BY REQUEST...

After-School Programs: Good for Kids, Good for Communities

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NORTHWEST REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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After-School Programs: Good for Kids, Good for Communities

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Northwest Regional
Educational Laboratory

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Foreword

This booklet is the tenth in a series of "hot topic" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. These reports briefly address current educational concerns and issues as indicated by requests for information that come to the Laboratory from the Northwest region and beyond. Each booklet contains a discussion of research and literature pertinent to the issue, a sampling of how Northwest schools are addressing the issue, suggestions for adapting these ideas to schools, selected references, and contact information.

One objective of the series is to foster a sense of community and connection among educators. Another is to increase awareness of current education-related themes and concerns. Each booklet gives practitioners a glimpse of how fellow educators are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success in certain areas. The goal of the series is to give educators current, reliable, and useful information on topics that are important to them.

Other titles in the series include:

- Service Learning in the Northwest Region
- Tutoring Strategies for Successful Learning
- Scheduling Alternatives: Options for Student Success
- Grade Configuration: Who Goes Where?
- Alternative Schools: Approaches for Students at Risk
- All Students Learning: Making It Happen in Your School
- High-Quality Professional Development: An Essential Component of Successful Schools
- Student Mentoring
- Peaceful Schools

Introduction

How many parents are at work today wondering what their kids are doing after school? Are they safe? Are they getting their homework done? Who are they with? The truth is, many of America's children come home to spend hours of unsupervised time in front of the television or engaging in risky behaviors. Consider the following possible scenarios:

- *Yi-Kang is a 12-year-old who walks home from school. On his way he stops at the local convenience store to play video games for two hours before going home.*
- *Maya is an eight-year-old. After school she goes home, where her 13-year-old sister is in charge. They watch talk shows on TV everyday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.*
- *Tom goes to the mall after school to hang out with his buddies. When he became a middle school student he started smoking and chewing tobacco—habits he learned from friends after school.*

Now consider what the scenarios could be if these same students had access to safe, supervised activities after school:

- *Yi-Kang goes to his 4-H cooking club at the after school. He attends a special class at the high school that teaches boys how to cook meals for themselves and their families.*
- *Maya and her sister use after-school hours learning the latest computer programming languages in the computer lab of the middle school. She has her choice of other activities as well, including rehearsing for the next school play, working on homework in the library, or taking an aerobics class.*
- *Tom works on service learning projects after school. His goal is to become a doctor and, through a school-based after-school program, he volunteers at a local clinic. He sees firsthand how concepts he learns in biology are used every day in the medical profession.*

After-school programs, which are sometimes referred to as "extended-day" programs, are often operated in school buildings but can also be implemented in other community locations. They can be supported by district, state, or federal funding, or some combination of the three. They may target a specific student population, or be open to all interested participants. And they may or may not be offered every day of the week. This is all to say that variety is the name of the game in discussions of after-school efforts, and that they truly can be as unique as the communities they serve. Taking all of this into account, this booklet will attempt to offer a brief overview of the research on after-school programs, examine ideas for implementing a program, and profile several sites around the Northwest currently having success with their work in this area.

Historical Perspective

In the United States, the first out-of-home, after-school care programs for school-age children were offered by private charities and nurseries around the turn of the century (Seppanen, 1993). Gradually new ideas in education led private schools to begin offering arts and crafts and other recreational activities to their students after school. These first after-school programs were called "play school" and spread across the country during the 1920's and 1930's as the population continued to move from rural to urban areas of the country. In the midst of the Great Depression the federal government started funding after-school programs as part of the effort to create jobs for both women and men. The government's support of after-school programs dramatically increased during World War II as many women entered the workforce to support the war effort.

During the war years, nearly 3,000 extended-day school programs served over 100,000 school-age children, and 835 school-age child-care centers served another 30,000, along with several hundred combined school-age/nursery child-care programs (Seligson et al., 1983). After the war, many working women returned to their homes, and the federal government's support of after-school programs dwindled. In a few urban areas state and local governments funded after-school programs, but these efforts were not widespread.

In the 1970s demographics in the United States once again began to shift. The 1993 National Study of Before- and After-School Programs by Seppanen and her colleagues highlighted four demographic shifts in the United States that affected and continue to influence the number of students needing after-school care. All four of these changes (listed below) have increased most dramatically since the early 1970s.

1. Growth in the number of young children as the baby boom cohort has begun to reproduce (often referred to as the "baby boom echo")
2. A sharp increase in the employment of mothers with young children
3. An increase in the proportion of single-parent families
4. A decrease in the number of extended family members available locally to care for school-age children during nonschool hours

In response to these shifts, the federal government increased its support for after-school programs. A 1994 report on after-school programs shows that many departments of the government support a variety of programs with after-school, or potential after-school, components (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994). The Department of Agriculture, for example, has developed the 4-H program to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and becoming self-directed, productive, contributing members of society. In 1991 approximately 5.7 million five- to 19-year-olds and 650,000 teen and adult volunteers participated in 4-H programs. Current research is demonstrating that 4-H can be an effective program in a variety of settings. A 1996 study of seven- to 13-year-olds participating in urban 4-H programs found that over 85 percent felt their 4-H program helped to keep them out of gangs (Fleming-McCormick & Tushnet, 1996).

Another federal department that actively sponsors after-school programs is the Department of Defense, which has established 481 "Youth Centers" around the world. At these Youth Centers, comprehensive programs and services are provided to over 950,000 six- to 18-year-olds. Though both 4-H programs and the Youth Centers have a major impact on the lives of certain populations of students, the current level of support for after-school programs is still far from meeting the need that exists.

The Current Situation

Just how many children go home alone every day after school? There is clear evidence that the number of students in the United States left without some kind of adult supervision after school is large and growing (Marx, 1989; U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). Consider the following statistics:

- By current estimates, there are over 28 million children in the United States with parent(s) who work outside the home. Of those 28 million, about five to seven million students go home alone every day after school and are without any adult supervision (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- Between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of American children under the age of 18 with mothers in the labor force rose from 39 percent to 62 percent (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- As students become age 10 and older, more and more of them are left home alone. For example, about 35 percent of 12-year-olds are left by themselves regularly while their parents are at work (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- The average American child spends 900 hours a year in school and 1,500 hours a year watching television (Alter, 1998). Many of these hours in front of the TV take place after school. Often the TV is the best after-school care available to the working poor.

It is clear that even with some support from federal, state, and local governments, there continues to be a lack of quality after-school options for many students and their families. Parent surveys often find that affordable after-school programs are not available. Fortunately, there is evidence that schools are beginning to respond to this need. Between the 1987-88 school year and the 1993-94 school year the availability of extended-day programs among public elementary and combined schools nearly doubled, from 16 percent to 30 percent (DeAngelis & Rossi, 1997). However, parents with students attending the other 70 percent of schools in this country still have reason for concern. Specifically, parents in rural areas and parents of middle school students are often left with very few choices for the after-school care of their children. Only 18.3 percent of rural schools offered extended day programs in the 1993-94 school year, well below the national average of 30 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Some small communities offer after-school options for elementary school students, but choices for middle school students are few and far between.

