

A CLOSER LOOK @ Afterschool Programs



Educational Service District 113

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Introduction

Millions of children return to an empty home after school. When the school bell rings, the anxiety for parents often just begins. They worry about whether their children are safe and whether they are doing their homework. In response to these pressing concerns, many communities have created afterschool programs to keep children and youth out of trouble and engaged in activities that help them learn. Recent polls have found overwhelming adult support of afterschool programs for children in their communities.

However, a chronic shortage of quality afterschool programs exists. According to parents, the need far exceeds the current supply. One recent study found that twice as many parents of elementary and middle school students wanted afterschool programs than are currently available.

ESD 113 funds 17 afterschool programs through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. More than 2,000 students participate in these programs. Evaluations and teacher reports reveal positive results in behavior and achievement for students who regularly attend these 21st Century afterschool programs.

“Public schools, working with community partners, are the best place for afterschool programs. Not only are they convenient and reach the most children, but they are at the center of the community and in a great position to offer

ESD 113's 21st Century Community Learning Centers

ESD 113's 21st Century Community Learning Centers provide programs for students after school that:

- Increase student academic performance in the core academic subjects of reading and mathematics.
- Provide health and safety programs in the afterschool environment and reduce substance abuse and school violence.
- Enhance parents' abilities to assist their children in being successful in school and build stronger families.
- Provide community connections that enhance student empowerment in the school and community and that foster character development and civic involvement.



high-quality learning opportunities in a safe place,” Richard W. Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education and a strong supporter of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, said.

“Why are afterschool programs so important?” Riley asked. “Because children’s minds don’t close down at 3 p.m., and neither should their schools.”

The purpose of this closer look at afterschool programs is to present positive research and examples illustrating the potential of quality afterschool activities to keep children safe, out of trouble and learning. Included are descriptions of exemplary programs, lists of key components of high-quality programs, advice

on creating and running successful programs and information about creating partnerships to fund programs.

A Closer Look @ Afterschool Programs offers:

- Brief background information,
- Items you can use as you lead discussion with staff and others in your community,
- Materials you can use in your district communication efforts,
- Summaries of the overwhelming volume of information available about afterschool programs,
- Guides for creating, running, sustaining and evaluating your afterschool programs, and
- Resources for additional information and assistance.

Voters see afterschool programs as necessity

Voters want the new Congress and their newly elected state and local officials to increase funding for afterschool programs, according to a public opinion survey conducted November 7 and 8, 2006. Developed by Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates, Inc. for the Afterschool Alliance, the poll found that 72 percent of voters agree that “our newly elected public officials in Congress should increase funding for afterschool programs,” and just 24 percent disagree.

When asked if they’d support “increased funding for afterschool programs even if it leads to a tax increase,” 69 percent of voters said they want funding to increase. Seventy-three percent want their newly elected state and local officials to provide more funds for afterschool programs.

“Voters know that afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They voted for change last week, and now they want the officials they elected to invest in the future by making quality afterschool programs available to all children and families.”

Despite an agreement embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act for steady increases in afterschool funding, federal support has been slowly eroding for five years. As a result, many states were unable to make new grants to afterschool programs last year.

Other findings from the new survey:

□ Eighty-two percent of voters agree that there should be some type of organized activity or safe place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn (66 percent strongly agree).

- Support for afterschool crosses party and ideological lines. Eighty-eight percent of Democrats, 84 percent of Independents and 76 percent of Republicans agree on the need for an organized activity or safe place for children and teens, as do 70 percent of conservative men.
- Two in three voters (65 percent) say that afterschool programs “are an absolute necessity” for their community. Seventy-eight percent of Democratic women, 60 percent of Republican women and 96 percent of African American voters agree with that statement.
- When told that kids in afterschool programs are less likely to get involved in criminal activity, use drugs or alcohol, become teen parents and drop out of school, 89 percent of voters – including 85 percent of Republicans, 86 percent of men, 88 percent of people who attend a religious service every week, and 85 percent of Bush voters – say afterschool programs are very (66 percent) or somewhat (23 percent) important.

“Voter support for afterschool programs is broad, deep and enduring,” Grant added.

“Americans recognize that these programs provide tremendous benefits. Lawmakers should pay attention.

The federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative is badly underfunded and, with the exception of California, few states are doing as much as they could to support afterschool programs. The result is that too many students are alone and unsupervised – and at risk – each afternoon when the school day ends. Changing that



is a high priority for voters, and it should be a high priority for lawmakers as well.”

A web-based survey of afterschool program leaders, released by the Afterschool Alliance in October, found that many programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet the demand in their communities. Respondents said budget cuts and stagnation are taking a toll on programs and the youth and families they serve. Providers report that future funding is insecure, and many have already been forced to make painful cuts. The program survey also found that afterschool programs are serving a high need population, and serving more children than expected.

Some 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders in this country take care of themselves after the school day ends, including almost four million middle school students in grades six to eight. The parents of 15.3 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is funded by federal grants awarded through the U.S. Department of Education to state educational agencies, which then award grants to eligible entities.

Program Description

This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program:

- Helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math;
- Offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and
- Offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Types of Projects

Each eligible entity that receives an award from the state may use the funds to carry out a broad array of before school and afterschool activities (including those held during summer recess periods) to advance student achievement. These activities include:

- Remedial education activities and academic enrichment learning programs, including those which provide additional assistance to students to allow the students to improve their academic achievement;
- Mathematics and science education activities;
- Arts and music education activities;
- Entrepreneurial education programs;
- Tutoring services, including those provided by senior

- citizen volunteers, and mentoring programs;
- Programs that provide afterschool activities for limited English proficient (LEP) students and that emphasize language skills and academic achievement;
- Recreational activities;
- Telecommunications and technology education programs;
- Expanded library service hours;
- Programs that promote parental involvement and family literacy;

- Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled to allow them to improve their academic achievement;
- Drug and violence prevention programs;
- Counseling programs; and
- Character education programs.

For information about the 21st Century Community Learning Centers funded through ESD 113, contact Erin Riffe at eriffe@esd113.k12.wa.us or (360) 464-6849.

Facts, facts & more facts

Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement.

- More than 28 million children today have parents who work outside the home.¹
- As many as 15 million kids have no place to go once the school day ends.²
- Studies show that students involved in afterschool programs get better grades, attend school more and have improved behavior. They express greater hopes for the future and more interest in school.³
- Teens who participate in afterschool are less likely to skip class, use marijuana and other drugs, smoke, drink alcohol or engage in sexual activity.⁴
- Two-thirds of Americans say that it is difficult to find programs in their communities and that not enough programs are available.⁵
- About 13 percent of children and adolescents are now seriously overweight.⁶ Afterschool programs can provide physical activity and reinforce healthy behavior.⁷

Sources:

1 U.S. Department of Labor

2 U.S. Census Bureau, Urban Institute estimate, 2000

3 "Extra Benefits Tied to Extracurriculars," Education Week, October 2000

4 YMCA of the USA, March 2001

5 Afterschool Alliance, Mott/JCPenney Afterschool Poll, July 2001

6 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999

7 "Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports: A Report to the President From the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education," Fall 2000

For more information, visit <http://www.afterschoolnow.org>, a project of the Afterschool Alliance.

