

**ADULT SUPERVISION IN
MISSOURI’S NEW COMMUNITIES PROJECTS**

JULY 2002

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The New Communities Projects (NCPs) and this evaluation are funded by a five-year grant from the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) National Initiative of CSREES-USDA. University Outreach and Extension (UOE) of the University of Missouri administer the grant through the Family and Community Resource Program (FCRP). UOE Outreach Development Funds provide additional funding for this work. Information about CYFAR, the NCPs, and FCRP’s programming with at-risk populations can be found at <http://outreach.missouri.edu/fcrp>.

I. Introduction

The National Outcomes Working Group (NOWG) of the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) program cites “presence and participation” as a key impact for programs serving children and youth. Children and youth must be present to benefit from program experiences, and their level of participation affects how much they benefit. The National Center on Educational Outcomes model adopted by NOWG includes presence and participation as one of two outcome domains that fall into a special category called the “Learning and Opportunity Process” (CYFAR Evaluating the National Outcomes Website).

Following NOWG’s lead, presence and participation was selected as a primary impact indicator for three programs funded under the Missouri CYFAR New Communities Projects. These three programs focus on providing children and youth with quality out-of-school time programming:

- Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program,
- Irondale Community Computer Lab Program, and
- St. Louis West-End After-School Program.

The evaluation focuses more specifically on the concept of “adult supervision.” While children and youth are participating in these programs, they are in a safe and supportive environment under adult supervision. In other words, when children and youth participate in organized out-of-school programs, they are in structured, positive environments supervised by caring adults rather than in unstructured, potentially negative environments on the street or in unsupervised settings at home. Several recent studies have concluded that adult supervision has important positive impacts on children and youth, including improved social, academic, and emotional outcomes and reduced risk-taking behavior. For more information on these studies, see the reference list and brief descriptions at the end of this document.

The data presented in this document cover a full twelve months, from July 2001 through June 2002, reported quarterly. There are four measures of adult supervision.

- Number of participants: number of children (pre-K to 6th grade) and youth (7th to 12th grade) that participated in the program in a quarter.
- Overall participation days: sum of all the days of participation by all participants in a quarter.
- Average participation days: overall participation days divided by the number of participants in a quarter.
- Average weekly participation: average participation days divided by the number of weeks that the program operated in a quarter.

The first two measures reflect the program’s size and outreach. The last two measures emphasize the intensity of program attendance, or how frequently children participate in the program. To determine if there were any statistically significant changes in the intensity of program participation over the year, the intensity measures were compared across quarters using independent samples t-tests.

II. Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program

The Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program is open Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 5:30. Children and youth who live in Caruthersville Housing Authority housing units can participate in the program on a walk-in basis. While attending the after-school program, participants are supervised by paid professionals and community volunteers.

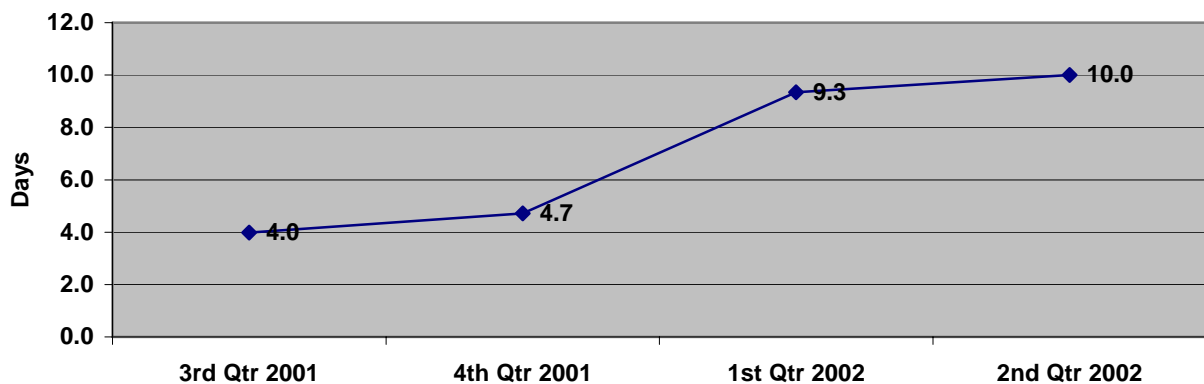
Table 1. Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program Attendance, 7/01-6/02

