor objective" of the program, choosing instead to focus on recreational, social or cultural development — a choice consistent with the 21st CCLC program's guidelines at the time.

- Just seven elementary school 21st CCLC grantees participated in the evaluation – far fewer than one might expect for a study of this size. In an acknowledgement of this problem, Mathematica added more elementary school sites to the sample for future phases of the research, and conceded that "the elementary school findings in this report should be viewed as preliminary."
- Another problem with the sample of elementary schools, according to Mathematica: "grantees were chosen for their ability to carry out the experimental design" of the evaluation, rather than because they were representative of the population of the 21st Century program. Therefore, the researchers conclude, "Findings for the elementary school centers in the evaluation do not generalize to all elementary school centers."
- The samples of Hispanic and African American students in the studied elementary schools are not representative of the number of Hispanic and African American students in afterschool programs. According to Mathematica's own numbers, 27.6 percent of elementary afterschool students in 21st CCLC programs were Hispanic, compared to only 1.8 percent of the students in the studied elementary programs. Similarly, 22.8 percent were African American, while 66.8 percent of students in the studied programs were African American.
- White students were over-represented in the student populations of the 34 participating middle school grantees. By comparison to 21st CCLC middle school centers across the nation, the studied centers included more white children, fewer African American, fewer Native American or Pacific Islander, fewer American Indian or Alaska Native, and fewer Asian.
- Beyond the demographics, students in the middle school sample were different in ways that might affect academic achievement. Before their participation in the afterschool program year studied by Mathematica, the middle school students were, as a group, less likely than students in the comparison sample to do assigned homework, less likely to read for fun, more likely to watch television, less confident in their reading skills, more likely to expect to drop out of high school, less likely to have a parent with a college degree and more likely to have a parent who dropped out of high school.

Many scholars and afterschool leaders have also questioned the Administration's use of the study as its sole measure of the value of afterschool programs, noting the importance of reasonable expectations, and citing test-score and grade improvements as inappropriate early measures of afterschool programs' value. As Robert Granger, president of the William T. Grant Foundation, and Thomas Kane, professor of policy studies and economics at UCLA wrote in a recent overview of afterschool evaluations ["Improving the Quality of After-School Programs," *Education Week*, February 18, 2004, Robert C. Granger & Thomas Kane]:

> We need to be more realistic about what it takes to create discernible effects on achievement-test scores. In the national samples used to norm the Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition, 5th grade students scored only one-third of a standard deviation higher than 4th graders on reading, and one-half of a standard deviation higher on math. This reading-score difference is about as large as the difference in moving from 1000 to 1070 points on the combined SAT, or 100 to 105 on an IQ test. In other words, everything that happens to a student between the end of 4th grade and the end of 5th grade — a whole school year of full-day classroom instruction, interactions with family, conversations with friends, and

homework – is associated with an important but not huge gain on an achievement test.

With this as a backdrop, consider the typical after-school program, with youths attending one to two days per week for two to three hours per day. While it is reasonable to expect that after-school activities can affect performance as measured by achievement tests, it is likely that such effects will be small. This is particularly true for reading scores, since they are traditionally less responsive than mathematics scores to instruction.

Therefore, even if the programs are helping, effects on achievement tests are likely to be hard to detect statistically. We should balance a focus on test scores with an examination of intermediate effects – more parental involvement in school-related activities, more diligent homework completion, more school attendance, and better grades, for example – which may pay off in improved test performance over time.

The second phase of Mathematica's study is expected sometime in 2004, although the report's timing has not yet been announced. It will include, according to Mathematica, a second year of data for middle school programs, and additional first-year data from elementary school programs not included in the first report. Of particular interest to the afterschool community will be the extent to which Mathematica and the Administration address the first phase's methodological flaws and more fairly balance the emphasis they give to positive and negative conclusions. A third phase of the report will include a second year of elementary school data.

Afterschool Evaluations in Detail

The gulf between Mathematica's findings and the large body of afterschool evaluation data before and since could not be more pronounced. Over the past decade a number of important afterschool evaluations have been conducted – more than enough to demonstrate that afterschool programs help children achieve academically. Following are summaries of several of the most extensive evaluations.

LA's BEST

Los Angeles's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow, or LA's BEST, is among the largest and best known afterschool programs in the nation. Launched in 1988 as a partnership between the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the city of Los Angeles and the private sector, the program operates at 117 school sites, serving more than 19,000 students. Schools are chosen for participation because of the generally low academic achievement among their students, or because of the low economic status of the community, or high gang or crime rates in the neighborhood.

Since early in the life of the program, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation has conducted evaluation studies. The studies have focused on a variety of topics, using a range of measures. The Center released its separate studies in March 1990, March 1991, July 1991, December 1993 and spring 1995. Then in June 2000, the Center released a comprehensive

report summarizing each of the five previous studies and adding a rich set of findings based on its five-year tracking of the academic performance and school attendance of LA's BEST students who were in 2nd through 5th grades in the 1993-94 school year.