The afterschool hours in America

- More than 14 million school age children (25%) are on their own after school. Among them are more than 40,000 kindergarteners. (*America After 3 PM, May 2004*)
- The parents of more than 28 million school-age children work outside the home. (*U.S. Department of Labor*)
- Only 6.5 million K-12 children (11%) participate in afterschool programs. An additional 15 million would participate if a quality program were available in their community. (*America After 3 PM, May 2004*)
- The hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. (*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2002*)
- Nine in 10 Americans want all children and teens to have some type of organized activity or safe place to go after school. (*Election Eve Poll, November 2004*)
- More than half of voters (55 percent) think that there are not enough afterschool programs available for children in America today. (*Afterschool Alliance Poll, September 2003*)

Afterschool Programs Benefit Youth, Families & Communities

- Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and they are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity. (*YMCA of the USA, March 2001*)
- Parents in New York City said that their child's afterschool program helped them balance work and family life (*Policy Studies Associates, Inc., February 2001*):
 - 60 percent said they missed less work than before because of the program.
 - 59 percent said it supported them in keeping their jobs.
- Students in a statewide program in California improved their standardized test scores (SAT-9) in both reading and math by percentages almost twice that of other students and also had better school attendance. The program cut high school dropout by 20%. (*University of California Irvine, May 2001 and March 2006*)

- Boys and girls in the Quantum Opportunities afterschool program were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half times more likely to go on to further education after high school than their peers. (*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000*)
- A Brandeis University study estimates that decreased worker productivity due to stress and absenteeism caused by issues related to afterschool care arrangements costs employers \$496.00 to \$1,984.00 per employee, per year, depending on the employee's annual salary. (*Community, Families and Work Program at Brandeis University, 2004*)
- Students (pre-k through 8th grade) in The After-School Corporation (TASC) supported afterschool programs improved their math scores and regular school day attendance compared to non-participants. High school level afterschool participants passed more Regent exams and earned more high school credits than non-participants. (*Policy Studies Associates, July 2004*)
- Eighty-seven percent of Citizen Schools' eighth grade participants were promoted to tenth grade on time, while only seventy-four percent of non-participants achieved that objective. This is critical, since earning promotion to tenth grade on-time is a key predictor of high-school graduation (i.e., preventing drop-out).

What parents say

Parents have said that the afterschool program in which their children participated helped them balance work and family life:

- 94% said the program was convenient;
- 60% said they missed less work than before because of the program;
- 59% said it supported them in keeping their job; and
- 54% said it allowed them to work more hours.

Source: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., "Evaluation Results from TASC After-School Programs' Second Year," February 2001.

These facts come from Lights On Afterschool sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance. For more information visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>.

Eight keys to a successful expanded-day program

“Nothing can replace quality instruction during the school day. But when the day isn’t long enough, here is a formula you can use to stretch it,” according to Dan Owens, principal, and Nancy Vallercamp, vice-principal, at Union House Elementary School in Sacramento, California. They wrote about the success of their afterschool program for the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

The Union House Elementary School’s expanded-day program provides a year round, daily afterschool home to more than 300 students. For many of them, the school day starts with breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and concludes at 6:00 p.m. Their afterschool instruction supports and expands the classroom curriculum and consists of:

- Homework assistance;
- Literacy and math instruction based on state and district standards and benchmarks;
- Accelerated learning for targeted at-risk students;
- Healthy snacks; and
- Enrichment activities that include fine arts, music, drama, dance, foreign language, computers, and cooking.

“There is no special secret to our program’s success,” Owens and Vallercamp said. “Virtually any school can achieve and maintain a quality after-school program by following these eight essential keys.”

1. Identify real needs.
Once we began discussions regarding what our school needed to help all children succeed, it was clear that closing the achievement gap at all grade levels was front

Afterschool programs promote success by:

- ❑ Building meaningful relationships between kids and caring adults outside of their families, providing positive role models.
- ❑ Engaging students in a wide variety of experiential activities that give them a chance to apply what they learn in school.
- ❑ Teaching self-reflection, efficacy, planning, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.
- ❑ Convening a group of peers who have positive aspirations.
- ❑ Increasing school-bonding for kids in school-based afterschool programs.
- ❑ Providing homework help and tutoring.
- ❑ Serving as a link between families, schools and communities.

Source: Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success, a report commissioned by the Nellie May Education Foundation

and center. We had a hard-working staff who were already maximizing their classroom instructional time. What else could we do? We obviously had a real need for more instructional time than was available during the school day.

2. Share the vision.
With your real needs identified, the next step is to create a vision for how those needs will be met. Because this vision is important for garnering needed program support, it should be one that everybody – parents, instructional staff, support staff, and the community – can easily identify with. Above all, keep it simple.
3. Foster staff ownership.
Staff involvement is critical to the success of any after-school program. What we looked for in all of those we hired was an understanding of our students and a desire to support our efforts to close the achievement gap.
4. Invest in staff development.
Providing staff development is critical to the success of any afterschool program.
5. Create community partnerships.
With a strong partnership base, it will be easier to expand

program funding through corporate and individual sponsors.

6. Link learning to state standards.
“We believe that aligning our program to state standards has had a significant impact on the success of our students, as measured by statewide standardized testing,” Owens and Vallercamp said.
7. Measure and share results.
Track the impact of an expanded-day program by measuring attendance, behavior, academic grades, and standardized testing growth.
8. Involve the community.
The addition of an expanded-day program can draw a community closer together and cause the success of a school to be noticed.
“We believe that our expanded-day program has played an important role in its primary goal of helping to close the achievement gap. While nothing can take the place of outstanding instruction during the regular school day, we have met the needs of students who have limited support at the end of the day with a program that continues to have a significant, positive academic impact,” Owens and Vallercamp concluded.

What to look for in quality afterschool programs

Ask these questions on your visit to the program:

- ❑ What qualifications do the staff and director have? What on-going training are staff required to attend, and are staff encouraged to attend trainings offered by professionals in the field of school-age care? Are staff specifically trained to work with this age group?
- ❑ How does the program's environment look? Are there separate areas for different age or interest groups? Are there areas for kids to have some private space? Is it generally clean and orderly? Are you inclined to stay?
- ❑ What types of activities are planned for the kids? Is there good balance between indoor/outdoor, large group/small group, active/quiet, and staff-directed/child-directed activities? Is there time for kids to just "hang" out? Are activities planned to meet the development needs of all children in the program? Will the program meet the needs and interests of your particular child?
- ❑ What are the program philosophies and goals? Do these match your ideas? Ask to have a copy of the program's handbook to check out all the important information on billing, payments, pick-up, safety, etc.
- ❑ What is the staff-to-child ratio? The ratio should never exceed 15-to-1. Lower ratios (10-to-1) promote higher quality standards.
- ❑ What is the rate of staff turnover? Continual changes in staff can create program instability.
- ❑ What meals or snacks are served? Are they nutritious and well balanced? Is there enough

food served to meet the needs of this age group?

