



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 percent 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 percent of their waking hours in school.ⁱ

Fact Two: Young people's participation in constructive learning activities during non-school hours contributes substantially to their success in school.

Educational researcher Reginald Clark has 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 (such as chess, checkers, Scrabble), museum visits, theater, movies and sports.ⁱⁱ

Fact Three: Young people experience multiple benefits from participation in high quality after-school programs.

In several studies spanning more than a decade, University of Wisconsin researcher Deborah Vandell and colleagues have shown that a host of positive benefits result from children's participation in high quality after-school programs, including better grades, work habits, emotional adjustment and peer relations.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, Stanford University professor Milbrey McLaughlin found that adolescents who participate regularly in community-based youth development programs (including arts, sports and community service) experience better academic and social outcomes, as well as higher education and career aspirations, than other similar teens.^{iv}

Fact Four: 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 percent of low-income eighth graders—compared with only 17 percent of high-income respondents—do not participate in any organized after-school activities.^v The likely explanation for this differential 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 Five: 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,^{vi} and it is during these same hours that children face the most serious danger of becoming victims of crime.^{vii} 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.^{viii}

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

Several recent studies have confirmed 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 percent. In another city, juvenile arrests in a public housing project declined by 75 percent after the establishment of an after-school program while they increased by 67 percent in a comparable housing project that offered no such activities.^{ix}

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

An overwhelming majority of voters (92 percent) say that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day, and two-thirds of voters believe that Federal or state tax dollars should be used to expand daily after-school programs and to make them accessible to all children.^x 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.

ⁱ Timmer, S.G., Eccles, J. and O’Brien, I., How Children Use Time, in *Time, Goods and Well-Being*, Juster, F.T. and Stafford, F.B. (editors), Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1985.

ⁱⁱ Clark, R.M., *Critical Factors in Why Disadvantaged Children Succeed or Fail in School*, New York: Academy for Educational Development, 1988.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vandell, D.L. and Shumow, L., After-School Child Care Programs, *The Future of Children: When School is Out*, Volume 9, Number 2, Fall 1999, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, pp. 64-80.

^{iv} McLaughlin, M.W., *Community Counts: How Community Organizations Matter for Youth Development*, Washington, DC: Public Education Network, 2000.

^v U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: A Profile of the American Eighth Grader*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.

^{vi} Fox, J.A. and Newman, S.A., *After-School Crime or After-School Programs: Report to the U.S. Attorney General*, Washington, DC: Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1997.

^{vii} Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A Report to the Nation*, Washington, DC: Author, 1996.

^{viii} Carnegie Corporation of New York, *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, New York, NY: Author, 1992, p. 33.

^{ix} The After-School Corporation, *3:00 P.M.: Time for After School*, New York, NY: Author, no date.

^x Afterschool Alliance, *Afterschool Alert Poll Report: A Report of Findings from the 1999 Mott Foundation/JC Penney Nationwide Survey on Afterschool Programs*, January 2000.