The study's description of its methodology: "To study LA's BEST schools, we obtained information about students including ethnicity, gender, language proficiency status, eligibility for free/reduced lunch (the proxy for low-income level) and disability status. In addition, we collected outcome data including achievement test scores (using either the *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills* [CTBS] or the more recently adopted *Stanford-9 Achievement Test* [SAT-9] in reading, mathematics, and language arts. The rate at which students were redesignated as fully proficient in English was also collected. We also obtained school absence rates, course-taking patterns and rates of student mobility (moving between schools or out of the district)."

In addition, because of the size of the LA's BEST program and of the LAUSD school system, researchers were able to track an extraordinarily large sample of students and a correspondingly large "control" group – more than 4,000 LA's BEST students and more than 15,000 non-participating students. The sheer numbers of students tracked make the data produced highly reliable.

The findings, summarized at http://www.lasbest.org/learn/eval.html with a link to the complete study, are powerful evidence of the value of afterschool programming. In short, the study found that LA's BEST participants, defined as students who participated regularly and over a period of more than one year, when compared to non-participating students, were absent less from school, "show positive achievement on standardized tests in mathematics, reading and language arts," and had "higher language redesignation rates to English proficiency." [Quoting from LA's BEST's summary of the findings, at http://www.lasbest.org/learn/eval.html.] Specific findings:

- "[O]ur results show that higher levels of participation in LA's BEST led to better subsequent school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts." [*A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance*, a longitudinal study report and a synthesis of research begun in 1990 by the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation with support from the Bandai Foundation and the City of Los Angeles. June 2000. Denise Huang, Barry Gribbons, Kyung Sung Kim, Charlotte Lee, Eva L. Baker. Page 7.]
- "Language redesignation rates favored LA's BEST students when compared with non-LA's BEST students for the cohort analyzed (fourth grade, 1994-1995). Significant differences in favor of LA's BEST students were found for subsequent redesignation rates in Grades 6 and 8. No significant differences were found in comparing performance for Grades 5 and 7." [*Decade of Results* at page 8.]
- "Absence follow-up data for the fifth-grade cohort (1994-1995) showed that students who participated in LA's BEST had significantly fewer absences in Grades 6 and 7, although no differences were detected in Grades 8 and 9." [*Decade of Results* at page 8.]
- "Although in the initial year LA's BEST students began with statistically significant mathematics achievement scores lower than those of non-participants, in 1997-1998 those differences no longer existed." [*Decade of Results* at page 9.]

Researchers conclude: "From our perspective, it looks as if LA's BEST is a program that, when followed as a regular part of students' broad educational experience, results in statistically important differences in student outcomes. The fact that we can detect *any* change on standardized achievement measures in itself is notable, for most educational interventions are unable to show impact on measures not tightly tied to the curriculum, or on follow-up achievement after a particular program is over. On a practical level, LA's BEST needs to focus its attention on increasing the attendance of enrolled students. It may be that high-level attenders do so because they and their parents are more highly motivated, and this interest transfers to achievement. But it is equally likely that coming to school and to the LA's BEST program regularly is the reason for good performance and persisting impact subsequent to leaving LA's BEST." [*Decade of Results* at pages 9-10.]

After School Education and Safety Program – California

Begun in 1998 as the California Afterschool Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, the After School Education and Safety Program (ASESP) provides $117 million annually in matching funds to local partnerships of school districts, community groups, and local governments to provide before and afterschool programs for students. In selecting grantees, the state gives priority to schools where 50 percent or more of pupils are eligible for free or reduced-cost meals. Programs are designed locally, but are required to include an "educational and literacy component to provide tutoring or homework assistance in one or more of the following subject areas: language arts, mathematics, history and social science, or science"; and "an educational enrichment component, which may include but is not limited to, recreation and prevention activities. Such activities might involve the arts, music, physical activity, health promotion, and general recreation; work preparation activities; community service-learning; and other youth development activities based on student needs and interests." [*California's Before and After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program Fact Sheet*, at http://www.cde.ca.gov/afterschool/aspfactsheetapr02.doc, September 3, 2002.] In all, 947 afterschool programs were funded during the ASESP's first two years.

Working with the California Department of Education, the Education Department of the University of California at Irvine conducted evaluations of two academic years of the program, from 1999 to 2001, releasing results in February 2002. The evaluation relied on data supplied to the state by participating programs, as required by law, and examined student and parent satisfaction with their programs, as well as students' academic outcomes.

Findings included:

- SAT-9 scores of participating students increased faster than those of students statewide. In reading, 4.2 percent of afterschool students moved from out of the lowest 25 percent of their classes. "This increase is more than twice the increase found among all students statewide (1.9 percent)…" [*Evaluation of California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program*, Department of Education, University of California at Irvine, February 1, 2002, page 4.] In math, similar findings: 2.5 percent of afterschool participants moved out of the lowest quartile, compared with 1.9 percent statewide. [*Evaluation*, page 6.]