Surprisingly, many parents and voters would like (and are willing to help pay for) after-school programs for children. This is evidenced by a number of studies and surveys that indicate a high level of public support. Following are some examples of the most recent findings:

- A recent national survey about after-school programs indicates that participants and their families are generally happy with them, but that the key criterion for satisfaction is simply their existence; parents are relieved that their children have a safe place to go after school (Schwartz, 1996).
- 74 percent of elementary and middle school parents said they would be willing to pay for such a program, yet only about 31 percent of primary school parents and 39 percent of middle school parents reported that their children actually attended an after-school program at school (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

- Currently the estimated demand for school-based after-school programs exceeds the supply by a rate of about two to one (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- In a recent poll, 78 percent of voters strongly agreed that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school. A majority of those polled felt that after-school programs should take place in public schools, and seven in 10 were willing to pay more taxes to make programs available to all children (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 1998b).

There is little doubt that after-school programs have the power to positively impact the lives of youth, and to enhance the communities they touch, regardless of their scope or sponsoring agency. The current importance of after-school efforts was officially recognized in 1998 when Congress allocated $40 million to fund after-school programs, and has since approved an additional $200 million for 1999. The initiative is known as 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program (authorized under Title X, Part I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) and provides funding by competitive grants to rural and inner-city public schools to establish or expand after-school programs. Although the statute requires these programs to offer a broad range of services to address the educational, health, social services, cultural, and recreational needs of the community, grants awarded through this program must focus primarily on providing children and youth with expanded learning opportunities in a safe, drug-free environment.

The Growing Need

In addition to the changing demographics in the United States, there are several new reasons for developing quality after-school programs. First, the after-school hours are becoming an increasingly dangerous time for many of our students. Parents are faced with rising fears about the health and safety risks of unsupervised children. Unsupervised after-school hours have become "prime-time" for juvenile crime. Violent juvenile crime peaks between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 8 p.m. (Fox & Newman, 1997).

Children are also at greater risk of being victims of a crime during the hours after school. Besides documenting the number of children left unsupervised and unchallenged after school, researchers have demonstrated that this group is at risk in a wide variety of areas. Specifically, school-age children and teens who are unsupervised during after-school hours are far more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors, receive poor grades, and drop out of school than children who have the opportunity to benefit from constructive activities supervised by responsible adults (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). After-school programs appeal to both "liberal" and "conservative" groups as an effective strategy to both raise student achievement and reduce juvenile crime in the afternoon hours (Reinhard, 1998).

Beyond issues of safety are the rewards that students and their communities can reap as a result of quality after-school programs. With rapid changes in technology there is a growing interest in supplementing the traditional school day with a variety of social and educational activities that enhance children's development. Indeed, quality after-school programs should be viewed as an opportunity to add to the knowledge and skills

students are already cultivating, rather than just an obligation to occupy their time. Today's children will need more and better preparation in order to succeed in tomorrow's rapidly changing world; through after-school efforts, children can become better equipped for the future.

Alone at Home: The Myth of Self-Care

Is time spent home alone an educational experience for children? In a 1985 review of the research, Dunbar reported that lack of adult supervision after school did not have significant negative effects on school-age children (Dunbar, 1985). However, in the same review she also found that after-school programs for school-age children were proven to be advantageous to children; and parent education was found to produce positive changes within both the parent and the child.

Some studies have concluded that under the right conditions, properly prepared youngsters who are left at home without supervision mature sooner, develop a strong sense of self-esteem, and feel more in control of their worlds. At the same time, there is also an increasing body of evidence to the contrary (Seppanen, 1993).

Today, the once common notion that self-care leads to greater maturity has been overshadowed by the knowledge that many of the children left home alone after school may experience loneliness, fear, and worry. They are also at greater risk of injury, victimization, poor nutrition, and excessive television viewing. Adolescents who care for younger siblings may experience great stress and must forgo constructive after-school activities. Those who "hang out" with similarly aimless friends may join gangs or engage in premature sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and other antisocial behavior" (Schwartz, 1996).

"Too often the ambiguous findings of these studies obscure yet another important question about self-care: namely, what developmental opportunities are being lost?" (Seppanen, 1993). After-school time has the great potential to offer students opportunities to continue their academic and social development. Instead, many of these opportunities are lost to hours of potentially dangerous self-care, premature responsibility for siblings, or watching low-quality television programming.

Research-Based Indicators of Quality After-School Programs

It can be difficult for schools to build an after-school program that satisfies the complex needs of today's families. It can be equally difficult for parents to know how to select an after-school program for their child. The following checklist has been developed from indicators of quality often used by researchers who study and evaluate after-school programs (Seppanen, 1993; National Elementary School Principals, 1994; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994). It addresses six components of quality programs: safety, health and nutrition, organization, staff, space, and activities. While it would be difficult for an after-school program to meet all the listed criteria (criteria's relevance is dependent upon the focus age group), it is important that these factors are at least considered as program goals are developed. Beyond initial planning and implementation, these indicators can be used by program staff, school faculty, and parents to gauge the quality and effectiveness of their after-school efforts.

Safety

- Is the program licensed or accredited? School-run programs may not be required to have a license but should meet or exceed state licensing requirements.
- Are there careful check-in and check-out procedures so children are always accounted for?
- Is there a telephone nearby in case of emergencies?
- Are play/recreation areas safe? Is there adequate adult supervision? Is the play equipment well maintained and age appropriate?
- Are hazardous materials locked away? Cleaning supplies should be locked in a cupboard or closet.
- Is the facility smoke-free?
- Is the staff trained in first-aid and CPR?
- Are the students and staff taught what to do in case of an emergency?

Health and Nutrition

- Is water available at all times for drinking, cooking, and clean up? Is there a place for the kids to wash their hands before eating and after doing science and art projects?
- Are snacks and meals nutritious?
- How often are snacks and meals available?
- Are a variety of physical activities that are fun, age-appropriate, and inclusive of all students included in the daily routine?

Organization

- What are the goals of the program?
- Is the program based on child development research?
- Is the program tailored to specific community and neighborhood needs?
- Is the program well coordinated with what is happening at school? Is there communication between teachers and after-school staff? Is there time for homework to be completed?
- Does the program collaborate with local community organizations?
- Does the program encourage parental involvement? How many parent volunteers are there? Is there a parent volunteer requirement?
- Does the program engage in planned and continuous evaluation? Are there ways for the students and their parents to make suggestions about the program?

Program Staff

- Are the staff skilled and qualified? What kind of training have they received?
- Talk with the staff. How do they feel about children?
- Do students feel the staff are patient and fair?
- Do staff make a point to talk with parents regularly?
- What kind of background and credentials does the staff/director have? Has the director studied education, child development, or another related field?
- Are there opportunities for staff members to participate in training and staff development?
- Is the staff sensitive to diversity?
- How does the staff handle conflict between students? Do they give the kids a chance to work out problems themselves?

