FACT SHEET ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fact One: Non-school hours represent the single largest block of time in the lives of American children and youth.
About 40% of young people's waking hours are discretionary—that is, not committed to other activities such as school, homework, meals, chores or working for pay. By contrast, American youth spend about 32% of their waking hours in school.

Fact Two: Children's participation in organized after-school programs has positive impacts on educational achievement.
Students who participate in high quality, constructive after-school programs demonstrate higher school attendance, higher language redesignation rates and improved performance on standardized tests. Educational researcher Reginald Clark documented that economically disadvantaged children who participate from 20-35 hours per week in constructive learning activities during their free time get better grades in school than their more passive peers. These activities include discussion with knowledgeable adults or peers, leisure reading, writing, homework, hobbies, chores, strategy games, museum visits, theater, movies and sports.

Fact Three: In addition to improved academic achievement, children experience multiple benefits from participation in high quality after-school programs.
In several studies spanning more than a decade, researcher Deborah Vandell and colleagues have shown that a host of positive benefits result from elementary-age children's participation in after-school programs, including better grades, work habits, emotional adjustment and peer relations. Other studies have reported similar benefits, including improvements in students' social skills, the ability to maintain self-control and avoid conflicts and to make constructive choices about their personal behavior. Parents and teachers also report that students are more excited about school and more confident, especially about their academic ability.

Fact Four: Teenagers as well as younger children benefit from participation in high quality after-school programs.
Stanford University professor Milbrey McLaughlin found that adolescents who participate regularly in community-based youth development programs
Fact Five: After-school programs are not equitably distributed. Low-income youth are much less likely than their more affluent peers to have access to them.

According to the National Education Longitudinal Study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, 40% of low-income eighth graders-compared with only 17% of high-income respondents-do not participate in any organized after-school activities. The likely explanation for this difference is access, not interest, since virtually every survey of American youth suggests that they want to participate in well designed, organized after-school programs.

Fact Six: In addition to providing an ideal opportunity for promoting children's learning and development, the after-school hours pose great risk.

Violent juvenile crime triples during the hours from 3:00 to 8:00 PM, and it is during these same hours that children face the most serious danger of becoming victims of crime. Unsupervised after-school hours represent a period of significant risk in other arenas as well, including increased risk of substance abuse and early sexual activity.

Fact Seven: After-school programs help to reduce youth crime.

Recent studies confirm the relationship between availability of after-school programs and reduced juvenile crime. For example, just one year after the Baltimore police department opened an after-school program in a high-risk area, illegal acts dropped 44%. In another city, juvenile arrests in a public housing project declined by 75% after the establishment of an after-school program while they increased by 67% in a comparable housing project that offered no such activities.

Fact Eight: There is widespread public support for the expansion of after-school programs.

Ninety-four percent of voters say that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day, and 75% of voters (a near 10% increase since 2000) believe that Federal or state tax dollars should be used to expand daily after-school programs and to make them accessible to all children. This support is based in part on the public's recognition that the three-hour difference between children's school days and their parents' work days presents significant problems for young people, families and communities.


UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement, June 2000.

Clark, R.M., Critical Factors in Why Disadvantaged Children Succeed or Fail in School,
Ibid., 12.