- Significantly, gains were closely related to individual students' levels of participation in the program. "Among students who participated for more than 150 days (approximately 7.5 months), there was an increase of 4.9 percent in students above the 25th percentile, an increase considerably larger than that found statewide. *The scores suggest that, particularly for students who participate in the ASLSNPP for substantial periods of time, there is a closing of the gap in Math achievement between low-income and other students.*" [*Evaluation,* page 6. Emphasis in original.]
- "The regular school day attendance of students in the ASLSNPP increased between 1999 and 2000. Among the ASLSNPP participants who were absent 5 percent or more days in 1999, the average increase in attendance was 5.6 days. Among those who were absent 10 percent or more days in 1999, the average increase in attendance was 11 days. For those absent 15 percent or more days in 1999, the average increase in attendance was 17 days." [Harvard Family Research Project, Summary of ASLSNPP Evaluation, http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/aslsnpp.pdf, September 3, 2002.][1]

The After-School Corporation

The After-School Corporation (TASC) is a New York City-based nonprofit, established by the Open Society Institute in 1998, representing a $25 million five-year commitment by the foundation. TASC provides grants to nonprofit organizations to establish partnerships with individual public schools, and the resulting afterschool programs follow a core set of program components. In all, 143 public schools in New York City and 73 schools in other parts of New York State participate. Funding is based on enrollment and is $1,000 per student, excluding start-up, facilities and staff training.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation provided funding to the Washington-based Policy Studies Associates to conduct a five-year evaluation, including annual summary reports. The first year's evaluation, covering the 1998-99 school year, focused largely on issues related to program design and participation. The second- and third-year evaluations focused more on academic achievement. The second-year evaluation, covering the 1999-2000 school year, found:

- "Students reported feeling safe, relaxed, happy, and connected to their after-school program. When asked what they especially liked, they mentioned being with their friends, completing their homework before going home, and participating in activities that differed from those of the regular school day." [*Building Quality and Supporting Expansion of After-school Projects, Summary of Findings,* http://www.tascorp.org/pages/promising_es2.pdf, page 12.]
- The evaluation "found significant differences in proficiency-level shifts among active participants and nonparticipants who scored in the lowest proficiency level on the 1998-99 mathematics tests. In math, 31 percent of active participants scoring at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99 scored at a higher proficiency level in 1999-2000, compared to 23 percent of

[1] The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) maintains a rich database of information on out-of-school-time evaluations, from which much information in this report is drawn. A complete listing of HFRP's summaries is available at http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html.

nonparticipants who demonstrated the same improvement. Two percent of these active participants increased their performance to grade level, compared to 1 percent of nonparticipants. A similar but less pronounced pattern was observed on the reading tests administered in grades 3-8. Among those scoring at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99, 45 percent of active participants improved their scores in 1999-2000 enough to move to a higher performance level, and 3 percent scored at grade level. Forty percent of nonparticipants who scored at the lowest proficiency level in 1998-99 increased their scores enough to move to a higher proficiency level a year later, and 2 percent reached grade level." [*Patterns of Student-Level Change Linked to TASC Participation Based on TASC Projects in Year 2, Executive Summary*, http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Y2%20Performance%20Executive%20Summary.pdf, page 4.]

- "Forty-five percent of principals in Year 2 reported that the TASC project has increased parents' attendance at school events and 36 percent said that the project had increased parents' attendance at parent-teacher conferences." Ninety-seven percent of parents surveyed indicated that "their child liked to come to the program"; 86 percent agreed "that the project was helping their child academically." Parents also said that the program helped them balance work and family life: 94 percent said the program was convenient; 60 percent said they missed less work than before because of the program; 59 percent said it supported them in keeping their job; and 54 percent said it was supportive to them in allowing them to work more hours. [*Building Quality,* page 15.]

The third year of the evaluation, covering the 2000-2001 school year, concluded:

- "Students who were active participants in TASC projects for more than a year showed significantly greater gains on citywide math tests than did similar nonparticipating classmates. Students who participated in TASC after-school activities the most consistently and for the longest period of time experienced the greatest math gains, when compared to similar nonparticipants. Among students who participated actively in TASC projects in each year of their enrollment, students participating for two years gained an average of four scale - score points more on the city-wide standardized tests than similar nonparticipants. Among active participants, students participating for three years gained six points more than similar nonparticipants. Demonstrating the value of even higher levels of participation, students classified as 'highly active' (participating 80 percent or more of the days they were enrolled in the year and at least 80 days) gained six scale-score points more than similar nonparticipants after only two years of TASC participation. The performance of TASC participants on the citywide tests of reading and English/language arts was not significantly different from that of similar nonparticipants." [*What Have We Learned from TASC's First Three Years? Evaluation of the TASC After-School Program*, December 2002, page 7, at http://www.tascorp.org/pages/psaYear3.pdf.]
- "In general, the TASC participants who were at greatest academic risk made the largest math gains, when compared to other students. (Reporting of subgroup analyses focuses here on math because of the consistent relationships with TASC participation, as found in the aggregate analyses of math achievement.) Math benefits were clearly evident for students who scored in the lowest of four proficiency levels in the year prior to TASC participation. The gains for these low-achieving students were evident for active participants regardless of

their number of years of participation. Among students from low-income families, the evaluation also found evidence of after-school benefits in math after two or more years of active participation." [*What Have We Learned*, page 7.]