- If a child needs discipline how does the staff handle it? If a child is upset, are staff members calm, comforting, and sensitive?
- When a child succeeds do they offer praise and encouragement?
- Are children encouraged, but not pressured, to try new activities?
- Do staff members enjoy working with each other and treat each other respectfully?
- Are the staff members good role models and examples for students?
- Are there enough staff to supervise well and give enough attention to each child? (The National Association of Elementary School Principals recommends no more than 12 children per staff member.)

Space

- Is the environment inviting, warm, colorful, "cozy"?
- Is there enough space for students to move around without disturbing other projects and activities?
- Is space accessible to participants with physical limitations?
- Are there a variety of spaces (quiet spaces for study or rest, small-group areas, and large play areas)?
- Are the bathrooms clean and conveniently located?
- Is the temperature comfortable?
- Is there a clean, safe (protected from traffic and unwanted visitors) outdoor space?
- Is there enough well-kept play equipment for everyone?
- Are there adequate materials and supplies for activities?

Activities and Time

- Are a variety of activities offered (physical, cognitive, group, and individual)?
- Does the program emphasize social relationships by encouraging a family-like atmosphere?
- Are activities challenging for different age groups?
- Are activities flexible, fun, culturally relevant and linked to students' interests?
- Are new skills introduced as appropriate?
- Do the students have opportunities to make choices about how they spend their time?
- Are the hours of operation convenient?
- Does the program operate when school is closed?
- Is the tuition affordable? Is there a sliding scale based on family income?

Benefits for Students

Quality after-school programs can have far-reaching benefits. Though not always immediately evident, the benefits for students include increased learning, improved health, increased exposure to career choices, and enhanced social and psychological development. Based on a national review of the research, many documented benefits of after-school programs are detailed below (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

Increased learning. After-school programs can play a large role in improving student achievement. Whether through targeted academic activities, or through indirect activities that positively motivate them, students' chances of improving their school performance go up when they are actively engaged in a structured after-school program. Specifically, student learning benefits can include:

- Increased achievement in math, reading, and other academic subjects
- Enhanced reading ability and motivation, and greater self-confidence in reading
- Improved school attendance and reduced drop-out rate
- Completion of more and better-quality homework
- Reduced in-grade retention and placement in special education

Healthier students. After-school programs can foster healthier habits for students who would otherwise go home alone. Student health benefits can include:

- Decreased risk of teen parenthood (students who are not involved in any extracurricular activities are 36 percent more likely to be teen parents)
- Decreased likelihood of substance abuse
- Enhanced nutrition and wellness
- Increased opportunities to engage in fitness activities

Career outcomes. After-school programs are a perfect venue for student career exploration. Potential career benefits for students are:

- Exposure to a variety of careers and related interests through targeted activities (e.g., job shadows, speakers, workplace visits, etc.)
- Increased commitment to schooling and a subsequent development of higher aspirations for the future, including the intention to complete high school and college

Positive influences on social and psychological development. In addition to direct academic and school-related benefits, after-school programs can be advantageous to students in many other ways. After-school programs can be a time for students
to volunteer in their communities, learn leadership skills, and make connections with adult mentors (Corporation for National Service and National Institute on Out-of-School-Time, 1997). Additional benefits to children's social and psychological development may include:

- Less time spent watching television (The most frequent activity for children during non-school hours is television watching, which has been associated with increased aggressive behavior and other negative consequences. For about one-half of the hours children spend watching television, they are watching by themselves or with other children. And roughly 90 percent of the time is spent watching programs that are not specifically designed for them.)

- Fewer behavioral problems in school
- Enhanced ability to handle conflicts
- Better social skills (more cooperative attitude with adults and peers)
- Improved self-confidence through development of caring relationships with adults and peers
- Growth in personal sense of community
- Reduced participation in gangs

Benefits for the School and Community

The rewards of after-school programs are not limited only to students. Many benefits can also be reaped by the school itself and the surrounding community.

School-community relations. Quality after-school programs require partnerships with parents and the outside community. Such partnerships can acquaint others with schools in a very unique way. Specific benefits can include:

- More effective use of funding (e.g., better use of public libraries, parks, and recreational facilities)
- Increased capacity to serve children
- Increased business support and involvement
- Increased parental involvement and support of the school
- Maintenance or increase of student enrollments
- Improved school image (e.g., classrooms remain in use for more of the day thus discouraging the public from thinking that schools represent ineffective use of public resources)
- Decreased vandalism and delinquency
- Increased advocacy on the part of the community for the school (when community members are involved with the school more, they tend to become proponents of the school and its mission)

Crime rates. Because juvenile crime rates peak during after-school hours, and quality after-school programs provide structured, supervised activities, it is only logical that such programs can be directly linked to a decrease in juvenile crime. Furthermore, violent victimization of youth decreases, as does school vandalism.

Implementation Ideas

Initial steps. It is always important to point out that when designing or implementing a new school program, no one "right way" exists. What works in one site may falter in another. Use the following suggested implementation steps as a guide, but keep in mind that the unique needs of your school or district may necessitate other methods.

1. Document the need for an after-school program in your community through surveys and other needs assessment measures (e.g., community and/or school profiles, examinations of discipline and juvenile crime data, etc.); this helps to build a larger planning group.
2. Research available information on after-school programs (include site visitations at this time) to become familiar with the indicators of quality programs.
3 Assess what the program's financial capabilities are, and develop a financial plan that can be the basis of subsequent planning decisions.
4. Solidify details about your program's location and other logistics; for example, be sure to establish clear boundaries as to what part of the school building will be open for activities, what will be closed, what doors will be locked and when, and so forth.
5. Based on the conclusions of the first four steps, determine the scope of the intended program: What students will be targeted? What activities will be offered? And how will it be staffed?
6. Garner support of school staff and leadership—it is difficult for programs to thrive if any adversarial relationships exist.
7. Hire a program director to oversee and coordinate all phases of implementation (this person may already be a teacher or may be an educator hired from outside the district).
8. Build a broad base of community support by involving parents, businesspeople, and other community members in the development of the program; the more advocates a program has, the greater its chances for success.
9. Start small and build gradually in response to need. First set up a pilot program, and fund it modestly.
10. Provide ongoing evaluation to ensure the program is successful and able to respond to changing community needs.
11. Identify local resources and forums for staff training and ongoing staff development.

Ongoing issues. A more indepth examination of implementation issues in conjunction with a review of the program quality indicators reveals that a successful program is the culmination of several factors.

1. Quality after-school programs involve the community

Quality after-school programs are customized to the specific needs and resources of the community they serve. In order to have the greatest benefit, it is important that after-school programs work with a variety of community agencies and encourage the sharing of resources. For example, in a community experiencing economic depression due to the instability of a once-reliable natural resource (such as timber), area schools could partner with the local community college and/or area businesses to offer after-school career exploration to middle school students. This way students whose families had once relied upon local mills and factories for stable jobs could be exposed to new career options. Such activities could involve expert demonstrations, guest lectures, career mentoring, simulations, or apprenticeships, as well as life skills training and home economics workshops.