	3rd Qtr 2001	4th Qtr 2001	1st Qtr 2002	2nd Qtr 2002
Number of Participants	140	103	59	119
Overall Participation Days (all participants)	557	485	551	1190
Average Participation Days (individuals)	4.0	4.7	9.3	10.0
Average Weekly Participation (individuals)	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.8
Weeks of Operation	10	12	13	12

The results, reported in table 1, indicate that the number of program participants has held steady, while there has been a significant increase in the intensity of participation:

- With the exception of the first quarter of 2002, when a new Boys' and Girls' Club opened in the area, there have been over 100 children and youth attending the program each quarter.
- Intensity of participation increased steadily over the four quarters, from four to ten days per quarter ($p < .01$) and from 0.4 to 0.8 days per week ($p < .01$).
- The increases in program intensity were especially large between the fourth quarter of 2001 and the first quarter of 2002, jumping from 4.7 to 9.3 days per quarter ($p < .01$) and from 0.4 to 0.7 days per week ($p < .01$).

Adult Supervision - Average Quarterly Individual Attendance:
Carthuthersville Housing Authority After-School Program



III. Irondale Community Computer Lab

The Irondale Community Computer Lab (ICCL) is open five days per week (Tuesday through Friday, from 8:30-3:00, Wednesday and Thursday from 4:00-7:00, and Saturday from 9:00-12:00). It is a walk-in program, open to all residents of Irondale. Although the ICCL is also open to adult residents of the community, only children and youth are included in this analysis. The adult supervision that they receive while attending the lab, which is located in Irondale’s city hall, ranges from passive supervision by city hall employees to technical assistance on the computers and mentoring from program staff and volunteers.

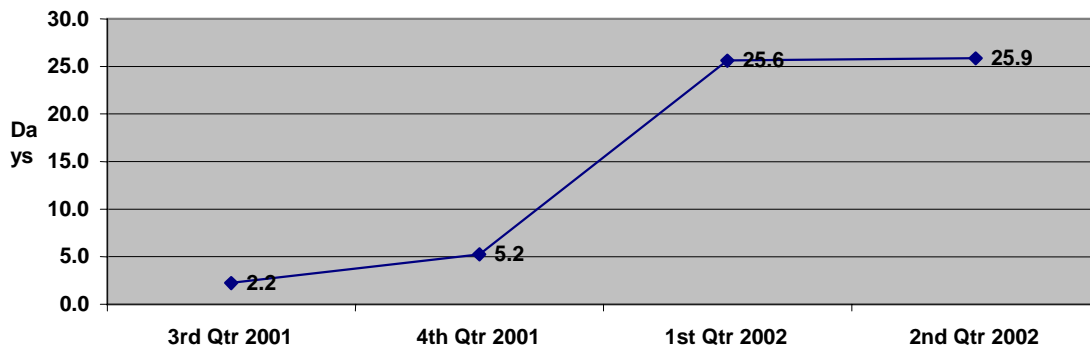
Table 2. Irondale Community Computer Lab Attendance, Children and Youth Only, 7/01-6/02

	3rd Qtr 2001	4th Qtr 2001	1st Qtr 2002	2nd Qtr 2002
Number of Participants	9	17	20	20
Overall Participation Days (all participants)	20	89	512	517
Average Participation Days (individuals)	2.2	5.2	25.6	25.9
Average Weekly Participation (individuals)	1.1	0.4	2.1	2.0
Weeks of Operation	2	13	12	13

The ICCL opened two weeks before the end of the third quarter of 2001. The number of children and youth who visited the lab at least once increased from nine to 17, then held steady at 20 during the first and second quarters of 2002. Participation intensity increased dramatically during the first three quarters of operation, and then appeared to plateau in the final quarter.

- Children and youth visited the lab an average of 26 times per quarter during 2002. Between the first full quarter that the lab was open (fourth quarter of 2001) and the second quarter of 2002, average quarterly participation per individual rose from about five days per quarter to almost 26 days ($p < .01$).
- During the first six months of 2002, children and youth visited the lab an average of two times each week. The largest increase in this measure occurred between the fourth quarter of 2001 and the first quarter of 2002, when average weekly participation rose from 0.4 days to 2.1 days ($p < .01$).