- ❑ Do they have a state-issued DSHS license that is current? (Note: Programs that are run by Park and Recreation Departments or school districts are exempt from licensing but should meet basic health and safety standards.)
- ❑ Will the director give you names of parents in the program to call and ask questions? Do they allow open visits by parents?
- ❑ What is the program's discipline policy? Does this fit into your ideas and beliefs? If your child has special needs in this area, will they be met by the program?
- ❑ What is your child's first impression of the program? What is your first impression?

Is the overall atmosphere and sound of the kids and staff a happy and inviting sound? Are they having fun?

- ❑ What are transportation policies? What vehicles do they use?
- ❑ What community resources does the program utilize? Quality programs get out in their community and regularly invite featured speakers to visit.
- ❑ What are the policies on TV viewing? Quality programs use the TV for special occasions only.

Compiled by School's Out
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323-2396. Web site: <http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org>.

Why mentors?

- Students provided with one-on-one mentoring improve academic performance, are more likely to prepare for college, are more likely to attend college and remain longer in college. (*Mentoring Adolescents: What Have We Learned?*, June 1999)
- Mentoring can help young people address problems such as: negative feelings about themselves (55%), poor relationships with family members (49%), poor grades (42%), hanging out with the wrong crowd (41%) and getting into trouble at school (36%). (*Mentoring Matters: A National Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People*, June 1999)
- Forty-five percent of mentored students grow up in families with serious financial problems. (*Mentoring Matters: A National Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People*, June 1999)
- Sixty-five percent of mentored students were judged by their mentors as motivated to be good students. (*Mentoring Matters: A National Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People*, June 1999)
- According to teachers in a Big Brothers Big Sisters study in 1999:
 - 64% of mentored students developed more positive attitudes toward school
 - 58% achieved higher grades in social studies, languages and math
 - 60% improved relationships with adults
 - 56% improved relationships with peers
 - 55% were better able to express their feelings
 - 64% developed higher levels of self-confidence
 - 62% were more likely to trust their teachers

Source: Education Commission of the States

Boistfort afterschool program

Focus is on homework, fun & community service

Making scarves for cancer victims or napkin holders for Mother's Day presents and baking cookies and other goodies are all part of the afterschool program in the Boistfort School District in rural Lewis County.

Traditional homework comes first, but Shari Watt, site coordinator for the program, said involving parents and members of the local community is important too.

A cancer survivor, members of a local Grange and Lewis County Sheriff Steve Mansfield have all had a hand in providing information or instruction for the approximately 40 Boistfort kindergarten through eighth grade students who participate in the afterschool program.

Watt said participation is strongest in the lower grades with only about a dozen sixth, seventh and eighth grade students involved in the program. Even so, the participation level is about 50 percent of the entire student body in the K-8 school.

Program components

"Homework comes first, then games and crafts," said Watt, who has been site coordinator for over two years and has worked in the program for more than six years. The program is now funded by its second grant through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative.

Watt said the idea of having the kids make scarves for cancer patients came from a school staff member who is a cancer survivor. The scarves come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some knitted, some crocheted and others made of fleece.

Sheriff Mansfield became involved as part of a "Lights On Afterschool" event in Boistfort. Watt said the sheriff brought a positive message about safety and making good choices that was well received.

Napkin holders, birdhouses, and other wood working projects are created with the assistance of members of the Baw Faw Grange who provide an afterschool workshop for Boistfort students twice a month. Watt said the kids are enthusiastic and the program is easy to administer because the Grange hall is within walking distance of the school grounds.

Making scarves and woodworking projects help the students with math skills, which was the featured subject during the first quarter of the school year.

"We played a lot of math games after homework was done, including kits provided by ESD 113 called Box Cars and One-eyed Jacks," Watt said. Another popular game is "Value Math". It was created by a

retired Shelton teacher and according to Watt "is kind of like Bingo."

Raising funds

A major effort associated with afterschool tutoring in Boistfort is a drive to make the program financially self sufficient. Even though more than two years remain of the current 21st Century grant, Watt said school leaders are looking ahead to the day when they may not have this funding.

She said fundraising is tough in a remote school district which is largely agricultural, with a little timber, and no real business base. That has forced fundraisers to contact businesses in Chehalis and Centralia in an attempt to raise the money needed for items as diverse as ingredients for bake sale goodies to orange hunting vests for playground attendants.

Schedule

From an operational standpoint, Boistfort runs a traditional program, with after school sessions from 2:35 to 5:30 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. Snacks and recess come first, followed by homework and then games, crafts or community service projects.

Kindergarten through third grade students are divided by grade level and fourth through eighth grade students are divided into multi-age groups. There are six groups total, with an adult tutor for each group.

Watt said her program enjoys tremendous support from the school district, to the point where many classrooms at the school are available for after school groups. She also said that, because the district does not provide transportation for the program, there is daily contact with parents.

"Teachers appreciate the program, and they are really good to work with," Watt said.

Boistfort has an open enrollment policy for the afterschool program, with a requirement that students attend at least 30 days per year of tutoring. There is also a four-week summer program in July, which Watt said was attended by 25 students this past year. The summer program includes breakfast and lunch, available to any of the district's students whether they attend the program or not, and operates from 8 a.m. to noon. There is no charge to parents for either program.

For more information contact Watt at dswatt@yahoo.com or (360) 245-3343.

