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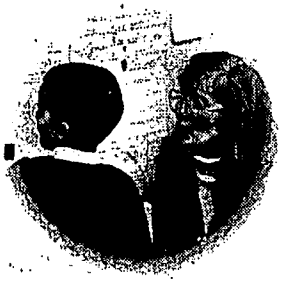
ABSTRACT

Noting studies showing a critical link between students' relation to the school environment and their academic performance, attendance, attitudes, motivation, and post-high school success, particularly for at-risk students, this guide compiles widely recognized strategies to develop students' sense of connection to their school environment. The strategies are organized around four types of connecting experiences: (1) Belonging--including creating schools within schools, promoting positive peer relations, building connections to the community, and providing special help for highly mobile students; (2) Competence--including holding high expectations for students, and providing opportunities for authentic learning and assessment; (3) Empowerment--including providing opportunities for students to work together, and promoting meaningful participation in policy and decision making; and (4) Usefulness--including organizing service learning projects. The guide also includes strategies for fostering connections beyond the school day, in co-curricular activities, extended-day programs, and summer learning programs. The guide's appendices include a school resiliency-building assessment checklist, analysis of extended-day program models, and a brief annotated bibliography. Contains a 178-item bibliography. (HTH)

Keeping Kids Connected

How Schools and Teachers Can Help All Students Feel Good About School . . . and Why That Matters



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Introduction

Any educator who has ever moved from one school to another can talk about the difference environment makes. Learning standards may be identical, funding may be equal, population statistics may be similar, but two schools can still feel radically different and have significantly different student outcomes. Inherently, we know this has to do with school climate and the way people relate to one another. Students will reach high academic standards only if they are presented in a context where students feel safe, supported, and happily engaged as well as challenged.

The Add Health project, a national longitudinal study on adolescent health, recently brought new evidence to the discussion of students' connection to their school environments. Add Health found that both younger and older students who feel connected to their school have better mental health and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (Blum & Rinehart 1997). In this study, school connectedness was measured by a series of questions on whether students felt they were treated fairly, felt close to people at school, and felt a part of the school. Other studies over the last 20 years have shown a critical link between students' relation to the school environment and their academic performance, attendance, attitudes, motivation, and post-high school success.

■ Learning from Resiliency Theory

The sense of connection to school is most important for those children we term at-risk, who struggle with lack of support on the home front, serious academic deficiencies, language barriers, and other challenges. A body of research around the concept of resiliency points to the critical role educators can play in building an environment that buffers these children against adversity, and fosters the psychological well-being and healthy development they need to learn.

Resilience is broadly defined as "the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's world" (Henderson 1996 p. 7). For the most part, resilience theory has focused on children in extreme situations: growing up in families with mentally ill, alcoholic, abusive, or criminally involved parents, or in poverty-stricken or war-torn communities. But

"What seems to matter most for adolescent health is that schools foster an atmosphere in which students feel fairly treated, close to others, and a part of the school."

Connections That Make a Difference in the Lives of Youth. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health

given the complex web of problems facing today's students, it's clear that we need to support resilience in all children.

For more than 20 years, resiliency researchers have been working to identify the "protective factors" that allow many high-risk children to overcome their circumstances and become healthy, competent adults. Some of these are internal characteristics, while others are environmental influences from families, schools, communities, and peer groups. The table that follows this introduction describes the most commonly identified protective factors.

"Competence alone, while critical, is not enough. Skills can go unused, or be used in unproductive, anti-social ways, if not anchored by confidence, character, and connections."

Karen Pittman, *In School and Beyond: Constructing Supportive Environments for Youth*

Bonnie Benard, who has synthesized more than 100 studies and articles connected to resiliency, has found that all students have an innate capacity for resilience, and that school and classroom culture can strongly influence their ability to tap that capacity. By using approaches that develop both internal and external protective factors, educators can help all students develop the social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy, and sense of purpose they need to overcome life's adversities (Benard 1995; Benard 1997).

Resiliency theory challenges educators to make a strategic shift from programs that respond to student deficits to environments that protect and nurture student strengths. Traditional strategies for at-risk students have often led to ability-grouping in programs focused on basic skills remediation, using fewer of the creative instructional theories shown to influence learning. Researchers now believe that those approaches limit student engagement and learning, and that classroom strategies that expand on students' own experience, talents, and aspirations are more effective at building academic competence and resiliency. (Letgers et al. 1993; Baker et al. 1994).