Adult Supervision - Average Quarterly Individual Attendance:
Irondale Community Computer Lab



IV. St. Louis West End After-School Program

The St. Louis West End After-School Program is open Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 8:30 pm. The program is open to children and youth who attend nearby schools in this inner city area. In general, children attend the program from 3:30 to 5:30, and youth (teens) attend from 5:30 to 8:30. Paid professionals provide adult supervision during the entire period.

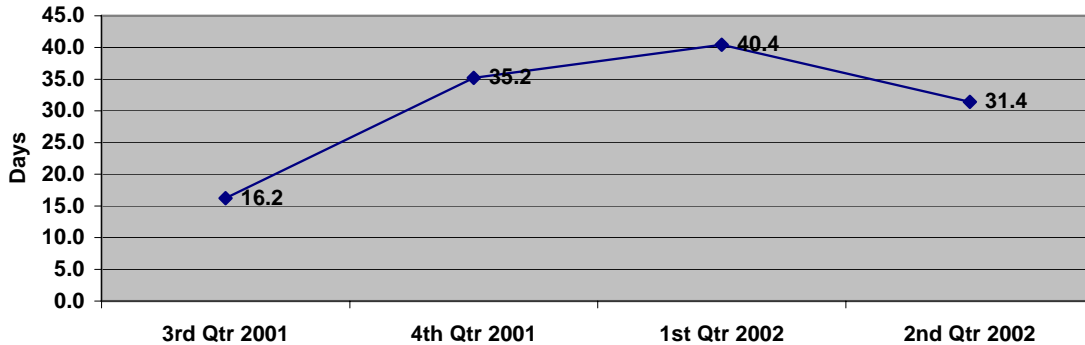
Table 3. St. Louis West End After-School Program Attendance, 7/01-6/02

	3rd Qtr 2001	4th Qtr 2001	1st Qtr 2002	2nd Qtr 2002
Number of Participants	24	49	44	40
Overall Participation Days (all participants)	389	1726	1778	1280
Average Participation Days (individuals)	16.2	35.2	40.4	32.0
Average Weekly Participation (individuals)	4.1	2.9	3.4	2.9
Weeks of Operation	4	12	12	11

Except for the third quarter of 2001, when the program operated only four weeks during summer vacation, attendance has been steady, with at least 40 participants per quarter. As table 3 indicates, the children and youth who attend the West End After-School Program tend to come frequently.

- Average quarterly participation over the last three quarters was about 36 days per quarter, meaning that participants were at the after-school program an average of 36 out of 55 to 60 days of operation.
- Children and youth attended the program an average of about three times per week, although there was some fluctuation across quarters. Average weekly participation increased from 2.9 days in the fourth quarter of 2001 to 3.4 days in the first quarter of 2002 ($p < .10$), dropping back to 2.9 days per week in the second quarter of 2002 ($p < .10$).

Adult Supervision - Average Quarterly Individual Attendance:
St. Louis West End After-School Program



V. Conclusions

In summary, there is evidence that all three programs are having a positive impact on children and youth by providing them with adult supervision during out-of-school time. In addition, the impacts of the Caruthersville and Irondale programs are increasing in significant ways while the St. Louis program is maintaining a high level of participation intensity. Table 4 summarizes the annual measures of outreach and intensity for each of the three programs.

Table 4. Adult Supervision in Three Missouri NCP Out-of-School Programs, 7/01-6/02

	Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program (12 mos)	Irondale Community Computing Lab (9 mos)	St. Louis West End After-School Program (9 mos)
Average Number of Participants	105	19	44
Average Weekly Participation	0.6	1.5	3.1
Total Weeks of Operation	47	38	35

Caruthersville Housing Authority After-School Program: This program provides adult supervision to a very large number of children and youth, averaging 105 participants over the year. The children and youth who attend the program are doing so with increasing frequency. When the program first opened, children and youth attended an average of only four days over the quarter. By the second quarter of 2002, they were attending an average of ten days. This is a significant increase, and it indicates that the amount of adult supervision that children and youth receive from the program is increasing over time. While the program is currently filling an important need for adult supervision once a week, there may be an opportunity to have a greater impact by encouraging otherwise unsupervised children and youth to spend more of their after-school time in the safe and supportive environment offered by the program.