Different ages need different programs

Elementary students (Ages 5-10)

Characteristics:

- High energy and need lots of activity
- Practicing large muscle and fine motor skills
- Developing physical flexibility
- Growing attention span
- Respond to simple rules and limits
- Eager to learn
- Creative
- Beginning to reason
- Feel their ideas count
- Easily hurt and insulted
- Identify with the family
- Eager to please
- Enjoy small groups
- Emphasize fairness

Programs should offer:

- Wide variety of activities and choices, but offered under a set routine
- Frequent individual interaction with adults
- Games with simple rules
- Quiet areas as well as noisy areas
- Outside experiences
- Imaginative play opportunities
- Some clear responsibilities like clean-up
- Projects that apply school day lessons to family and community
- Opportunities to read aloud, silently, and to talk about books and ideas
- Matching, ordering and sorting activities
- Opportunities to apply arithmetic problems in real-world ways
- Small experiments with everyday products
- Nature walks and talks
- Opportunities to work with a variety of materials for projects
- Physical activities that do not emphasize competition, such as jump rope, marbles, jacks and kites
- Music, dance and drama opportunities
- Opportunities to try experiences from diverse cultures

Preadolescents & Teens (Ages 10-14)

Characteristics:

- High energy and need lots of activity
- Like to achieve and be seen as competent
- Seem inconsistent in ideas and moods
- Use logic and reasoning
- Think beyond the immediate experience
- Can exchange ideas
- Seek independence
- Want voice in decisions
- Feel awkward and embarrassed in some situations
- Need praise and approval
- Identify strongly with peers
- Interested in experimentation

Programs should offer:

- Wide variety of options
- Connections to real-world experiences
- Opportunities to interact in large and small groups as well as individual recognition
- Experiences that explore ethics and values with respected adults
- Opportunities to serve others
- Physical activity
- Opportunities for decision making and leadership
- Opportunities to apply school day lessons through performances and projects
- Experiences emphasizing reasoning and problem solving in art, science, mathematics
- Quiet times for homework with adult help and peer help when needed
- Games that provide opportunities to practice basic skills, such as chess, checkers, puzzles, word games
- Wide range of reading activities with discussion of the ideas found in the books
- Experiences built on a wide diversity of cultures and ethnic groups

Teens (Ages 14-18)

Characteristics of teens:

- Concerned about body and appearance
- Highly developed motor skills
- Worry about clumsiness, illness and diet
- Think abstractly
- Learn by doing
- Less influenced by parents, more influenced by peers
- Need and demand more freedom and privacy
- Mask true feelings
- Need praise and adult recognition
- Admire heroes that demonstrate characteristics of friendship and romance
- Recognize diversity of ideas

Programs should offer teens:

- Presentations and projects that involve appearance
- Opportunities to discuss and address physical risk, including smoking, drugs, drinking, and sexual activity
- Opportunities to tutor younger children
- Opportunities to show competence in a public setting
- Individual projects as well as teamwork in small and large groups
- Substantial choice with clear limits
- Opportunities to express feelings through projects and activities
- One-on-one opportunities to talk with adults
- Loud and quiet areas and activities
- Discussions of diverse ideas and opinions with adults and peers
- Specific help with skill areas that are causing problems
- Opportunities to catch up or move ahead with academic interests
- Opportunities to work on school day projects and papers with library and Internet support
- Problem-solving and reasoning skills practice

Source: Afterschool Alliance

Considerations for Middle School and High School Programs

- Involve the students. Make sure they are represented on your planning team and advisory committee. Make sure you are representing the kids you most want to reach, not the ones who are always involved.
- Make frequent use of surveys (with some open-ended questions) to make more informed programming choices. Ask students what they want. For example, a new movie may spark interest in learning to fence, or do martial arts.
- Find out what the students want your afterschool program to be called. You might think the name you and several other adults came up with is clever, but they might think it's hokey and be less inclined to attend. More choice at this stage is better.
- Allow for freedom in registration. Perhaps use a semester-long "membership" or some other system that allows the students some freedom in whether or not they attend.
- Be aware of conflicting activities. Communication with the day school staff on sports or other afterschool functions is critical.
- Offer a wide array of recreational activities, which are particularly appealing to older students.
- Develop mentorship opportunities in which older students pair up with younger students. For example, high school students can mentor elementary and middle school students; middle school students can mentor younger elementary students. Mentoring is a win-win activity – both for the mentor and the younger student.
- Create opportunities for service learning projects. Teens indicate a strong preference for helping others. Have them brainstorm areas in which they feel they can "make a difference" in the community.
- Provide opportunities for students to help with your program. Older students often can create meaningful and creative brochures, Web sites, public service announcements, and video production. Look

(Continued on page 10.)

Yelm afterschool program

Support & choices for middle school students

Yoga classes, guitar lessons, and movie making are just some of the activities used to lure students to and keep them interested in the afterschool tutoring program at Yelm Middle School that serves students in the seventh through ninth grades.

Middle & High School . . .

(Continued from page 9.)

for collaborative opportunities with local media outlets.

- Provide outdoor team-building activities. Such activities teach cooperation, encourage creative problem-solving, and provide new opportunities for leadership – plus they're popular with teens.
- Keep in close touch with counselors and school staff to recruit those kids most at risk of "turning off" from school or dropping out. Offer parents "scholarships" for the students to your program.
- Work with school staff to foster independent study programs for students who may think more effectively later in the day or who may prefer an independent project that generates more individualized learning.
- Make flexible schedules of activities for students who work part-time or more.
- Provide in-depth information about post-high-school opportunities (such as college or vocational schools) as well as detailed information on the application process, admissions test preparation, and available financial aid.

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

"It is challenging to convince struggling students to add an additional two hours to their school day by working with us after school," said Andra Kelley-Batstone, who until recently was site coordinator for the program and is a counselor at Yelm Middle School. The new coordinator is Jenne Bennett who took over in November.

The program is funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant through ESD 113 and is somewhat unique in that its focus is strictly middle school students. Many 21st Century grants are awarded to smaller districts where the funding is used for programs serving all grades.

"Our students continue to attend the afterschool program for the adult support and enrichment activities. Despite the unwritten rule of adolescence to avoid admitting anything homework related is fun, Yelm students let staff know they enjoy the program," said Kelley-Batstone.

Although the district uses non-traditional activities to recruit and keep students in the afterschool program, the focus in Yelm remains on academics. Sessions begin when school lets out at 2:20 p.m., and the first hour is spent on homework for all students achieving at all levels. This way

everyone is learning and growing and no student is singled out as struggling," said Kelley-Batstone. The second hour is where the fun comes in.

Some parents insist that their children spend both hours on homework, but Kelley-Batstone said that sometimes can be counterproductive.

"If a student has already 'checked out' academically during the school day, it is questionable whether two solid hours of homework will help," she said. "Sometimes it is better to have an hour of homework and a second hour of activities, but this depends on the student. We try to be as flexible as possible in getting each student to reach his or her academic potential."

Another way to keep the students coming back is to let them decide, to the extent practical, what the enrichment activities will be. "We try to give students as much decision-making power as possible in planning our quarterly enrichment classes," Kelley-Batstone said.

Yoga classes were continued from last year by popular demand by both male and female students. Guitar lessons were offered last year, when a seventh grade student created and teach the class.

(Continued on page 11.)

“High-quality afterschool programs create connections with the curriculum and instruction offered by the school during regular hours, but they do not duplicate what goes on during the school day. Instead, they offer highly interactive, engaging activities that stress skills acquisition, problem solving, exposure to new experiences and significant relationships with caring adults.”

"Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Yelm . . .

(Continued from page 10.)

“The guitar class was student driven and student taught,” said Kelley-Batstone. “I was there to make sure things were safe and sound, but he (the student teacher) had to write up the lesson plan, and he taught the class. That was pretty exciting.”