- "Among the various subgroups examined, African-American students were especially likely to benefit from active participation in TASC projects, demonstrating gains in math over similar nonparticipants after one or more years of active participation. Hispanic students benefited in math after two years of participation." [*What Have We Learned*, page 7.]

The Boys & Girls Clubs' Project Learn

Begun in 1996, the Boys & Girls Clubs' Project Learn focuses on providing youngsters with "high-yield learning activities," including weekly discussions with knowledgeable adults, leisure reading, writing activities, homework help, helping others, and games that rely on cognitive skills. The program has been implemented in full at one-tenth of the Clubs' 3,300 sites, and all sites are implementing components of the program. Steven P. Schinke, Ph.D., of New York's Columbia School of Social Work led an evaluation of the program that relied on a quasi-experimental design. Three groups of students were identified, in five separate cities. The groups:

- Students participating in Boys & Girls Clubs programs that had implemented Project Learn, (BGC program sites),
- In the same cities, students at Boys & Girls Clubs that had not implemented Project Learn (BGC comparison sites), and
- In the same cities, students at non-Boys & Girls Club sites that had not implemented the kind of enhanced learning initiatives characteristic of Project Learn (non-BGC comparison sites).

All students in all groups lived in public housing projects, and the sites were chosen to be nationally representative of students in public housing. Data on students' academic performance were collected four times: before they began the program, six months after they began, 18 months after they began, and 30 months after they began. Findings included:

- "The level of program involvement, as rated by teachers on a scale of 0 to 10, was found to be associated with a number of self-reported academic outcomes." [*A Profile of the Evaluation of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America—Project Learn/Educational Enhancement Program*, Harvard Family Research Project, http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/pleep.html. Based on *Enhancing the Educational Achievement of At-Risk Youth,* Steven P. Schinke, Ph.D.
- "As program involvement increased, engagement in reading, use of verbal skills, writing, tutoring, and the study of geography all significantly ($p<.05$) increased as well."
- "There was also a direct and statistically significant ($p<.05$) relationship between program involvement and enjoyment of reading, use of verbal skills, writing, and geography."
- "At final follow-up (30 months after the program began), program youth more than BGC comparison youth and comparison youth more than non-BGC youth reported greater engagement in reading, enjoyment of reading, engagement in verbal activities, enjoyment of

verbal activities, engagement in writing, enjoyment of writing, engagement in tutoring, enjoyment of tutoring, and enjoyment of geography."

- "Also at 30-month data collection, relative to the non-BGC comparison group youth, program and BGC comparison youth reported greater study of geography, more engagement in board games, enjoyment of board games, engagement in life-enhancement activities, and enjoyment of life-enhancement activities."
- "Data from teacher reports at final follow-up reveal that program and BGC comparison youth more than non-BGC comparison youth had more positive reading skills, writing skills, games skills, overall school performance, and interest in class material."
- "School grades at 30-month follow-up favored program youth over BGC comparison youth and non-BGC comparison youth on overall averages, reading scores, spelling scores, history scores, science scores, social studies scores, and attendance. At the 30-month follow-up, program and BGC comparison youth had better grades in math than non-BGC comparison youth."
- "Average grade increases over the 30-month study period were greatest for program youth. Program youth increased their average grades by 11 percent from baseline to the 30-month measurement while BGC comparison youth and non-BGC comparison youth, over the same period, increased their average grades by .4 percent and .3 percent, respectively."
- "Program youth missed an average of only 2.19 days of school a year at the 30-month measurement as compared to missing an average of 6.4 days a year at baseline. In contrast, BGC comparison youth went from missing an average of 4.85 days of school in the baseline year to missing an average of 12.33 days a year at the 30-month follow-up. Similarly, non-BGC youth went from 7.47 days at baseline to 16.67 at follow-up. The differences between the school attendance of program youth and youth in both comparison groups at 30 months were statistically significant at $p<.05$, while they had not been significantly different at baseline." [All bullets from HFRP Profile.]

Houston's After-School Achievement Program (ASAP)

In 1997, Houston's After-School Achievement Program began providing significant funding for afterschool programs in the city. The program has grown steadily since, and in the 2000-2001 academic year, it provided $2.3 million to 95 sites. ASAP has six programmatic goals: to reduce crime committed by and against juveniles; to prevent delinquency; to provide a safe, supervised place for youth; to provide academic enhancement and enrichment; to promote school attendance and discourage school drop-out; and to motivate youth to develop good citizenship.