According to a publication from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice (1998), "Successful programs respond to community needs: their creation is the result of a community effort to evaluate the needs of its school-age children when school is not is session."

It is important for school-sponsored after-school programs to collaborate with a variety of community service agencies. Schools with genuine partnerships will be able to put together more comprehensive programs and will be in a better position to obtain grant funding and eventually become self-sustaining.

2. Quality after-school programs have the support of school staff and leadership

When after-school programs are housed in schools, it is essential that the school staff (including the secretary, janitor, school nurse, and counselor) and leadership be supportive and accommodating. If they aren't, it makes it very difficult to successfully share space and resources. Depending upon the organization of the program, staff and leadership may be involved in a range of activities from planning to implementation of the program. Often the principal is a key player and can "make" or "break" an after school program. Seppanen (1993) notes, "The involvement of principals ranges tremendously from providing the leadership necessary to integrate the before- and after-school program into the school culture, to assuming the role of protecting school resources from being used by program staff and children." Effective programs will find the principal in a supportive partnership role with program staff.

3. Quality after-school programs respond to the needs of students and their families

It makes sense to involve students and families who will be using the program in the development and implementation phases. Students are an asset that schools and communities often overlook. Many times students have very creative ideas about how to use limited resources and time. In addition, students know what they need and what they will enjoy—so ask them! Parents are another resource that is often overlooked. Working parents may not be able to volunteer every day, but they can likely participate occasionally, and they can be a valuable connection to the business community. They may also be able to help in other ways. Programs that have built-in flexibility and that actively seek feedback from parents and students will be best able to adapt as needs shift over the years.

4. Quality after-school programs provide students with consistent, caring relationships with adults

Many students now come from single-parent families and/or do not have relationships with their extended families. Although the staff of an after-school program cannot take the place of family, they can serve as mentors and positive role models. The relationships students develop with staff can have a major impact on their lives and can thus serve as protective factors counteracting other detrimental life circumstances. It is important for children to know they have a variety of caring adults in their lives.

This assertion was reemphasized in a 1992 assessment of after-school programs in the greater metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. The assessment was based on the results of a series of focus groups 135 youth participated in. When asked who they felt would be ideal staff members, the 11- to 15-year-olds indicated that the "ideal staff" would be "adults and teenagers who are

concerned about young adolescents' needs" (S. W. Morris & Company, Inc., 1992).

Additional themes that emerged from the focus groups include:

- The need and desire for adult role models from whom to seek guidance and support
- The importance of families and friends in the lives of the youth
- The desire for environments in which the students can "be themselves" and be respected

It is clear that students themselves recognize the need for consistent, caring relationships with adults. "Youth repeatedly reported that they have a great deal of free, unsupervised time that affords them the opportunity to engage in risky behaviors; however, many expressed a desire to have more contact with positive adult role models, and with adults to whom they can talk." (S. W. Morris & Company, Inc. 1992). After-school programs can provide students with the supervised time and interactions with adult role models that they both want and need.

5. Quality after-school programs provide students with a safe place to go and reinforce sound health and nutrition practices

Many public schools no longer offer the level of fitness-related activities they once did. As more and more time is being dedicated to core academics, after-school programs can be one place where students are encouraged to participate in fun fitness activities. Nutrition can be taught and modeled by providing healthy meals and snacks. After school is also a great time for other traditionally "extracurricular" activities like music, art, and drama, that are often first to be eliminated from public school offerings during budgetary shortfalls.

Potential Pitfalls

Implementing a quality after-school program is no small undertaking. Along with the many rewards come many potential pitfalls. Being aware of what these pitfalls are can save time and money.

- ***Planning:*** Make an effort to involve all stakeholders who will be impacted by the program, including businesses, community organizations, parents, teachers, and students. Leaving out any of these important groups may prevent the program from being well-rounded and supported by all stakeholders.
- ***Pacing:*** Don't try to do too much too soon, and build on successes. It's better to have to scale-up than to scale-back (e.g., start the program in only one site and go from there).
- ***Buy-in:*** Make sure you have teacher buy-in. Work with teachers to develop a comfortable plan for using school space, and make sure that there are avenues for communication between teachers and the staff of the after-school program (e.g., monthly meetings, newsletters, and appointed program liaisons who facilitate regular communication with school staff).
- ***Transportation:*** Be sensitive to transportation issues. Work with the school and parents to come up with safe transportation options.
- ***Scope:*** Stay away from doing the same things that happen during school hours. Make it different—something for students to look forward to.
- ***Diplomacy:*** Avoid turf wars. Work with existing community groups, and try to make the school more accessible. Avoid duplicating existing services.
- ***Funding:*** Seek stable funding that will sustain the program over the long term.

Future Trends

The coming years are likely to see a steady increase in the need for quality after-school programs. As parents and communities seek to provide more and better opportunities for their children, after-school programs will continue to be seen as part of the solution. The need for quality after-school programs for students in the middle school and early teen years will be an additional area of emphasis. It is also likely that many of these programs will be expanded to before-school and weekend programs to offer parents and students even more ways to fully utilize school resources. With schools increasingly at the center of public debate and controversy, the trend toward more community involvement in school is likely to grow. The public will require more from schools and will not be content to see expensive school facilities sit empty after 3 p.m., on weekends, and all summer long.

Conclusion

While we may debate the nature of who should be responsible for providing the nation's youth with quality after-school activities, we simply cannot debate their necessity. The reality of the situation is rather simple—too many children in this country go home alone after school every day and are unsupervised for too many hours. The results of this unsupervised time are counterproductive and can prove to be devastating or even deadly. By working together we have the opportunity to make this time healthier, happier, safer, and more educational for today's students through quality after-school programs. And by taking advantage of the material and human resources already available, we can make their future and ours even better.

The Northwest Sampler

On the following pages are descriptions of several after-school programs. Though the programs are all different in design, each seeks to create a safe environment conducive to learning for all students. These Northwest programs are by no means meant to represent an exclusive listing of exemplary programs; rather they are just a few of the many good ones found in the region and throughout the country. Some have been in existence for several years, while others are fledgling efforts. Some have chosen to describe every component of their program, while others wanted to focus on one element alone. Included for each site is location and contact information, a description of the program, observed outcomes as a result of the program, and tips directly from these educators to others looking to implement similar programs in their schools.

Location

Child in Transition/Homeless Project
Anchorage School District - Title I
605 W. Fireweed Lane, Room 131
Anchorage, AK 99503

Contact

Janet Levin, Homeless Education Specialist
Phone: 907/278-4537
Fax: 907/278-4544
E-mail: levin_janet@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us

Description

Success in school can be a challenge for kids from even the best of home circumstances; for students from homeless families, it can be next to impossible. To offer such students a chance for a better future, in 1993 the Anchorage School District designed and implemented the Child In Transition (CIT) program. The mission of the CIT program is to ensure that homeless students stay in school and have access to academic success. The program does this by coordinating necessary supports to get students to school each day, and by offering them consistent after-school assistance to facilitate effective learning.