The theater is also a major part of the afterschool program in Yelm. Currently there is a movie-making class using digital cameras, and there will be a student-produced play later this year. The kids will be responsible for selecting the play and seeing it through to final production.

Kelley-Batstone said a wide range of enrichment activities is necessary to engage middle school students and make them feel like their time and voice are valued. The program is not like elementary afterschool tutoring where a parent makes the decision whether a youngster attends, and that settles the question. A challenge for parents of many middle school students is getting their sons or daughters to attend.

“We have students with a variety of maturity levels, ability levels, and from three different grades,” Kelley-Batstone said. “We are dealing with adolescents, so we’ve got to have extra energy and humor to keep them inspired and make them want to stay at school for two additional hours and complete assignments with which they are struggling. Offering decision making opportunities and fostering leadership skills keeps our students coming back and allows us to support their academic growth as well as social and emotional development.”

The program is open to all students, Kelley-Batstone said, and more than 100 students have registered with the Yelm program this year. Daily attendance

“ Families able to enroll their children in good programs indicate that their children are safer and more successful in school. These families also develop a greater interest in their children’s learning.”

– “Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs”,
U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice

fluctuates between 30 and 60, and participation changes on a quarter-to-quarter basis as athletic programs move from season to season. The target for the end of the school year is to have 200 students participate out of a middle school enrollment of 640.

“The 21st Century afterschool program targets high risk students, but we have found that all students benefit from enrichment activities and structured homework support after school,” she said. Many of the students are referred to the program by teachers, counselors and their own peers.

21st Century afterschool participants in Yelm utilize the activity buses provided by Yelm Community Schools for transportation home. Despite the late arrival home and “skeleton routes,” the majority of students in the afterschool program rely on busing to get home.

The Yelm program’s professional staff consists of a site coordinator and three middle school teachers who serve as academic coaches.

“This is pretty outstanding, because what we pay them is far less than their teaching salaries,” said Kelley-Batstone. In addition, there is collaboration with the Indian education coordinator, who also offers homework help in Yelm.

An additional part of the staffing mix is made up of volunteers, both adults from the community and high school students.

Kelley-Batstone said the program uses a case management approach “to keep students from falling through the cracks.” This

means there is close coordination between the classroom teachers and the site coordinator to make sure work is completed and turned in on time.

“Ideally, every student utilizes the homework support and is motivated to complete his or her assignments. However, not all students are so easily focused. Fostering adult and student relationships with additional mentors in our afterschool program is key to supporting such students,” she said.

There is no specific ratio of teachers to students in the Yelm program, but Kelley-Batstone said Yelm strives not to exceed 20 students per teacher.

Volunteers are in addition to the professional staff, and she said more needs to be done to explain that academic excellence is not a requirement for volunteering.

“We have to do more outreach with parents and community members because a lot of them are nervous and concerned about their own academic skills,” she said. “Volunteers provide the relationship building necessary to inspire student motivation and willingness to try their best. They need contact with people who are fun to get to know and who will help them stay focused. Our adult volunteers serve as mentors guiding students through problem-solving strategies versus simply providing answers.”

For more information, contact Kelley-Batstone at (360) 458-6154 or Bennett at (360) 458-6155.

Potential Partners: Why They Are Interested

Families

Families desire safe places for their children, with supervision by caring individuals after the school day ends and before the workday does. They want afterschool programs to support their children's educational, physical, social and emotional development, a variety of settings that reflect diverse family and community cultures, languages, values and work schedules, and to be included in designing and evaluating programs in which they have a stake.

Consider including:

- Parents
- Youth

Government

Government at all levels is supporting investments in afterschool programming and activities. Partnerships allow governments to enhance services and programs by offering complementary services, such as training, technical assistance and efforts to foster public support. Governments also look to private-sector initiatives and leadership to provide continuity when elected and appointed public-sector leaders change.

Consider including:

- Representatives from state or local agencies that are supporting afterschool programs:
 - 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 - Juvenile justice
 - Child care licensors
 - Food and nutrition programs
 - Child care subsidy administrators
- Representatives from the governor's office (or from the office of city or county executives)

- Children or Youth Cabinet
- Governor's policy advisors
- Representatives from Indian tribes
- Representatives from communities that are focused on afterschool programs

Educators

Educators want children to succeed in school and see afterschool initiatives as one way to help. Afterschool community programs can supplement scarce resources. Educators see afterschool initiatives as a way to bolster student achievement and academic success.

Consider including:

- School superintendents and principals
- School board members
- Representatives from teacher's unions or professional organizations
- State or local Parent-Teacher Association (or other parent organization) members

When resources are scarce . . .

- Look for new resources.
- Partner with another organization to offer the program.
- Scale back the program but still offer it.
- Suggest the program to another organization that can offer it.
- Draw up a concrete plan to offer the program in the near future.

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Child Care Providers

Child care providers strive to offer children safe and enriching environments. Providers seek ways to make their programs responsive to the needs of families while interesting and engaging for the children. Child care providers have resources and practices to share, but can also learn from the growing number of organizations and agencies serving school-age children.

Consider including:

- Program providers
- Large school district providers
- YMCAs
- Boys' and Girls' Clubs

Employers

Addressing the needs of their employees is a way for businesses to attract and retain qualified workers. Employees focused on work and not worried about their children are more productive. Investments in afterschool programs are an investment in the workforce of the future. Long-term well-being depends on the economic viability of their communities, and quality supports and services for children and youth, such as afterschool programs, are an important element of economic vitality.

Consider including:

- State or local Chamber of Commerce
- Other state or local business organizations (e.g., local business roundtable or economic development collaboratives)

Philanthropic Organizations

Philanthropic organizations seek to leverage their investments by fostering systemic

(Continued on page 13.)

Potential Partners . . .

(Continued from page 12.)

changes that may improve the way that states and communities address the needs of children and their families. Philanthropic organizations are expanding and looking for ways to sustain investments in programs for school-age children and youth.

Consider including:

- National or regional foundations with an interest in children and youth
- Local community foundations
- Local United Way organizations

Youth Development Workers

Youth development workers seek to ensure healthy social, emotional and cognitive development of school-age children and youth. Youth development workers find ways to engage youth in activities that help connect them to school and assist with their transition to the labor force.

Consider including:

- Local community-based organizations
- Boys' and Girls' Clubs
- 4H Clubs
- Faith-based organizations
- YMCAs

Community, Youth-Serving and Civic Organizations

Community, youth-serving and civic organizations have been pioneers in creating and expanding quality afterschool initiatives as an important strategy for attracting and retaining businesses; preparing children for a productive future in school and work; reducing future dependence on public assistance; and reducing crime. Their experience, knowledge and know-how can aid

new partners looking to expand or improve afterschool opportunities.