For teachers to design these programs, their own protective factors must be supported. Overwhelmed, change-weary teachers can be just as disengaged as their students. Administrators can create an environment that supports teachers' resilience by demonstrating high expectations and trust, promoting caring relationships among colleagues, and providing ongoing opportunities for small groups to reflect and make decisions together (McLaughlin & Talbert 1993).

A School-Wide Commitment To Connection

Fostering connection begins with a sincere, deliberate commitment to the belief that all students can meet high academic standards, and that schools have the ability and the responsibility to help every child reach that potential. This commitment means more than

a few changes and a list of strategies. It requires a long-term, developmental process of reexamining school practices, policies, and attitudes. Complete staff involvement and sustained professional development will be needed to anchor this process, and constant reinforcement will be required.

Sagor (1993) summarizes the research findings of the last decade to identify the kinds of experiences students must have every day in order to leave school optimistic about their educational and personal futures. He suggests that key experiences fall under these four categories:

- Belonging: experiences that show them they are valued members of a community
- Competence: experiences that provide them with authentic evidence of academic success
- Potency: experiences that make them feel empowered
- Usefulness: experiences that reinforce feelings that they have made a useful contribution to their community

The following section uses these key experiences as an organizing framework for overviews of some of the most widely recognized strategies to develop students' sense of connection to their school environment. These overviews are very concise, but background references are provided for those who want more information on specific issues. Most educators will find these pages a mix of inspiration and validation. The most important message they offer is the promise of every school and teacher to protect, nourish, and support the development of our children.

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Winfield, L.F. (1994). *Developing resilience in urban youth*. NCREL Monograph Series. [Online]. Available: www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le0win.htm

Web Resources:

Center for Community Research
This nonprofit organization works with school districts to improve school and community climate.
www.air.org

National Association of Secondary School Principals
NASSP has developed a school assessment program called the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE) which includes a school climate survey.
www.nassp.org

Search Institute
This nonprofit organization has developed a survey to measure 40 "developmental assets" that it says are essential to adolescent development.
www.search-institute.org

Yale Child Center, School Development Program
This school reform model offers several school climate surveys.
www.info.med.yale.edu/comer/welcome.html

Internal and Environmental Protective Factors

■ Internal Protective Factors:

Individual Characteristics That Facilitate Resiliency

1. Gives of self in service to others and/or a cause
2. Uses life skills, including good decision making, assertiveness, impulse control, and problem solving
3. Sociability; ability to be a friend; ability to form positive relationships
4. Sense of humor
5. Internal locus of control
6. Autonomy; independence
7. Positive view of personal future
8. Flexibility
9. Capacity for and connection to learning
10. Self-motivation
11. Is "good at something;" personal competence
12. Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence

■ Environmental Protective Factors:

Characteristics of Families, Schools, Communities, and Peer Groups That Foster Resiliency

1. Promotes close bonds
2. Values and encourages education
3. Uses high-warmth, low-criticism style of interaction
4. Sets and enforces clear boundaries (rules, norms, and laws)
5. Encourages supportive relationships with many caring others
6. Promotes sharing of responsibilities, service to others, "required helpfulness"
7. Expresses high and realistic expectations for success
8. Encourages goal setting and mastery
9. Encourages prosocial development of values (such as altruism) and life skills (such as cooperation)
10. Provides leadership, decision making, and other opportunities for meaningful participation
11. Appreciates the unique talents of each individual

Adapted from Richardson et al. 1990; Benard 1991; Werner and Smith 1992; Hawkins et al. 1992

Connections Within The School Day

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Nurture a Sense of Belonging

Both research and common sense tell us that many of the problems among today's students are rooted in the fundamental desire of individuals to belong to a group — a group where they are depended on, respected, and supported. Children who don't belong, who feel anonymous, isolated, or neglected, will disengage from the contexts where we hope to influence them, leaving us powerless to affect them either academically or socially.