The program has been evaluated annually by independent evaluators, with the most recent study conducted by Dennis W. Smith, Ph.D. and James J. Zhang, P.E.D, covering the 2000-2001 school year. Among their findings:

- "In both science and fine arts, ASAP participants improved significantly over the course of the school year, compared with students not in the ASAP. While student achievement in the remaining nine subject areas [reading, other language arts, mathematics, social studies, handwriting, physical education, health and safety, computers and science lab] was not significantly different between the ASAP and non-ASAP groups, the post-test mean scores for ASAP participants clearly indicated improvement over the span of the program year." [*Shaping our Children's Future: Keeping a Promise in Houston Communities, 2001, Year 4*

Evaluation of the After-School Achievement Program, page 4, published by ASAP. Contact: Jennifer Brimer, ASAP Coordinator, 713-437-6981.]

- Surveys conducted for the evaluation found that 22 percent of parents of ASAP children said "their children would be by themselves" without ASAP, and "close to 16 percent of parents said that their children would be watched by a sibling." [*Shaping*, page 6.]

San Diego's '6 to 6' Extended School Day Program

San Diego has developed one of the nation's most ambitious afterschool programs, with the goal of making affordable programs before and after school available to every elementary and middle school student in the City of San Diego. Two significant evaluations of the program have been conducted, one an interim report by WestED, released in April 2001, the other by Hoffman Clark and Associates released in July 2001. Using random sampling of sites, document review, interviews, focus groups and site observations, WestED found:

- Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program, "including their perceptions of the quality of academic enrichment, the degree to which children looked forward to the program, communication with staff, success at helping children complete homework, and the promotion of positive behavior in children." [Harvard Family Research Project website at http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/sd66esdp.pdf, hereafter HFRP-SD.]
- "Almost two-thirds of responding parents noticed improvements in their children's academic performance." [HFRP-SD.]

Relying on random sampling of program participants and reviewing a variety of data, WestED's study concluded:

- Reading scores for "6 to 6" students improved. Fifty-seven percent of students increased their reading scores over the course of the studied year, and SAT-9 reading scores increased. [HFRP-SD.]
- Nearly ten percent of children moved up into the 25th percentile or higher in 2000 by comparison to 1999 reading scores. [HFRP-SD.]
- Forty-four percent of students increased their SAT-9 math scores. [HFRP-SD.]

Ohio Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project

The Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project (SACC) funds a variety of afterschool programs in Ohio urban school districts. The University of Cincinnati College of Education's Evaluation Services Center conducted a thorough review of the program's 1998-1999 school year, measuring both project design and its outcomes. Data collection included document reviews, observation of programs, surveys and questionnaires. Among the findings:

- "Ohio Proficiency Tests scores for both 4th and 6th graders showed that SACC children exceeded the state-wide percentages of students meeting proficiency standards. SACC 4th grade students' scores exceeded the statewide percentages of students meeting proficiency standards in every subject area tested: writing, reading mathematics, citizenship, and science. SACC 6th graders exceeded the statewide percentages of students meeting proficiency standards in four of the five areas: writing, reading mathematics, and citizenship." [Harvard

Family Research Project at http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/osisaccp.pdf, hereafter HFRP-Ohio.]

- "School absence and tardiness were reduced for participating students. First graders who were not in a SACC program during kindergarten reduced the number of school days they missed from an average of 8 during their kindergarten year to an average of 3 days during their 1998-99 1st grade year. Eighth graders who were not in a SACC program during 7th grade reduced the average number of school days missed from 18 to 5." [HFRP-Ohio.]
- "Parents participating in interviews or completing surveys felt the programs had positive impacts on their families." [HFRP-Ohio.]

Owensboro, Kentucky's 21st Century Community Learning Center

The Owensboro Public Schools' 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool program serves students from a number of schools at five year-round centers. The program's goal "is to provide safe, supervised, and fun learning opportunities for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade that serve to increase their academic skills, enhance their ability to interact positively with peers and adults, and reduce behavior problems." [*A Profile of the Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Owensboro, Kentucky Public Schools*, Harvard Family Research Project, http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/owensboro.pdf, summarizing research by Robert J. Illback, Psy.D., and Benjamin Birkby, Psy.D. of R.E.A.C.H. of Louisville, Inc.]

A three-year evaluation of the program, conducted by R.E.A.C.H. of Louisville, Inc., and released in three phases, evaluated a number of program implementation issues, as well as several student and family outcomes, including academic achievement and parental perceptions of the program's ability to alleviate family stress. Among the findings:

- "Seventy-seven percent of surveyed students reported that they were doing better at school because of the 21st CCLC program.
- "Parents continued to see academic benefits to their children due to the 21st CCLC program, with surveyed parents reporting that their children look forward to school (88 percent) and do better in school (84 percent) because of the program.
- "At the six-month timeframe, approximately 50 percent to 60 percent of teachers reported that 21st CCLC students had improved in turning in homework, completing homework, participating in class, regular attendance, attentiveness in class, academic performance, and preparedness for class.
- "Seventy-four percent of surveyed parents reported that the program helped their family have less stress.
- "Sixty-seven percent of surveyed parents reported that the program helped them remain employed. Twenty-four percent reported that the program helped them remain in school." [HFRP *Profile.]*