Irondale Community Computer Lab Program: Participation in the Irondale program has increased steadily since it opened, with attendance reaching a plateau in the first six months of 2002 at an average of 20 children and youth attending the lab. There have also been significant increases in participation intensity. While children and youth came to the lab an average of five times in the fourth quarter of 2001, they attended an average of 26 times per quarter in 2002, which was two days per week. Even though this is still less than half of total out-of-school time, the Irondale Community Computer Lab Program is providing participants with a safe environment and an important amount of adult supervision during out-of-school time. There may be an opportunity to increase the number of children and youth who come to the lab, although increases could be constrained by lack of space and the small size of the community.

St. Louis West End After-School Program: At least 40 children and youth participate in the St. Louis program at a very high level of intensity. During the year, participants attended the after-school program an average of more than three days per week. This means that three days out of five, children and youth were at the West End Center, in a safe environment under adult supervision. The St. Louis West End After-School program is clearly providing participants with a significant amount of adult supervision. The greatest opportunity (and challenge) may lie in expanding the number of children that can be effectively served by this program.

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National 4-H Impact Assessment Project. 2001. *Prepared and Engaged Youth: National 4-H Impact Assessment Project*. Washington, D.C.: National 4-H.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2002. Lessons from Experimental Evaluations. In *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, eds. Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, 147-95. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

SUMMARIES OF SELECTED REFERENCES

Baker, D. W. and P. A. Witt. 1996. Evaluation of the Impact of Two After-School Recreation Programs. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* 14 (3): 23-44.

In this impact evaluation of two after-school programs, Baker and Witt begin with a review of literature on the consequences of an absence of adult supervision after school and the positive impacts associated with children having a safe, adult-supervised environment after school. Several negative outcomes are associated with self-care (lack of adult supervision). Research has shown that self-care children are lonely, headstrong, more likely to have conflicts with peers, less likely to complete homework, and have poorer emotional well-being than children who have adult care after school or attend supervised after-school programs. One study found that participants in after-school programs watched less television and spent more time in academic and other enrichment activities, factors that are associated with improved grades, behavior, peer relations, and emotional adjustment.

The primary research question for the study was: "Is there a relationship between the level of participation in the after-school program (i.e., participant or non-participant, and number of activities attended) and the number of absences from school and school tardiness, school grades, self-esteem, and behavior at home and school?" The hypothesis was that participants would show positive changes in these variables. The study looked at two Austin, Texas, after-school programs in low-income communities. Program activities were both academic and sports-based. The sample consisted of 237 participants and 65 non-participants. Both primary and secondary data were collected at two points in time. Primary data were gathered through a "behavior rating profile" survey and a "culture-free self-esteem (general and academic) inventory." Data on demographic characteristics, grades, standardized test scores, and school attendance were taken from secondary sources such as school records. ANCOVA analyses were run for each of the dependent variables. Two program participation variables were used. One simply compared participants to non-participants (0/1), and the other was a measure of the number of activities attended (0, 1-2, 3-4, 5 or more). Initial (pre-test) scores on impact variables, socio-economic status (free lunch eligibility), gender, and age were used as covariates.

The results indicate that the after-school programs had positive impacts on participants' academic performance and "general" self-esteem. Improvements in academic performance consisted of improved grades in math, science, language, and reading, and better scores on standardized math and reading tests. For math, science, reading, and standardized test scores, more regular attendance was associated with higher grades: individuals who participated in 5 or more activities scored higher in math and science than both non-participants and participants who had participated in only one or two activities. Participants also scored higher on the general self-esteem scale.

Capizzano, Jeffrey, Kathryn Tout, and Gina Adams. 2000. *Child Care Patterns of School-Age Children with Employed Mothers*. Occasional Paper Number 41. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

Arranging childcare for the gaps between school and work schedules is a challenge for many parents. This study uses data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families to investigate the out-of-school childcare patterns of children between the ages of 6 and 12 with employed mothers. The types of supervised care examined include before- and after-school programs, family childcare (care by a non-relative in the provider's home), and relative care (care by a relative in either the relative's or the child's home). Self-care is defined as time during which the child is left alone or with a sibling under 13 on a regular basis.