Consider including:

- Representatives from statewide or large membership associations and advocacy groups
 - National School-Age Care Alliance affiliates
 - State Parent-Teacher Associations
- Training and Technical assistance providers
 - Non-profit agencies, universities, intermediary agencies
- Civic organizations
 - Junior League, Rotary, Kiwanis
- Child care resource and referral agencies

Police and Other Law Enforcement Agencies

Police and other law enforcement agencies know that most juvenile crime occurs between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. They see afterschool programs as a way to lower crime rates and provide children and youth with alternatives to risky behaviors.

Consider including:

- Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' state affiliates
- Fraternal Order of Police and other law enforcement civic organizations

Other State and Community Partners

Child welfare authorities, hospitals and clinics, faith-based institutions, local universities and colleges, libraries, arts and cultural institutions, community development groups and local business groups are some of the many potential partners with vested interests in better outcomes for children and youth.

Consider including:

- University and academic staff with an interest in afterschool programs
- Community health providers and hospitals
- Organizations with an interest in substance abuse and violence prevention
- Cultural institutions, museums, libraries

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau

How to decide which audience to reach

It can be argued that the whole community has a stake in the success of your afterschool program. However, for the purpose of effective communication, it is important to “segment” your audience so that you can target your communications and increase the likelihood that the audience will respond to the message.

Consider the primary mission and goals of your program and then use that as a basis for your early communication strategies. To determine which audiences to target first, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which audiences most directly influence or are most directly influenced by the program's mission and current goals?
- Which groups may influence other, more “unapproachable” audiences?
- Which audiences are best reached through communication modes we already possess?

Source: “Beyond the Bell” published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Communication Strategy Checklist

Use the following list of questions to guide the design of your communication strategy. These questions should be answered during the initial planning of the strategy and should be reviewed periodically to ensure that your afterschool program's communications continue to meet the needs of your stakeholders.

Questions about the communication strategy:

- How will we assess the effectiveness of our communication strategy?
- Have we identified all of our audiences?
- Have we targeted all messages appropriately to each audience?
- Have we identified relationships between audiences that may affect how we communicate with them (e.g., calling on one group to influence another)?
- Do we maintain an ongoing record of communications with each audience?
- Do we regularly review our communication strategy to ensure it is still meeting the needs of our audiences?
- Have we given one person or group ultimate responsibility for communications?

Questions about each audience:

- What kinds of information does this group want or need to know about the program?
- How does this group like to receive its information?
- What is this group's association with the program?
- How involved has this group been in the past?
- Does this group have a leader or group of leaders that influences the group's opinions?
- What is the group's familiarity/comfort level with the program?
- What is the level of trust between this group and the program?
- What is the level of support provided by this group to the program?
- From whom is this group most comfortable receiving messages?

Questions about the community as a whole:

- What percentage of the community has school-age children in public schools?
- What percentage of the community has school-age children in private/parochial schools?
- What are the primary languages used in the community?
- What are the primary employers in the community?

- What are the largest and/or most active faith communities, civic organizations, etc., in the community?
- What are the major sources of news/information in the community?

Questions about each outgoing message:

- What do we hope to achieve with this message?
- How will the target group feel upon receiving this message?
- What is the best format for this particular message?
- What language(s) should be used for this message given its audience?
- Does this message have a "hook" that will make the audience more likely to pay attention to it?
- Is this message concise?
- Does this message contain three or fewer main ideas?
- Is this message presented in an appealing, easily understood format?
- Does this message create a visual image that will leave a lasting impression?
- (*For written communications*) What reading level is required for this message? (Some experts suggest that messages sent to parents should be at the fourth- to sixth-grade reading level.)

Questions about each feedback opportunity:

- Have we requested feedback using different formats that respond to the needs/preferences of each group?
- Have we requested feedback in a variety of locations and at a variety of times to take into account the varying needs/preferences of each group?
- Have we demonstrated that we listen carefully and respectfully to all audiences? How?
- Have we used the input of our audiences? How?
- Have we demonstrated to our audiences that their input influenced program decisions? How?

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Community Group Involvement Checklist

Directions: Use this tool with program staff and/or the program's advisory group to help brainstorm ways to promote more involvement. This sheet may be duplicated as needed for each community group.

Community Group: _____

Have we surveyed this community group concerning their program needs? Yes No

Have we surveyed this group about barriers that could impede their involvement in the program? Yes No

Have we taken concrete steps to try to address these barriers? Yes No

If immediate actions to address these barriers are not possible, have we communicated to the group that we have heard its concerns and are working on a solution? Yes No

Have we surveyed this group about what language, format, time, and place are best for communications? Yes No

Are we using this information in our communications with this group? Yes No

Do we actively and consistently solicit feedback from this group? Yes No

Have we provided information to this group on how it can get more involved? Yes No

Have we provided reasons to this group for why they and the program will benefit from their involvement? Yes No

Do we provide training and information to members of this group who get involved in the program? Yes No

Do we provide training and information to staff members on how to interact with volunteers from this group? Yes No

Do we actively and consistently show appreciation to those who get involved in the program? Yes No

Have we taken steps to make the afterschool program an inviting place to be? Yes No

Have we designated a contact person with whom the members of this group feel comfortable communicating? Yes No

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Soliciting support

One of the most effective ways for you to present the views and concerns of your afterschool program is to make personal contacts with key opinion leaders in your community. Here are some tips to make the most of those contacts.

- Know your audience. Make sure you know whom to contact, and how to best reach those people. Don't be discouraged if you can't get the appropriate contact on the phone when you first call. Ask if there is a time when you can call back or make an appointment for a visit. Ask for an e-mail address so that you can send background information.
- Craft your message & have an agenda. When you talk with an opinion leader, be concise and informative.
 - Introduce yourself and why you're calling.
 - Present national statistics showing the value of afterschool programs. (*Use the information in this publication.*)
 - Add local statistics. Also add stories about afterschool programs that demonstrate the positive effects on children and their families.
 - Invite the person to visit your program, and ask to place him or her on the program's mailing list.
 - Conclude and say thank you.
- Follow up with a thank-you note. This reminds the opinion leader of any promises that were made, and it helps solidify your relationship with him or her, which will help when you request your next appointment or assistance down the road.

Mossyrock afterschool program

Students discover that learning can be fun

Afterschool tutoring can be fun. Just ask the participants and staff at Mossyrock Elementary School in eastern Lewis County.

Dozens of hand-made fleece blankets for orphans in Russia and a school library turned into Camp Read-a-Lot are two of many things that make the program something very much out of the ordinary.

“Everything is really hands-on in order to keep the kids entertained and focused without realizing they are learning,” said Katie Fitzhugh, who heads the afterschool program’s staff.

Fitzhugh herself is not a traditional educator. Her studies ended with community college, and she has spent time raising a family.