Promoting belonging shows up as a consistent trait in the research on high-achieving schools with a diverse student population. These schools are smaller, more nurturing, and more engaged with families and the community. They are more inclusive of children with poor academic skills, learning disabilities, and limited English proficiency. Both teachers and students have a sense of involvement. The staff embodies an ethic of caring: not just a program or strategy, but a way of relating to students, their families, and one another that conveys compassion, understanding, respect, and interest.

Keep Schools As Small As Possible

A large body of research over the last 15 years suggests that reducing school size can relieve the problems of student anonymity, apathy, and alienation. Because people know and care about one another, small schools generate a greater sense of belonging, not only for students but for teachers, parents, and larger communities. Across grade levels and populations, small-school students on average show fewer discipline problems, better attendance rates, lower dropout rates, and comparable or stronger academic achievement than their peers in large schools.

There is no standard definition for a small school, but many small school advocates suggest an ideal high school enrollment of no more than 600. Elementary schools should not exceed 400. Schools this size can be structured to operate as communities instead of bureaucracies. Order can be maintained without a strong central authority and depersonalized rules. Teachers with fewer students to "process" relate differently to one another and to their charge, working to succeed in educating, rather than to deliver services.

"In my high school, you were assigned an ID number and it was more important to remember than your name; you get the feeling that you are little more than a number on an assembly line. Because the school is massproducing students, it seems somewhat unimportant if they lose a couple of the many along the way."

Sean Kopeny, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

In small schools, antisocial behavior is less prevalent because it's harder to be anonymous. Parents are better connected, and a more watchful school community influences students' tendencies toward smoking, alcohol, drug use and other risky behaviors. Schools are more likely to be violence-free (Toby 1993/1994), with lower levels of truancy, classroom disruption, vandalism, theft, and gang participation.

Although large schools can offer more activities, researchers have found that broad-based participation in small schools makes up for any lack of variety. Proportionately more students are needed to fill teams, offices, and clubs; fewer are overlooked or marginalized (Fowler 1995). Nor is curriculum variety a drawback: with new distance-learning opportunities, small schools can offer courses to meet individual interests, while maintaining a solid core curriculum that suits all.

Kathleen Cotton (1996), a Northwest Regional Education Laboratory researcher who surveyed more than a hundred school-size studies, found that about half the research finds no difference between the achievement levels of students in large and small schools, including small alternative schools. The other half finds student achievement in small schools to be superior to that in large schools. None of the research finds large schools superior to small schools.

Small schools seem to be especially effective for at-risk and low-achieving students. Socioeconomic strata are less clear, and there is a significantly smaller gap between the achievement levels of advantaged and disadvantaged students. Cliquishness and polarization are reduced. "Marginal" students are much more likely to become involved, make an effort, and achieve (Oxley & McCabe 1990).

Structurally, small schools provide fertile ground for exploring the kind of reforms that educational research recommends. Closer interaction among staff tends to encourage creativity: the creation of authentic learning experiences, and assignments tailored to students' individual learning styles and interests. The learning needs of the students, not the organizational needs of the school, can take priority.

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Create Schools Within Schools

An alternative to small schools, less thoroughly researched and less unanimously supported, is the concept of schools within a school. Within a large school building, smaller, independent school units are created. Teachers have their group of students, rather than their discipline, in common. They take collective responsibility for students' success, work together to unify instruction, and help students learn across the disciplines.

Cawelti (1993) describes the most common models for schools within schools as:

- Vertical House Plans: Students in grades 9-12 (or 10-12) are assigned to groups of a few hundred each within a large high school. Each "house" has its own discipline plan, parent involvement, student activity program, student government, and social activities.
- Ninth Grade House Plan: Ninth graders have their own "house" within a large high school and have smaller classes and counseling for students to ease the transition into high school.
- Special curriculum schools: Students are organized into houses based on special interests or needs — English as a Second Language, for example.
- Charter schools: Similar to special curriculum schools, except that they are usually created by groups of teachers or parents who have identified a particular focus needed by students.

Independence is the key to success in the school within a school. Generally, each school has its own principal, and a large degree of control over its budget, staffing, scheduling, curriculum, and assessment strategies. The school should have its own identity as a distinct environment, not merely an offshoot of a larger body (Cotton 1996).

Schools within schools must not tilt toward tracking by academic ability. They are heterogeneous, designed to meet diverse academic needs. Students of varying backgrounds and educational histories must have an equal chance to succeed.