Among 6 to 9-year-old children, before- and after-school programs and relative care are the most common forms of care, at 21 percent for each. For five percent of children in this age group, self-care is the primary form of care, and ten percent spend some time in self-care arrangements. Among 10 to 12-year-old children, relatives care for 17 percent, and ten percent are in before- and after-school programs. Self-care represents the primary form of care for 24 percent this age group, and 35 percent spend at least some time in self-care arrangements.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. 1992. *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Non-School Hours*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation

The purpose of this report, commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, is to enhance understanding of how to better meet the needs of adolescents in the out-of-school hours. It points out that society has a stake in the healthy development of young people: today's youth are tomorrow's citizens. Yet, many young people face challenges, such as unsafe neighborhoods, economic uncertainty, neglect, and lack of positive input from caring adults, which can impede their development into productive members of society. Up to 40 percent of adolescents' waking hours is discretionary time. In the absence of structured, supervised activities, much of this time is not used productively. A 1988 study found that up to 27 percent of eighth graders regularly spent two or more hours at home alone after school, with youth from low-income families reporting that they spent over three unsupervised hours at home. Adolescents who do not have opportunities to engage in constructive activities during these hours, particularly those from low-income families, who have a lower level of personal and social support than their more affluent counterparts, are at risk of drifting into negative activities such as drug use, unprotected sexual activity, or crime.

The after-school hours also represent opportunity for youth. In surveys and focus groups, youth consistently voice a demand for more contact with caring adults, protection from drugs and crime, and opportunities to get involved in positive activities as an alternative to staying home alone. While the report recognizes that there are thousands of organizations that provide enriching and rewarding experiences for adolescents, and that these programs impart key life skills and contribute to positive outcomes, it suggests that much more can be done. Programs often lack coordination or have a focus that is too narrow to appeal to a broad range of youth.

Programs are under financed and staff morale is low. Many programs serve youth from families that are more affluent. The report recommends a number of changes to after-school programs for youth. Among the suggested changes are the following: listen to youth and tailor programs to their interests; recognize and celebrate diversity; focus on underserved populations, particularly in low-income areas where youth are most at risk and most likely to benefit; offer safe and enriching employment opportunities; emphasize family and community involvement in programs; engage in advocacy on behalf of youth; and evaluate program outcomes to ensure quality. In summary, the report stresses that quality after-school programs are critical to the healthy development of the country's youth, particularly at-risk youth, and should become a higher priority for society.

Huang, Denise, Barry Gribbons, Kyung Sung Kim, Charlotte Lee, and Eva L. Baker. 2000. *A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA's BEST After-School Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation.

Evaluation of the LA's BEST program has been an ongoing, decade-long process. The program, which provides participants with a safe environment, enhanced educational opportunities, recreational activities, and activities focused on the development of interpersonal skills and self-esteem, is an enrollment program (rather than drop-in) that operates from the end of the school day until 6 PM. LA's BEST evaluation activities have had two objectives: to improve the program based on objectively analyzed results, and to prove impact to its supporters. Over the years, a series of studies have reported on student, parent, and staff attitudes toward the program and student outcomes such as grades, educational aspirations, and other measures of achievement. This report examines the impact of the LA's BEST program on school attendance, language redesignation, and standardized test scores for students who were in the second through fifth grades in the 1993-1994 school year, following them through 1997-1998.

The sample consisted of a participant group (n=4,312) and a non-participant group (n=15,010). To evaluate differences by participation level, participants were divided into three groups: high-involvement (75% attendance or more); medium-involvement (74% - 26%); and low-involvement. Archival data were used for school absences, transience, redesignation as English language proficient, course-taking patterns, and program participation. Achievement measures consisted of standardized test scores. Linear regression and path analysis were the analytical techniques employed.