She said the emphasis from the start has been to make things interesting for the kids. Even the dreaded WASL test has been the basis of fun and games.

Focusing on the WASL

“Last year we had WASL Wednesdays,” Fitzhugh said. On those days, WASL related games were set up for fourth graders to, as Fitzhugh said, “take the edge off” the state test.

“Teachers thought it was a really big hit, and the parents made

sure the kids were there for WASL Wednesday even if they didn’t come to the afterschool program on a day-to-day basis,” she said.

This extra help combined with other innovations in the classroom led to the elementary school receiving a \$25,000 Apple Award last year from OSPI. These awards go to schools with significant increases in the percent of fourth-graders meeting the combined reading, writing and math standards on the WASL from one school year to the next. The students at Mossyrock Elementary got to decide how to spend the money, which had to be used for capital construction projects on school grounds or on other public property in the community.

Having fun learning

The non-traditional aspects of the program have had some unintended consequences.

Fitzhugh said she once received a telephone call from a worried mom who complained that her child came home and said they played all the time during afterschool tutoring.

“That is probably the best compliment anyone could have given my teachers, because the kids don’t realize they are

learning,” Fitzhugh said. “We brought her (the parent) in and let her watch our science and math classes, and she was astonished. She said ‘I’ve never seen so many kids in a classroom having so much fun while learning’.”

Fitzhugh attributes success of the program to “my amazing staff”.

She said the staff of seven coaches and an array of volunteers from the ranks of parents, other relatives, the community, local businesses, service groups and older students are what make the program work.

After school tutoring in Mossyrock is a Monday through Thursday affair during the school year, with an additional four-week morning to early afternoon program in the summer.

Enrollment of second through sixth graders in the school year program was about 50 at the Christmas break this year, down somewhat from the beginning of the school year. Summer school tutoring includes second grade through high school students, and enrollment last summer reached 175.

The afterschool program in Mossyrock is open to all and free to participants, and Fitzhugh said about 90 percent of the students who attend are at-risk or from low income families.

“We try not to put a cap on it,” she said of enrollment. “We really, really don’t want to do that. We want to make sure this program is open and available to all students who are interested in participating.

“The way we do that and still stay within our budget is that we hit our local businesses pretty hard for their help.”

(Continued on page 17.)

“Children, families and communities benefit in measurable ways from high-quality afterschool and extended learning programs. As an alternative to children spending large umbers of hours alone or with peers in inadequately supervised activities, well-planned and well-staffed programs provide safe havens where children can learn, take part in supervised recreation, and build strong, positive relationships with responsible, caring adults and peers.”

— “Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs”, U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice

Mossyrock . . .

(Continued from page 16.)

Gathering support

Community support for after school tutoring in Mossyrock borders on amazing.

When a decision was made to use the sewing of fleece blankets to teach grade school kids the math involved in measuring plus a vocational skill, a local contributor donated all the material and instruction needed to make 60 blankets, which were delivered to children in Russia by a Mossyrock teacher who, before the blanket project was undertaken, had already planned a trip to that country.

"We have been very blessed, and we have a lot of partners. Our program would not be nearly as successful without them," Fitzhugh said. Community support last year reached \$20,000.

Groups such as the Mossyrock Grange and the local Assembly of God Church along with tree farmers and other locals have provided material support and personal assistance for the program. Even the state Department of Natural Resources has gotten into the act by providing volunteer help.

Fitzhugh said curriculum for the afterschool program is developed after determining what the most pressing academic needs are.

"We go to staff meetings and talk to the teachers about where they think particular students need extra help," she said. Once an emphasis is determined, the next step is to see how learning can be made fun. This year, the emphasis is on writing because teachers made it clear they do not have enough time to teach that subject, Fitzhugh explained.

Extending into summer

The summer school program last year was an example of how

the system of turning learning into fun really works. Building on the location of the community, the theme of "Mossyrock Mountaineers" was chosen. A huge tent was erected in the school library and Camp Read-a-Lot was created. The science room became a forest, the math room was the "bait and tackle shop" and reading and writing was done in a "picnic area." Outdoor education included a series of hikes culminating in a trek by 100 students and adults to Mount Rainier.

Fitzhugh said one of the strong selling points for the afterschool program is the fact that young kids, who would otherwise go home alone, need a safe place to be after school. The school year program runs from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and the summer tutoring program is operated on a morning to early afternoon schedule and includes both breakfast and lunch.

According to Fitzhugh, part of the concern for children being unsupervised is the fact that the area from Interstate 5 (Exit 68) east to Packwood was home last year to a large number of registered sex offenders, including several who lived within a mile of Mossyrock Elementary School.

Even with all of the community support, keeping the after school program going at the current level is a major concern. Among other things, the program is in the fifth and final year of a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant through ESD 113.

Fitzhugh said there is some carryover money from the grant and support from the school district, but more revenue will be needed, perhaps from community partners, to maintain the current program.

For more information, contact Fitzhugh at kfitzhugh@mossyrock.wednet.edu or (360) 983-3453.

How to recruit participants for programs

Even with a wonderful set of activities, your program is not a success if nobody attends. Recruitment issues exist at all grade levels. Parents usually will ensure that young children attend. For students in middle or junior high school, consider these ideas.

- Have several students on the program planning board to ensure that offerings pass the "cool and fund to do" test.
- Have participants recruit fellow students. Ask them to design slogans, incentives, posters, PA announcements, etc.
- Allow students to take leadership roles (e.g., making decisions, delegating tasks).
- Create programs in which older students work with younger ones. An older student who has a hard time interacting with peers or adults may get a boost in confidence and communication from working with a younger student.
- Offer programs with a social component. Adolescents tend to focus on social matters.
- Select staff members who understand adolescents and enjoy being with them.
- When planning family activities, be sure to provide time for the young people to interact as a group.
- Offer "grown-up" activities that move students out of a narrow, closed regimen and into the community.
- Offer programs that present grooming tips or that focus on social skills in a non-threatening manner.

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Creating partnerships between afterschool staff & school staff

The key to developing partnerships is having shared information and shared experiences. No one likes to feel “out of the loop” or be the last to find out a key piece of information about a program or student.

Because people gather information in various ways, it’s important to communicate your message in various formats. Good ways to share information with teachers and staff include the following:

- Attend school staff meetings – try to be a regular part of the agenda.
- Eat lunch in the teachers’ lunchroom.
- Host an informational breakfast for school staff. Serve donuts, coffee, and tidbits about the afterschool program.
- Have a column in the daily/weekly/monthly school bulletin about what is happening in the afterschool program.

- Have an afterschool bulletin board on the wall outside the school office or wherever staff sign in and out.
- Select, appoint or hire a liaison (preferably a school faculty member) to interact with school staff.
- Work with the school principal to establish regular meeting times between afterschool and school staff.
- Use available technology (e.g., e-mail, voice mail) to allow afterschool staff to remain in regular communication with school staff.
- Make time to seek out custodians and kitchen staff. Let them know what the program is doing. Ask them whether they are experiencing additional work as a result of the program.