CIT is staffed by 15 tutors who are generally either certified teachers or college students enrolled in an education program. Their primary duty is to provide targeted students with individualized after-school tutoring four times a week, for two hours each day. To effectively do this they must also work in classrooms and carefully coordinate their efforts with classroom teachers. Tutors work at seven local shelters. While there, they provide enrichment activities, homework and GED support, and referrals to CIT coordinators for advocacy and problem solving (with parents and classroom tutoring).

The program is coordinated by two teachers (one elementary/early childhood, one secondary), a homeless education specialist, and a counselor. The teachers direct the tutors and other activities that pertain to their age specialty. The homeless education specialist is the liaison for community, transportation, and social services. The counselor (a new component to the program this year) serves as liaison between schools, staff, students, and parents. Although each coordinator has their own responsibilities, there is much overlap between all tasks. Key to the success of the program are creativity, flexibility, and ongoing communication between all staff (teachers, tutors, and the homeless education specialist). Similar collaboration within the school system and with community agencies is paramount.

Parents often express surprise that the school district's commitment extends to the shelter's onsite district-staffed program. Parents participate in the early childhood portion of the program by aiding in problem-solving efforts and by assisting in evening tutoring and field trips.

The CIT program, which serves over 1,000 children annually, is funded with federal Title I dollars and other state grants. Children can stay in the program for up to a year.

Observed Outcomes

- Long-term relationships with families are established that continue even when the after-school tutoring component ends
- Awareness has been raised among teachers and has resulted in increased commitment to the CIT mission

- Shelters now see children and their education as an important aspect of their services

Keys to Success

- Provide onsite training and support for tutors throughout the school year
- Maintain ongoing collaboration with community agencies—those that work with homeless families as well as those that do not
- Offer public awareness and education/training opportunities to raise consciousness in the professional and lay communities about homelessness in general and its impact on the education of children and youth
- Ensure that after-school tutoring programs adapt to the culture and environments of shelters (tutors are guests and must accommodate to the shelter structure and needs while maintaining high standards and quality)
- Work to respond to the unique and individual needs of students
- Open and regular communication between program coordinators, school staff, administration, counselors, and nurses is essential

Location

Marsing Elementary School
PO Box 340 Highway 78
Marsing, ID 83639

Contact

Kay L. Tillotson, Counselor
Phone: 208/896-4476
Fax: 208/896-4491

Description

Marsing is a rural, lower socioeconomic, agriculture-based community in Owyhee County in western Idaho. The population of the school is approximately 33 percent Hispanic, with 76 percent of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The number of children in the county that live in poverty is 113 percent higher than the state average. Subsequently, many families do not have the financial resources for adequate child care. Because no licensed day-care facilities exist in the community that can provide supervision for school-age children, the Marsing School District determined something needed to be done to prevent vast numbers of children from going home alone each school day.

Implemented in 1995, the purpose of the Marsing Afterschool Program is twofold: 1) to provide families with affordable child care; and 2) to provide students from elementary through middle school with safe, developmentally appropriate activities that enhance their social, physical, artistic, and educational development.

The Afterschool Program has been in operation for four years and has become a vital service to the community. The elemen-

tary and middle school administrators provide their services in the overall organization of the program, and staffing is provided by three teachers who elect to work additional hours beyond their normal school day. The dedication of these staff members is the primary reason for the success of the program, and because they are teachers in the school already, they have a familiarity with the students that wouldn't otherwise be possible. The program operates from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. each school day. Parents are required to transport their children home. A daily schedule is followed that includes homework assistance, physical activities, a healthy snack, and an enrichment activity. Students attending the program are also instructed in basic drug and alcohol education.

Beyond the general schedule, there are several components of the program that target different needs of students and the community. For example, tutoring is a priority component of the program. For elementary students, program staff take referrals from classroom teachers and, based on these referrals, help individual students with areas of difficulty. The students are divided into three age-appropriate groups and are instructed by an individual teacher. Tutoring is also important at middle school level, where students can go to the school's computer lab and receive one-on-one instruction and computer skills training. The primary focus of all tutoring efforts is students who are struggling academically.

Other components of the program include 4-H clubs, nutrition instruction, and a recently added literacy component, funded through a grant from the Albertson's Community Foundation. This grant provides for literacy labs that are available for all students but targeted especially at students not meeting grade-level standards. These labs are staffed by two additional certified teachers. The labs are divided into two separate developmental groups; grades one through three in one group and grades four through five in another. The primary group focuses on literature immersion, while the older group works on writing in a computer-based environment. The students move in and out of the labs and are able to attend the functions of the Afterschool Program as well.

Another new component of the Afterschool Program this year is the Fine Arts Series, which was funded by a Creative and Innovative Grant from the Idaho Department of Education and was designed to bring culture and enrichment to the children of Marsing. A different area is being focused on each quarter. Enrichment programs are presented on a daily basis and include music and drama, intramural sports, science and math, language arts and publishing.

Community collaboration and other outside funding sources have been an important focus for the Afterschool Program. The original program was funded by Safe and Drug-Free Schools federal monies, but since that time new programs and funding sources have been added each year. A grant from the State Health and Welfare Agency helped provide software and supplies at the secondary level efforts. Feeding America's Youth provided the snacks in the months of May and September.

Parents, too, are a vital part of the program, and their letters of support were a major factor contributing to the renewal of the program's Safe and Drug Free Schools grant. Parents assist in providing snacks and often assist on special occasions. To keep parents abreast of activities, program teachers publish a regular newsletter highlighting the various activities.

The success of the program is evidenced by the number of students who attend on a daily basis—anywhere from 30-55 are present each day out of a total student population (K-8) of 490.

On days of special events or holiday celebrations, as many as 80 students have attended.

Because of this affordable program, many families have had the opportunity to enter the workforce. The Afterschool Program provides the peace of mind that children are in a safe environment.

Observed Outcomes

- Students that are struggling academically have access to more individualized help
- Students are being exposed to enrichment activities that they would otherwise not be able to experience
- School and parent relationships have improved
- Students are in a safe environment rather than being home alone after school

Keys to Success

- Hire dedicated staff members
- Design a program that is both fun and educational
- Enlist the support of parents and the community

Location

The Flagship Project
Missoula County
200 W. Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Contact

Peggy Seel, Grants Administrator
Office of Planning and Grants
Phone 406/523-4743
Fax: 406/523-4843

Description

Four years ago community leaders in Missoula, along with youth service providers, began to realize that activities for youth, though well intentioned, were rather helter-skelter and not uniformly based on current theory and practice. Accordingly, the disparate parties involved in planning and delivering services to youth formed the Missoula Alliance for Youth, a coalition of school personnel, youth service providers, parents, and community leaders. Together the alliance has worked to create an environment that allows the community to come together in a proactive way to assist Missoula's youth.