After School Education and Safety Program – Santa Ana, California

With funding from California's After School Education and Safety Program, Santa Ana, California in 1999 opened afterschool sites in four urban middle schools. The sites "serve predominantly Latino students with limited English proficiency and from high poverty

backgrounds. Although each site's schedule varied, a typical program schedule included a one-hour homework period, a one-hour arts or life skills component, and a one-hour sports component." [Harvard Family Research Project summary, http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/saaslsnpp.html, December 2003.] Jenel Prenovost, Ed.D., of the University of California, Irvine and the University of California, Los Angeles led an evaluation that relied on a quasi-experimental design, comparing the one-year results of three groups of students – a control group, a high-dosage treatment group (students who attended the program for 38 or more days during the school year), and a low-dosage group (students who attended for fewer than 38 days).

The findings indicated that students in the high-dosage group showed better results than low-dosage and control group students. Results included the following:

- "No statistically significant differences were found in SAT-9 Reading improvement scores or NPR [National Percentile Ranking] scores between treatment and comparison groups from 1999 to 2000. However, high-dosage participants improved somewhat more than matches; this was especially true for eighth-graders, females, and students of limited English proficiency." [HFRP at http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/mott/saaslsnpp.html]
- "No statistically significant differences were found in SAT-9 Math improvement scores from 1999 to 2000 or NPR scores between treatment and comparison groups. However, high-dosage participants improved somewhat more than matches and all program participants improved more than the general school population. The subgroups of high-dosage sixth graders, high-dosage male participants, and high-dosage LEP [Limited English Proficiency] participants also improved more than matches. NPR scores favored high-dosage LEP and high-dosage LEP participants when compared to the low-dosage participants." [HFRP]
- "At two of the schools, there were significant differences in SAT-9 Math test scores between particular subgroups of program participants and comparison group matches. At the first, high-dosage males ($p<.038$) and high-dosage sixth graders ($p<.048$) improved significantly more that the matches. These same two subgroups also had significantly higher NPR scores on the SAT-9 Math test than matches. High-dosage participants at the second school had significantly ($p<.084$) higher NPR scores than low-dosage participants." [HFRP]
- "There were significantly ($p<.005$) fewer days of school missed by high-dosage participants (5.56 days) as compared to low-dosage participants (7.46 days) and the matches (6.80 days). In addition, high-dosage LEP students missed significantly ($p<.002$) less school than low-dosage participants and the matches. Higher-dosage sixth and eighth graders, on the other hand, had higher means in days absent than the matches, although this also was not statistically significant." [HFRP]
- "The program was associated with a nearly significant ($p<.082$) difference in improvement in school attendance. There was a statistically significant ($p<.031$) finding that high-dosage students improved more in their school attendance (1.36 days) than low dosage students (.32 days). Also, high-dosage LEP students improved their attendance significantly ($p<.05$) more than low-dosage participants (.29 days) and matches (-.18 days)." [HFRP]

YS-CARE After School Program for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the YS-Care After School Program in 1999. The afterschool program is "designed to offer a safe environment that includes academic assistance, homework help, enrichment activities, recreation, and quality childcare provided by caring adults in well-supervised school site environments." [*Evaluation of the YS-CARE After School Program For California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids* (CalWORKS), March 2002, at http://www.gse.uci.edu/asp/aspeval/resources/YSCARE13.pdf, page 5, hereafter YS-CARE Evaluation.] The program is targeted at K-5 children attending schools in neighborhoods with high concentrations of families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The Department of Education, University of California at Irvine and Research Support Services conducted a formal evaluation of the program, and released findings in March 2002.

The evaluation compared the test scores and behavior of participating students with a comparable group of non-participating students. The study's chief conclusions:

- "YS-CARE participants had larger gains on SAT-9 Reading and SAT-9 Math scores than non-participants."
- "YS-CARE participants had larger gains on Reading Achievement than matched non-participants."
- "YS-CARE participants initially in the lowest decile reading group had significantly larger reading gains than matched non-participants."
- "YS-CARE participants had significantly lower scores on all Work and Study Habits and Citizenship measures at baseline. The participants narrowed the gap by the time of the end-of-year ratings, with almost half of the initial differences substantially smaller." [*YS-CARE Evaluation*, pp. 5-6]

Massachusetts After-School and Other Out-of-School Time Grant Programs

In early 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education released, via the Internet, a draft executive summary of an evaluation the state's After-School and Other Out-of-School Time Grant Programs. The purpose of the program is "to establish or expand community learning centers that operate during out-of-school hours and provide students with academic enrichment opportunities along with other activities designed to complement the students' regular academic program." [Contact information at http://www.doe.mass.edu/contact/] The evaluation report was submitted jointly by Beth Miller and Wendy Surr of the National Institute on Out of School Time at Wellesley College, and Karyl Resnick and Kelly Church of School Enrichment Services of the Massachusetts Department of Education. The report covers Fiscal Year 2002.