Source: “Beyond the Bell” published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Aligning afterschool activities with the classroom curriculum

In order to focus on improving academic achievement, it is important that the afterschool program and the school day parallel one another with content, as allies not as copies. To determine how well your afterschool program is integrated with the school day, ask:

- Are programs selected and designed based on needs revealed by the school’s student assessments?
- Are programs selected and designed around curriculum guidelines?
- Are programs aligned with standards adopted by the district or state?
- Are programs selected, designed and operated based (at least in part) on teacher feedback?
- Do teachers regularly share the specific needs of students – skills that should be learned more completely – with afterschool staff?
- Do programs include activities (e.g., field trips, student performances, lab experiments, use of community space or resources) that build upon school-day lessons by using the less-restrictive requirements and time constraints available after school?

Source: “Beyond the Bell” published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

How the after-school program can support the school day

A core reason for linking the afterschool program to the regular school day is to promote learning and school success for the children who participate in the program. However, this does not mean replication of the school day.

Teachers and afterschool staff share the same goal of giving students the competence, confidence and character to be successful. Try these strategies to promote links:

- Program staff and teachers communicate any changes they notice in a student’s achievement, behavior or attendance.
- Program participants create a newspaper that includes stories about school and program events.
- Program staff and teachers work together to assess student progress at the end of each marking period.
- Teachers provide information about the curriculum and state/local standards to afterschool staff.
- Teachers present a series of workshops for afterschool staff on successful literacy and math strategies.
- Program staff members plan field trips based on lessons being taught during the school day.
- Teachers provide activities for students to do during tutoring/homework center. Teachers send a list of homework for the day to tutors/homework center instructors. Afterschool staff members provide feedback on student progress with homework.

(Continued on page 19.)

Evaluating your program

Evaluation is the process of analyzing data to assess what works and what does not work in achieving goals. Data collection is part of the process, but, in order to be useful, it has to be accompanied by careful analysis.

Good evaluations start with a set of important questions such as:

- Are we meeting our program's goals?
- Are some activities more effective than others?
- What changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviors will result from program activities?
- Does the funder require any specific information?
- Are some activities more popular than others?
- As a result of all the time and effort everyone has devoted to the program, what difference have we made?

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Supporting the school day . . .

(Continued from page 18.)

- Teachers include the afterschool program in students' individual education plans. Special education teachers work closely with program staff to plan appropriate activities for special-needs students in afterschool programs.
- Program coordinators provide program enrollment forms that homeroom teachers distribute to all students.
- Teachers "recruit" students for the afterschool program who are in danger of being retained.

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Tips for Data Collection

- Collect ONLY the data you will need. For example, if you want to know simply age, grade and ethnicity, do not ask many demographic questions.
- Ask ONLY for data you do not already have. Someone in the school office probably has the name, grade and ethnicity of each student.
- Assign each participant and ID number. Keep data filed by that number. This practice reduces the chance of breaching confidentiality.
- Collect all the information at one time; ask for demographics when students enroll.
- Use multiple-choice rather than open-ended question in surveys. The former are easier than the latter to tabulate and report. ALWAYS provide respondents with an equal number of choices for all questions on the same survey.
- Gain permission from parents to use information about their children. Permission could be integrated without difficulty into the registration process. Stress that information will be aggregated and will not be used to identify individual students.
- Let school personnel know – as early as possible – what data you will need from them.
- Consider purchasing commercial electronic database software to record and monitor pertinent data.

Source: "Beyond the Bell" published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Afterschool Resources

Many groups have developed tools that can help you develop an afterschool program and find funding. Most of this information is easily accessed through organizations' Web sites.

General Information

www.afterschoolalliance.org

This Web site provides up-to-date news on afterschool policy as well as tools and materials that can be used in presentations and meetings. It also has information about starting an afterschool program, finding funding for afterschool and how to get involved in the issue.

www.niost.org

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time focuses on research, policy and practice in its efforts to ensure that all children, youth, and families have access to high-quality programs, activities, and

opportunities during the non-school hours.

www.learningpt.org/gateway/

Learning Point Associates, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, has developed this Web site to streamline the information, resources, and services to help the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) create, improve, and sustain effective programs. This site is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and currently features a guide to resources with links to quality programming, evaluation, funding, afterschool advocacy, summer learning, and youth development resources.

www.afterschoolalliance.org/lights_on/index.cfm

Lights On Afterschool is celebrated nationwide to call attention to the importance

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Resources . . .

(Continued from page 19.)
of afterschool programs for America's children, families and communities.

www.naaweb.org/

The National AfterSchool Association is a professional association dedicated to the development, education, and care of children and youth during their out-of-school hours.

www.schoolsoutwashington.org/

School's Out Washington is a statewide organization focused on building community-based systems to improve the quality and availability of afterschool programs for Washington's school children.

Resources for Parents
www.childcareaware.org

This site offers resources for parents on finding and choosing a child care provider. It also has a newsletter for parents and providers about child development and child care issues.

A Closer Look is a periodic publication of Educational Service District 113.

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“From school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood, and community to community, every afterschool program is different. 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 in session.”

– “Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs”,
U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice

www.npin.org

The National Parent Information Network is a source for research-based information on education. The site's Virtual Library includes extensive resources on afterschool and summer programs, including a downloadable version of a previously held satellite town meeting webcast, links to information on finding or starting an afterschool program and a collection of publications.

www.nochildleftbehind.gov

This Web site describes the components of the No Child Left Behind Act, which was signed into law by President Bush in January 2002. The “For Parents” section offers a variety of resources designed to help parents help their children learn.

Starting or Running an Afterschool Program

www.afterschool.gov

This Web site offers a variety of helpful topics for running an afterschool program, including best practices submitted by afterschool program providers from around the nation.

www.afterschool.org

Promising Practices in Afterschool is a place to find and share ideas that are working in afterschool programs. It has information on curriculum, funding, staffing, evaluating and other areas of interest on afterschool.

www.afterschoolalliance.org

This Web site offers various tools to help communities develop and expand afterschool programs. Check out “Start a Program” and “Program Tools.”

Additional guides on starting an afterschool program are available for a small fee from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (www.ncrel.org/after) and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (www.sedl.org/pubs).

Funding

www.afterschool.gov

Check out “How to Get Money” for an extensive but easy to use database on government resources that support afterschool programs.

www.afterschoolalliance.org

Go to the “Program Tools” section of this site for funding information and links to additional resources.

www.financeproject.org

The Finance Project is a national initiative to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public- and private-sector financing for education, other children's services, and community building and development. The site includes downloadable guides on afterschool funding.

www.ed.gov/programs/21stcccl/index.html

This site offers general information about the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program.