Embracing modern theories of risk, resiliency, and asset building, as well as endorsing the notion of unified delivery systems, the alliance designed a precedent-setting initiative at C.S. Porter Middle School. Initial funding came from a grant from Montana's InterAgency Coordinating Council. At Porter, eight community organizations (referred to by the alliance as “providers”) and well over 100 community volunteers integrated their services into one seamless delivery system that provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to withstand the negative

influences inherent in adolescence. These organizations included Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the YWCA, the YMCA, Child and Family Resources (a parent education organization), Family Basics (a non-profit group that sponsors family resource centers in schools), the Missoula City/County Health Department, Lutheran Social Services, and Turning Point (the community's chemical-dependency treatment provider). Since the program's inception the Missoula Art Museum, the Girl Scouts, the National Guard, and the police department have also joined the project. The Flagship Project continues to rely on the support of many volunteers, who give of their time as mentors, instructors, and program assistants.

The goals of the project are simple:

1) To forge links between schools, families, neighborhoods and the community that encourage community ownership of youth programs

2) To build assets in young people so they can effectively deal with adverse situations that may arise in their lives and increase their likelihood of becoming healthy, caring adults

To achieve these goals, a variety of activities are offered to students at each school, as well as on some evenings, weekends, and during the summer. Activities include mentoring, art, dance, poetry, creative writing, theater, carpentry, child/parent communication classes, conflict resolution classes, support groups for children affected by family separation, family strength building programs, nutritional cooking classes (one is designed specifically for boys), and opportunities to learn life skills appropriate to adolescence. As is apparent, the organizations involved offer a variety of activities that meet a variety of needs and interests.

Other activities, not directly sponsored by an outside agency are coordinated by the Youth Development Coordinator. The coordinator, who is integral to the success of the program, develops and coordinates the site-based extended-day hour activities which, similar to the activities listed above, are designed to target different interests and abilities but which also share certain commonalties. Each provides alternatives to activities that often lead to drug and alcohol abuse, each gives participants an opportunity to achieve some measure of success, and each involves either substantial peer group, community, or family interactions. The coordinator also develops service learning activities, participates as a regular staff person at his/her assigned school, and meets regularly with the community regarding potential provider activities.

These activities are developed so that their impacts are readily observable, contact with the community is direct, relationships with classroom activity are obvious, and supportive peer relationships and team-building skills are enhanced. Finally, the coordinator connects the students to the community groups in the project as well as other local groups that most effectively meet their needs and interests.

Based on the success of the activities taking place at Porter, other funding has become available from The United Way of Missoula County, the federal Office of Juvenile Justice, and the DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest Fund. This additional funding has allowed the project to expand over the past two years into the three elementary schools feeding into Porter, another middle school, and into freshman classes at two local high schools.

The district superintendent explained the impact of the Flagship Project at Porter by saying there is a positive attitude permeating the school. One sixth-grader put it in simpler terms, saying, "School is a better place. We're nicer to each other." Another student said his participation in the project made him "a softer person...like I use a softer voice and I'm more concerned."

The project also impacts teachers who have long recognized that children learn better when their emotional needs are met. By helping to meet those needs, the project allows teachers the opportunity to teach. The comments one teacher made six months into the program support this conclusion. She said, "Thank God [the community organizations are here]...I have someone to help these kids outside of the classroom."

Volunteers working in the program are recruited through the University of Montana, business organizations, civic groups, parent organizations, and various nonprofit groups. Often phone calls will be made to individuals in the community who've been identified as having a special talent that the Youth Development Coordinator thinks would interest the students. And sometimes members of' the community hear about the program and call the coordinators to offer their services (such was the case with the accountant who offered to teach quilting to students after school). Volunteers serve as tutors, coaches, mentors, and instructors for activities such as Taekwondo, fly tying, cross-country skiing, and as participants in activities in the game room or as monitors in the drop-in room.

Observed Outcomes

- Volunteer hours rose from 400 at C.S. Porter the year before the project began to almost 4,000 during its second year of implementation.
- Parental involvement has increased substantially—especially on the part of parents who normally would not participate in most of the their children's activities.
- Community members who saw schools only as formal institutions where classroom teaching took place now see them as vehicles for the community to become involved with its youth. Well over 30 businesses participated in the project at Porter in some fashion last year.

Keys to Success

- Obtain the services of a VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) volunteer (Having a VISTA on-site at Porter has been one of the most cost-effective methods of assisting the program. The VISTA worker more than doubled Porter's capacity to reach youth and to involve the community. One of the priorities of the program is to put caring adults in the lives of Missoula's youth. The interaction of the VISTA volunteer with the community has been a major catalyst to this effort.)
- Ensure that the project has the full support of the school administration, including the superintendent and the principals at each site. The principals also need to have an active role in overseeing the project if possible.
- Maintain the visibility of the project throughout the community.
- Always keep in mind the goal of the program is to help kids.
- Be sure to thank volunteers and participating agencies/ businesses for their work

Location

Lincoln County Youth Court Services
418 Main Avenue
Libby, MT 59923

Contact

Marie Studebaker
Phone: 406/293-7781
Fax: 406/293-6917

Description

For many of today's young people, encounters with the law, coupled with poor school performance often lead to alienation from the world of education and a life with little opportunity. In an effort to prevent such a scenario from becoming reality, the Youth Court Services agency in Libby set out to offer extra after-school assistance and one-on-one attention to certain troubled students. In 1990, an after-school program designed specifically for adolescents on probation who were not receiving a grade of "C" or better in all of their classes was implemented.

Each day, about a dozen kids from this rural Montana town make their way to the basement of the Youth Court Services building after school. Though they are required to attend the program until their grades improve, most of the participating students welcome the positive interaction, support, and attention they receive while there. The focus of the program is academic improvement, but positive social and life skills are promoted as well. Students do homework, technology projects, and work with tutors if necessary. They have access to six state-of-the-art computers, a certified teacher, and a cadre of volunteers who work to model prosocial behavior at all times. All instruction is individualized and tailored to students' unique needs. This is achieved through a close partnership between program staff and local schools. Regular communication between the program teacher and school teachers ensures that students get precisely the instruction they need.

The program is funded through a variety of grants, but its primary sponsor is the Montana Department of Corrections Board of Crime Control.

Observed Outcomes

- The youth have better rapport with this office (as a probation office). They are more comfortable and interactive
- Participants know that in addition to academic help, they can also come to program staff if they have problems of any kind, consequently, even after youth transition out of the program they still often come to visit
- Students' grades, class participation, and attendance improve as a result of their participation in the program

Keys To Success

- Enlist the expertise of a certified teacher to run the program
- Structure the environment in a way that makes learning logical and fun
- Obtain the support of the school system, parents, and other agencies

Location

POWER (Promoting Outstanding Work, Education, and Recreation) in Youth
Salem-Keizer School District
Community Education
PO Box 12024
Salem, OR 97309

Contact

Sandy Swanson, Community Education Coordinator
Phone: 503/399-3305
Fax: 503/399-4004
E-mail: swanson_sandy@salkeiz.k12.or.us

Description

In the spring of 1995 the staff at Parrish Middle School, in the Salem-Keizer School District, decided they wanted to make a concerted effort to rebuild the school's sense of community after they and students had been displaced for a year of building construction. Based on research indicating that students with a strong sense of belonging and positive bonding to school are more likely to resist negative behaviors, such as drug/alcohol abuse, delinquency, premature sexual behavior, or violence, they set out to design an after-school program that would engage both students and faculty as an extension of the regular school day and the school-based curriculum. What resulted was the POWER in Youth program. The goal of POWER in Youth is to improve student attendance, behavior, and academic performance, and also to enhance student bonding to school and community through integrated after-school activities.