According to the report, "Building an Outcome Evaluation System For the Massachusetts Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers," FY 2002 saw important gains for students in a number of areas. According to the report:

- "Results indicate that 56 percent of the students participating had positive gains on measured outcomes." [*Building an Outcome Evaluation System*.]
- "Student gains in Math and/or English Language Arts were statistically significant in 73 percent of the ASOST programs."

- The areas with the greatest percentage of youth improving were Learning Skills, Communication Skills and Engagement in Learning.

The Foundations After-School Enrichment Program

For more than a decade, Foundations, Inc. has operated extended-day enrichment programs and provided technical assistance to other afterschool sponsors. During the 2001-2002 school year, Drs. Stephen P. Klein and Roger Bolus of Gansk & Associates, of Santa Monica, California, administered pre- and post-tests in mathematics and reading to first- through fifth-grade students in 19 Foundations programs in three states. A summary of the report is available on the Foundations website at http://www.foundationsinc.org/ExtendedDayFolder/conclusions.asp. The full report, issued in December 2002, concludes:

- "Foundations students made substantial improvements in average scores between the fall pretest and spring posttest. In fact, their average score gains in mathematics were somewhat greater than what would be expected given the results obtained in CTB/McGraw-Hill's national norm sample. The Foundations students' gains in reading kept pace with those made in this national norm sample." [*Improvements in Math and Reading Scores of Students who Did and Did Not Participate in the Foundations After School Enrichment Program During the 2001-2002 School Year*, Stephen P. Klein, Ph.D. and Roger Bolus, Ph.D., Gansk & Associates, December 2, 2002, page 2.]
- Over the course of the school year, Foundations' afterschool students' test averages moved them up national percentile rankings – by an average of 10 percentile rankings in mathematics reading, and an average of 2 percentile rankings in reading. *Improvements in Math and Reading Scores,* page 10.]
- Foundations students fared very well by comparison to non-Foundations students at the studied schools. The mathematics "effect size" difference averaged .39 (representing 39/100^{ths} of a standard deviation unit), in afterschool students' favor. In reading, a similar finding: a .41 effect size advantage for afterschool students. [*Improvements in Math and Reading Scores*, page 14.]

In September 2003, Drs. Klein and Bolus released a follow-up report, assessing of data from the 2002-2003 school year, again finding statistically significant improvement.

- "The major finding from this analysis is that there was a statistically significant improvement in scores between the pretest and posttest at every grade level and in every subject. Moreover, the amount of gain was greater than what would be expected given the results in the national norm group. For example, the average FOUNDATIONS' student was at the 40th percentile in mathematics on the pretest and at the 46th percentile on the posttest. The corresponding values for reading were 45th on the pretest and 48th on the posttest. Language arts was 43rd percentile on the pretest and 48th on the posttest. Results were similar within grade levels." [*Improvements in Basic Skills Scores of Students Who Did and Did Not Participate in the Foundations After School Enrichment Program during the 2002-2003 School Year*, page 7, Stephen P. Klein, Ph.D. and Roger Bolus, Ph.D., Gansk & Associates, Santa Monica, California, available from Foundations, Inc., by emailing info@foundationsinc.org.]

- "We conducted regression analyses to assess the Foundations program's overall effect on improving the students' test scores. These analyses predicted a student's posttest score on a test on the basis of that student's pretest score on that same test, grade level, and "group" (i.e., Foundations versus non-Foundations). These analyses found that the students who participated in the Foundations program had about a 5-point higher posttest score (which is equivalent to about one tenth of a standard deviation unit) than did similarly situated non-participants (see Table 6). All the differences in Table 6 were statistically significant (at $p < .10$)." [*Improvements, 2002-03*, page 11.]
- The students who participated in the Foundations program during the 2002-2003 school year made substantial gains in math, reading, and language arts scores between the fall pretest and spring posttest. These gains generally exceeded the progress of students in CTB/McGraw-Hill's national norm sample. First graders in the Foundations program did particularly well, especially in mathematics. Foundations students also had statistically significantly greater gain scores between pretest and posttest than did comparable non- Foundations students who were tested under the same conditions and at the same time (see Table 6). It is not clear why fourth and especially fifth graders who were not in the program gained slightly (but not significantly) more between the pretest and posttest than did Foundations students. This anomaly may stem from a selection effect that was not accounted for by their pretest scores or perhaps to differences in how well the Terra Nova aligns with the Foundations' curriculum across the different grade levels. *Improvements, 2002-03,* page 11.]