The results indicated that the LA's BEST program has had several important impacts on participants. Language redesignation, which is an important predictor of subsequent academic achievement, was higher for LA's BEST students. LA's BEST students also had fewer absences, and improved their mathematics achievement scores in relation to non-participant scores. Outcomes were also analyzed among participants according to differences in degree of participation. Long-term program participation (at least four years) was significantly related to gains on standardized math, reading, and language test scores. Degree of participation was also positively related to better school attendance. Path analysis on the participant-only findings

indicated that higher levels of participation led to better school attendance, which in turn led to higher achievement on standardized tests.

In an appendix, Huang et al. summarize the results of five prior evaluations that focused on a diverse range of impact variables. Positive results were numerous. Children reported that they felt safer after school and parents reported that they felt that their children were safer. Both children and parents reported positive changes in student attitudes toward and engagement in regular school. Positive relationships between children and caring adults were established. Participants reported higher academic aspirations. Grades improved. Students stated that they enjoyed the program and parents stated that they supported it. In summary, evaluations of the LA's BEST program have found that numerous positive impacts could be attributed to the program, and that higher levels of participation were associated with higher levels of positive outcomes.

National 4-H Impact Assessment Project. 2001. *Prepared and Engaged Youth: National 4-H Impact Assessment Project*. Washington, D.C.: National 4-H

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the benefits of the 4-H Youth Development Program, the National 4-H Impact Assessment Project surveyed youth and adults associated with 4-H in 1999-2000. The 4-H survey was developed based on youth development research that points to a number of "critical elements" that are essential to programs that promote positive growth and development among youth. These include positive relationships with caring adults, safe physical and emotional environments, opportunities to master skills and content, opportunities to practice service for others, opportunities for self-determination, decision-making and goal setting, opportunities to be an active, engaged learner, a positive connection with the future, and an inclusive atmosphere. The survey included questions on the following components related to the critical elements: adults in 4-H; feelings about 4-H; learning about 4-H; helping others; planning and decision making in 4-H; and belonging in 4-H. The survey responses were based on a four-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Baseline data were gathered from a total of 2,467 youth and 471 adult respondents nationwide.

The results revealed that most youth and adult 4-H participants believe that 4-H youth development programs reflect the "critical elements." Both youth and adults agreed that adults in 4-H make young people feel good about themselves. Over 90 percent of youth and adults agreed that 4-H provides a safe environment. Youth feel that 4-H helps them to learn by trying new and different things, and helps them to solve problems on their own. Over 90 percent of youth and adults agreed that 4-H adults help youth learn to work as a team. Ninety percent of youth agreed that 4-H teaches them to help other people and to be responsible for their actions. Over 90 percent of youth and adults agreed with the statements "All kinds of kids are welcome in 4-H" and "4-H helps me to accept differences in others" and agreed that gender made no difference in that both boys and girls can be leaders in 4-H.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time. 2001. *Fact Sheet on School-Age Children's Out-of-School Time*. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women.

This fact sheet draws on official statistics and a number of studies done on after-school programs by researchers from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and academia. It is estimated that approximately 8 million children ages 5 to 14 spend time without adult supervision on a regular basis. The time differential between when children leave school and when parents get home can amount to 20-25 hours per week. There are a number of negative outcomes associated with a lack of adult supervision during out-of-school hours. Children without adult supervision are more likely to be injured in the home, miss school, get poor grades, use controlled substances, commit crimes, and become victims of violent crime.

It is increasingly recognized that children can avoid these negative outcomes through participation in after-school programs. Research indicates that children who attend after-school programs have better work habits, interpersonal skills, emotional adjustment, self-esteem, self-confidence, school behavior, and test scores. Moreover, such children are also less likely to engage in risky behavior such as smoking initiation, and are less likely to become teen parents. Several studies have linked high attendance rates to higher impacts: children who attend after-school programs regularly have better outcomes than do their peers who attend programs with less regularity.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2002. Lessons from Experimental Evaluations. In *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, ed. Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, 147-95. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