POWER In Youth was so successful at Parrish Middle School that it has since been implemented at the remaining eight Salem-Keizer middle schools. POWER is open to all students, but particular emphasis is made to involve ESL students. Sites are open two days a week, for an hour and a half each day. Involvement in the program helps students build positive relationships with peers, teachers, volunteers, and other community members. Though all schools implementing POWER have similar guiding principles and are overseen by a Central Coordinating Committee (responsible for master scheduling of community resources, guest speakers, visiting instructors, volunteer drives, and fundraising), each program is uniquely based on the needs of the students it serves. Each school's program is guided by a team of faculty, parents, students, and community resource people. Initially each team surveyed students to determine interests and to aid in the design, structure, and content of the program. Based on these findings, and with the input of students, individual school programs were implemented.

Each school works to facilitate the integration of after-school activities with the academic curriculum. To successfully do this, many stakeholders are actively involved with the onsite programs. Classroom teachers instruct selected activities such as photography, computers, Web-page design, model building, painting, dance, and tutoring; professionals from local youth organizations (City Recreation, Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, YWCA, Camp Fire Boys and Girls, etc.) lead other programs, such as a girls leadership club, a cooking class for at-risk teen boys, and an environmental club; and community volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, and as assistant leaders to other instructional staff. Depending on the expertise of teachers and community members, activity options vary, but all POWER sites include tutoring centers and study hall as part of their offerings.

Examples of activities that result from this combined community effort include an art club led by a professional artist who created a mural for a school cafeteria, an environmental club that

studied wetlands and created an interpretive nature trail at a park near the school, and a foods class that made treats for a bake sale and raised funds for new ovens at the school. Through their POWER program, most schools also provide regular field trips. Every day is a little different in the various program sites, but students generally meet in one location to have a snack and wait to be directed to their activity that day.

Each POWER site has a designated coordinator who is usually also a teacher at that school. Coordinators meet monthly to keep the program organized and unified.

For the last four years POWER In Youth has been funded through local grants and donations, but in 1998 the district received a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant from the federal government that will total $600,000 over the next three years. This new money will be used to develop a community learning center at three sites, and the remaining six schools will continue with the POWER program. The money from the grant will provide the salary for a half-time staff person at each school, allow for the development of extended learning opportunities during evenings and weekends, and assist the district at it works to design new site-based activities that meet emerging community needs with community resources.

In 1997 the district surveyed more than 2,200 students (half of whom participate in the program) and approximately 100 school personnel at four of the nine middle schools. The response was both positive and informative. Survey results have helped to shape the program as it continues to evolve each year.

Observed Outcomes

- Students meet new friends and gain new skills
- Student attitudes have improved, which has subsequently enhanced school spirit
- Student attendance has improved and there are also indications that students' academic performance has improved

Keys to Success

- Involve all key stakeholders in the planning process (including students)
- Have an onsite planning committee at each school and also a district coordinating committee
- Use student and staff surveys to inform program improvement decisions

Location

Bend Metro Park and Recreation District
KIDS INC—School-Age Care Program
200 NW Pacific Park Lane
Bend, OR 97701

Contact

Sue Jorgenson, Youth Recreation Manager
Phone: 541/388-7275
Fax: 541/388-5429

Description

To ensure that children in the Bend community have quality options before and after school each day, the Bend Park and Recreation District sponsors a program called KIDS INC at seven area elementary schools that is open to students in kindergarten through fifth-grade.

During the school year, KIDS INC provides children with a safe, enriching recreation program conducive to learning and social interaction. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests and to develop friendships, a sense of independence, and self-confidence. KIDS INC is available from 7 a.m. to8:45 a.m. and from 3:15 p.m. to 6 p.m. on regular school days. On early release days, the program is available at the time children are released from school. Time spent at KIDS INC affords students opportunities to cook, construct, explore science, play games, participate in sports, and hear guest speakers. The program does not have a specific tutoring or homework component, but if students want to do homework or if a parent makes a special request, a space is always available. The driving idea behind KIDS INC is that kids need time to make choices for themselves.

Staff at KIDS INC are not required to be certified educators, although many have backgrounds in education, recreation, or a related field. All staff are required to attend a formal training at the beginning of each school year, and to participate in regular inservice trainings throughout the year. Topics of training emphasis include leadership, safety, developmentally appropriate practice, customer service, and purposeful program planning. All staff are screened to ensure that they have no criminal history and an up-to-date first aid/CPR certification. KIDS INC works to hire only people who are genuinely interested in providing children with quality recreational, social, and educational experiences.

Children who participate in KIDS INC represent the full spectrum of the community. Some come from well-to-do families that can easily afford the program fee, while others are from homes that need financial assistance either through scholarships or child-care assistance from Adult and Family Services. The bottom line is that no child is ever turned away because of financial reasons.

Because all KIDS INC sites are at schools, a natural collaboration occurs between program staff and school staff. Beyond a sharing of resources, the two parties must have close communication to successfully serve students. If a student is having problems at school, he or she will likely exhibit the same difficulties after school. By discussing the student the program staff can inform the school staff and vice versa. In this way, both KIDS INC and the school can provide the students with the supports necessary for their success.

In addition to KIDS INC, the Bend Park and Recreation District offers a summer enrichment and recreation program called Operation Recreation.

Observed Outcomes

- The staff's modeling of positive interactions teaches students how to build positive relationships with others
- KIDS INC gives participants a sense of belonging
- Students learn empathy and understanding of others, due in part to the inclusion in the program of children with special needs
- Through field trips and community service projects, students gain an increased awareness of their community and the important part they play in it
- Students improve their problem-solving skills, learning how to interact with each other and people rather than spending all their time in front of the TV or computer

Keys to Success

- Make a strong effort to develop and nurture your relationship with all school staff
- Focus on outcome-based program planning
- Constantly work on program improvement through feedback from parents, children, school, and staff
- Allow children the opportunity to make choices while giving them a routine they can depend on

Location

TOGETHER!
Thurston County
221 College Street NE
Olympia, WA 98516-5313

Contact

Earlyse Swift, Executive Director
Phone: 360/493-2230
Fax: 360/493-9247

Description

TOGETHER! is a community coalition effort of Thurston County in northwest Washington that seeks to prevent youth violence, alcohol/drug abuse, and other high-risk youth behaviors through after-school programs. To address this goal, between 1994 and 1997 the coalition launched after-school programs specifically targeting high-risk children in 11 Thurston County communities. The guiding mission of TOGETHER! is to help children be resilient, academically and socially successful, and offer them strategies to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways. Each of the 11 after-school programs provides:

- Tutoring and homework assistance
- Conflict resolution and civil behavior training
- Alcohol and other drug prevention strategies training
- Positive role modeling
- A healthy and safe environment

TOGETHER! is funded through various federal, state, and local grants, and the location and scope of each TOGETHER! program varies. Some programs use school facilities and school bus transportation, but most do not. Some have school personnel who determine what students they serve, while other are drop-in centers. Some run programs beyond after school (e.g., summer), some do not. In essence, TOGETHER! is a community-based effort, not run directly by schools but is successful only when the community and the school partner with each other and are committed to it. Each site has the assistance of a school staff person who is appointed as the liaison between the school and the program. In addition, it is imperative that every building principal and school counselor must be in favor of and supportive of the program.