The Extended-Service Schools Initiative: 2002 Report

In 1998, the Extended-Service Schools Initiative (ESS) began funding community organizations across the country to partner with local schools to create a total of 60 afterschool programs in 20 communities. Each of the programs follows one of four nationally recognized program models – Beacon, Bridges to Success, Community Schools, or West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation – to provide youth-development activities in low-income areas in programs located in school buildings during non-school hours. ESS was funded as a five-year program by Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. Separately, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds provided financial support to Public/Private Ventures (PPV) to conduct an evaluation of the program. PPV, with subcontractor Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, began a four-year, multi-phase evaluation. Issued in June 2002, *Multiple Choices: Findings from the Extended-Service Schools Initiative*, is available online at http://www.ppv.org/content/reports/ess-multi-full.html.

According to researchers, "Students who participated in the school-based, afterschool programs seemed to experience positive change in four key areas: staying out of trouble; improving their school attitudes and behavior; strengthening their social networks; and learning new skills, seeing new possibilities and improving their self-confidence." [*Multiple Choices*, page 30, http://www.ppv.org/content/reports/ess-multi-full.html.] Specifically:

- "Given that most of the ESS programs were new and the levels of participation were well below five days a week, it was not thought likely that we would observe changes in grades or test scores. However, to gauge whether ESS was starting to have positive academic effects, we asked parents and youth if they thought the program helped the youth do better in school. In addition, we measured some "leading indicators" of academic improvement (a sense of

academic mastery and the level of school effort) to ensure that we did not miss an important change if one had occurred…. [A]pproximately two-thirds of the youth believed the program helped them do better in school, and it was even more likely that the parents found the program helpful to their children in this way." [*Multiple Choices*, page 32.]

- "Interestingly, the parents' survey responses are consistent with the expected pathway of change that could ultimately lead to increased academic success. High percentages of parents felt that ESS helped their children like school more and try harder in school, factors that may lead to learning more and doing better." [*Multiple Choices*, page 32.]
- "When we examined how the youth's academic attitudes and behaviors changed over time, we found a consistent story. Youth who participated in ESS activities experienced a greater increase in their sense of belonging at school and paid more attention in class. Again, consider the two groups of similar youth…. [A]mong the youth who did not go to ESS during the 13 months between the initial and follow-up surveys, 20 out of 100 reported that they started skipping school, 29 said they really paid attention in class, and 76 said they were very proud to belong to their school. Among similar youth who went to ESS two days a week, only 11 out of 100 reported starting to skip school; 49 said they really paid attention in class; and 84 said they were very proud to belong to their school." [*Multiple Choices*, page 32.]
- "Responses on the parent survey administered in Spring 2001 suggest that the after-school programs were having some of these beneficial outcomes: 80 percent of parents said they were less worried about their child's safety after school. 57 percent said their child's participation helped them manage their own work schedule. 47 percent said it let them attend classes or job training more easily. 45 percent said it helped them get a better job or do better at their job." [*Multiple Choices*, pages 33-34.]

North Carolina's 'Support Our Students'

In 1994, the state of North Carolina launched its "Support Our Students" initiative (SOS), to provide funding for afterschool programs across the state. The program offers grants in the $60,000 to $250,000 range to nonprofit organizations in the state – one per county, each of which coordinates services in their counties. In 2001-2002, the program provided $12.5 million to nonprofits in 98 counties. In all, the program supported programs in 190 school-based sites, and 54 community-based sites, providing afterschool services to 16,000 students during the school year, and summer programming for 10,000 students.

An evaluation of the 2001-2002 year's programs, conducted by EDSTAR, an independent research and analysis firm based in Raleigh, North Carolina, found the following:

- "At every grade except sixth grade, improvements in SOS participants' mean EOG [End of Grade Achievement Test] reading scale scores exceeded the state's improvement goals." [*North Carolina Support Our Students 2001-2002 Program Highlights*, at http://www.edstar.org/sos_2002reports/021009_SOS_handout.doc]
- "Classroom teachers reported that more than 40 percent of the regularly attending participants improved their grade in English and/or math.
- "The percentages of students who scored at grade level proficiency increased in both reading and math, with the greatest increase in reading—from 67 percent at grade level to 71 percent.

- "Minority students made greater improvements than White students in both math and reading.
- "African Americans made greater improvements in reading than any other demographic group; minority participants overall made nearly twice the gain of White students in reading scores.
- "Students continued to make steady, consistent improvement each year they participated in SOS. The average yearly improvement was slightly less than half a proficiency level.
- "Of the three-year SOS participants, more than two thirds had improved at least two proficiency levels in reading and math, compared with the year before joining SOS.
- "Except for sixth graders, SOS participants who were the furthest behind and had the most risk factors (e.g., free/reduced lunch status, single-parent households, etc.) made the greatest gains on EOG. Evaluators surmised that sixth graders often had problems making the transition to middle school, and recommended that sixth-grade transition programs be implemented.

* * * *

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. The Alliance is proud to count among its founding partners the C.S. Mott Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, JCPenney Afterschool, Open Society Institute/The After-School Corporation, the Entertainment Industry Foundation and the Creative Artists Agency Foundation. Washington, DC Office: 202/347-2030; Flint, Michigan Office: 810/239-3449