This chapter has two main sections. The first examines seven reviews and meta-analyses of evaluations of prevention and promotion programs for youth and discusses the results. Two reviews focused on preventative mental health programs for youth. These reviews, which focused on programs that teach coping, conflict resolution, and other important life skills, found that the programs assessed were effective at increasing competencies such as assertiveness, communication skills, and feelings of self-confidence, and indicated that both short- and longer-term mental disorder prevention programs support positive psychological development. Other reviews focused on violence prevention programs and positive youth development programs. The review of violence prevention program evaluations focused on ten studies that followed an experimental design. Results of these indicated that the programs, which provided mentoring, life skills development training, or therapy, had a deterrent effect on delinquency, drug use, and violent behavior. In a review of youth development program evaluations, 19 of 25 programs showed positive impacts on youth behavior in areas such as interpersonal relationships, self-control, and problem solving. Twenty-four of the evaluations indicated significant reductions in negative behaviors such as drug use and aggressive behavior. General conclusions taken from the reviews were that service-learning and mentoring were effective components of youth programs.

Three programs that stood out from the reviews as exemplary evaluations were examined more closely: the Teen Outreach Program (life skills training and volunteer activity), Quantum Opportunities (academic skills enhancement, developmental activities, and service activities), and Big Brothers Big Sisters (mentoring). These were chosen because 1) their programming is consistent with a youth development framework put forth earlier in the book, 2) they show that high quality experimental evaluation can be done with community programs for youth.

The Teen Outreach Program study was experimental in design, comprising 695 students in 25 schools who were randomly assigned to the program or to a wait list for the following year. Baseline and posttest data were collected at the beginning and end of school years from 1991-1995. After controlling for initial group nonequivalence, fewer youth in the experimental group were suspended, failed courses, or became pregnant than youth in the control group. A weakness of the study was that there was no analysis to determine which program components contributed to impacts.

The Quantum Opportunities evaluation included 250 students who were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. After two years, academic and functional skill scores for the experimental group exceeded those for the control group in five of 11 areas assessed. After four years, the experimental group scores were higher than those of the control group in all 11 areas. However, like the Teen Outreach study, a weakness of this study was that it did not sufficiently examine the causal paths of impacts.

As in the other studies, for the study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program the participants (n=959) were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, with the control group placed on a waiting list. Results of the study indicated that youth in the experimental group were less likely to initiate drug and alcohol use and hit others less frequently. They had higher grade point averages, attended school more often, and reported better parental relationships. Several weaknesses of the study were identified, including total reliance on self-evaluation by participants, and little attention paid to identifying the specific program attributes that cause impacts.

The chapter provides conclusions about the relationship between program features and program effectiveness, but also highlights the difficulties in attributing impacts to these features. Several program features were identified as likely contributors to program impact: supportive relationships with responsible adults, opportunities to belong to a group, promotion of positive social norms, opportunities for skill building, and appropriate structure and safety. While it is clear that some combination of these features contributes to positive outcomes for the youth who participate in programs, even the most rigorous impact evaluations were unable to tie impacts to specific program components. The chapter concludes that from the outset, studies should follow a “well-articulated theory of change grounded in solid developmental theory and research” in order to better understand how programs facilitate positive change in youth.

U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. 2000. The Potential of After-School Programs. In *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs*, 5-34. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

This chapter is a review of key literature on the demand for and importance of after-school programs. The research suggests that demand for affordable, quality care in the hours before and after school exceeds supply. More than 28 million school-age children have parents who work outside the home. It is estimated that on any given day, up to 15 million of these children return to an empty home after school. Children and teens who are unsupervised during the hours after school are much more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors, get poor grades, have behavior problems, and drop out of school than are children who participate in constructive activities supervised by responsible adults.

Research has shown that after-school programs can have positive impacts on the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of children and youth. There are three major functions of after-school programs: providing supervision, offering enriching experiences and positive social interaction, and improving academic achievement. Research on after-school programs points to a number of positive impacts stemming from participation. Behavioral impacts are manifested in decreases in juvenile crime and other risky behaviors, including vandalism, victimization, and use of controlled substances. Programs can also have positive impacts on academic achievement. Participants earn better grades, perform better on standardized tests, and read at higher levels. Other positive academic impacts include the development of new skills and interests, improved school attendance, lower-drop-out rates, improved performance on homework, and higher educational aspirations. Another important impact area is social development. Children who interact with caring adults after school exhibit fewer behavioral problems in school, handle conflicts better, are more cooperative with adults and peers, and display higher levels of confidence and self-esteem.