Following is a description of one TOGETHER! site.

Kids' Place is an after-school and summer program in Rochester, Washington, which is held at the R.O.O.F. (Rochester Organization Of Families) Community Resource Center. The program, which has been operating for nearly four years, specifically targets at-risk children in grades one through six. The approximately 50 children who participate daily (and also in the summer) commit to attending at least four out of five school days per week. All of the children are referred by Rochester school teachers or counselors. The criteria for including a child in the program specifies that they come from a low-income home and are classified as being at-risk. Accordingly, children are "at-risk" if one or more of the following scenarios applies: 1) no supervision at home after school, 2) exposure to drug and alcohol abuse or violence, 3) poor school attendance, 4) single-parent home, 5) low self-esteem, 6) poor peer relationships, or 7) low academic skills. Kids' Place staff work very closely with teachers to ensure that each child's needs are met. Once selected, the child signs a commitment form and their parent signs a permission slip and a student information release form, which the school keeps on file.

To facilitate smooth transitions between school and the program, R.O.O.F. contracts with the school bus company to transport participants to and from Kids' Place each day (there is no access to public transportation in this rural area). Though this proves to be a significant expense for the program (approximately $12,000 annually), it is the only way they have found to guarantee the attendance of these high-risk children.

Each day, the children have snacks, receive homework help, participate in recreational activities, and work on arts and crafts projects. They may also participate in a violence prevention workshop or home economics activity. There are weekly sessions concerning drug and alcohol awareness, conflict resolution skill building, self-esteem improvement, and personal hygiene. The children are also treated to monthly field trips to places where they might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit. For example they have gone to the beach, park and zoo, and have also gone swimming and skating. Groups such as DARE, Washington State University Extension-Master Gardeners, and Community Youth Services-Readiness to Learn also volunteer their services for the program. Family nights, a time when families enjoy a meal and activities together at the R.O.O.F. Community Resource Center, are another regular event at Kids' Place. It has become a privilege for students to be participants in the program.

The program relies on volunteers as well as staff to succeed. Many teens from the local high school give their time to help with tutoring. Staff at Kids' Place includes the program coordinator, an AmeriCorps member, a program assistant, and three teens who are participants in a local job-training program for low-income teens (their salaries are paid by another community agency). Teachers and school counselors fill out monthly evaluations concerning each participating child. These evaluations are then used by program staff to determine where they are making a positive difference in the lives of the children they serve, and

also for future funding options. Kids' Place staff attend school conferences and also meet weekly to discuss the program and current issues. In addition, the program and its budget are evaluated annually to determine how services can be improved.

For more information about Kids' Place, please contact Linda Clark, Director of R.O.O.F., at 360/273-6375.

Observed Outcomes

- Children are participating in a structured program in a safe, supervised environment
- Children look forward to coming each day
- School personnel report that many of the children attending the program have shown improvement in their school performance
- Parents of those children attending Kids' Place report improvements in behavior at home
- School bus drivers report that many participants have shown improvement in their behavior
- Teen volunteers feel a sense of community involvement and appreciate an opportunity to positively influence a younger child

Keys to Success

- Develop a strong partnership with the school, local businesses, and community organizations
- Ensure that communication between parents, school staff, and program staff is open and frequent
- Show appreciation to school staff, volunteers, and others involved in the program with some form of recognition (e.g., thank you notes, recognition ceremony, media coverage, etc.)
- Enlist a core group of people that includes representatives of the school staff, law enforcement, churches, and local community members to advise the program
- Provide qualified supervision during operation of the program
- Provide training for staff and volunteers

Appendix A: Web Sites

The following list details a number of Web sites that provide information relevant to planning and implementing an after-school program.

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (http://www.mott.org)
The foundation works in partnership with the Federal Department of Education on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Project. Hosts "Mott Afterschool," a national e-mail discussion group created to share ideas, approaches, and strategies for improving and sustaining quality after-school programs.

Department of Education (http://www.ed.gov)

- **The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education** (http://pfie.ed.gov)
  Increases opportunities for families to be more involved in their children's learning at school and at home. Uses family-school-community partnerships to strengthen schools and improve student achievement.

- **The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program** (http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC)
  More information on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, including grant applications, specific requirements, and research reports, is available on the program Web site (above) or by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

ExplorNet (http://www.explornet.org/links/after.html)
Provides links to a variety of after-school related sites for kids, parents, and teachers.

Foundations (www.foundations-inc.org)
Currently provides comprehensive before-and after-school educational and cultural enrichment activities for children and youth at numerous urban schools in the northeastern United States. Based within the school building, the program operates outside of school hours and during the summer. Expansion throughout the country is anticipated during the next few years.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (http://www.fightcrime.org)
A national anticrime organization led by more than 400 police chiefs, sheriffs, police association presidents, prosecutors, and survivors of violent crime.

National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE) (http://NAPEhq.org)
A national membership organization devoted solely to the mission of providing leadership in the formation and growth of effective partnerships that ensure success for all students.

National Center for Community Education (http://www.nccenet.org/)
Promotes community education by providing leadership training to people who are interested in community schools, as well as leadership training to further the development and skills of those implementing community education.

National Institute on Out of School Time
Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College
(http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/index.html)
The National Institute on Out-of-School Time's mission is to improve the quantity and quality of school-age care programs nationally by concentrating in five primary areas: research; education and training; consultation; program and community development; and public awareness.

National Youth Development Information Center (http://www.nydic.org)
Offers information on evaluation, research, and funding for youth development programs. The Web site also includes links to publications and youth-related statistics.

Appendix B: Selected Resources

- ***School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual for the 90s and Beyond***, by Michelle Seligson and Michael Allenson
- ***Youth Programs: Promoting Quality Services*** by Susan R. Edginton and Christoher Edginton
- ***By Design: A New Approach to Programs for 10-15 Year Olds*** published by Work/Family Directions
- ***Kid's Time: A School-Age Care Program Guide*** developed by the California Department of Education

  (These resources are available through School-Age NOTES, PO Box 40205, Nashville, TN 37204-0205. For a free catalog call 615/242-8464.)
- ***Community Schools: Linking, Home, School and Community*** by Larry E. Decker and Mary Richardson Boo, 1996
- ***School Community Centers: Guidelines for Interagency Planners*** by Joseph Ringer, Jr. and Larry E. Decker, 1995
- ***Putting the Pieces Together: Comprehensive School-Linked Strategies for Children and Families*** published by the U.S. Department of Education, 1996

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