"Teenagers who stay in more nurturing settings where they encounter less departmentalization, fewer teachers, and smaller groups experience higher achievement, attendance, and self-confidence than those who enter large impersonal departmentalized secondary schools."

Linda Darling-Hammond,
The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work

By offering a variety of courses of study and distinctive academic programs, the school within a school structure may give large neighborhood schools the means to compete with magnets. Students are members of a small learning community, where they participate in decision-making and can make choices that support their interests and career goals. Often, this translates to better behavior and more respect for their teacher and facility.

Teachers can build closer personal connections to their students, and may be more willing to assume extra duties for the school community. They are in a better position to communicate with parents, knowing their students much better than the overburdened administrator of a large school. In general, the decentralized structure of a school within a school may reduce tension between instructors and administration.

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Develop Advisory Groups

In a society of increasingly fractured family units, many students have to face their academic, social, and emotional problems on their own. Advisory groups create extended families, where students can consistently find peer support and caring, responsible adults. They present opportunities for social and academic support activities, provide career information and guidance, and offer leadership training. (Dale 1995).

Advisory groups are most often found in middle schools. There are many models, but generally, each student in the school is assigned to a small group of peers (10 to 15) with a school adult leader. The group may be same grade-level or multi-age students, and may stay together for one year or many.

The leader monitors academic progress, helps to build decision-making and interpersonal skills, and acts as advocate for the students. Roles evolve as needed: friend, counselor, or parent and school liaison. Advisors address this broad assignment any number of ways. Some leaders facilitate group discussions. Some engage their groups in service projects or in organizing school activities as a means of building team interdependence.

Consistent meeting times help reinforce the group's sense of stability and commitment. Usually, advisory groups meet briefly every day, often first thing in the morning. Some groups meet again at the end of the day. For more in-depth discussions and structured activities, groups may meet every other week for a longer block of time (45 minutes). Ideally, the advisor meets one-on-one with members of the group about once a month.

Developing an advisory group program requires strong administrative support. The principal must allocate time and resources, facilitate scheduling, and hold advisors accountable. Teacher/advisors are instrumental in setting goals for the program, evaluating and refining it on a continual basis. Some programs have a teacher coordinator and/or committee to assure support and continuity from year to year.

"Effective youth initiatives connect young people with adults who care about them, who serve as role models for them, who advise, mentor, chide, sympathize, encourage, and praise."

American Youth Policy Forum, *Some Things Do Make A Difference*

Initial and ongoing staff development is essential. For the program to be effective, every teacher must build a wide repertoire of interpersonal and small group leadership skills. Counselors and trainers can give teachers effective tools to help their students with social and emotional problems, encourage group bonding, and interact effectively in difficult conflicts. Periodic opportunities to share experience with other advisors also provide much-needed support.

"The resilient youngsters in our study all had at least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperamental idiosyncrasies, physical attractiveness, or intelligence."

Emmy Werner, *Overcoming the Odds: High-Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*

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Encourage Multi-Year Instruction

In the practice sometimes called "looping," a teacher moves on from one grade to the next with the same group of students, sometimes for two consecutive years, sometimes for three or more. This builds stronger, more meaningful relationships between the teacher, the student, and his/her family. Not having to discover students' learning styles, personality traits, and academic strengths and weaknesses each new year, teachers gain time and flexibility. Research of elementary and middle schools consistently shows higher motivation and improved learning outcomes in a multi-year teaching structure.

For students, multi-year instruction enhances the sense of the classroom as a community. Children, especially shy students and limited-English speakers, are far less anxious about starting the new school year. They have more time to build positive peer relationships, and to develop trust and understanding with their teachers. They are more likely to see themselves as important members of a group, and feel pride in that group as well as the school as a whole (George et al. 1987).

Teachers find they gain about a month of teaching time in the second and consequent years, because they can forego the usual "getting acquainted" transition period. They also gain instructional time in the summer between grades, when students can maintain their classroom connection through journaling, correspondence, reading lists, and high-interest projects.

When they have a multi-year span to cover content and assess progress, teachers can be more creative with instruction tailored to individual skills and interests. There's more time for slower students, without the threat of retention. Teachers report an increased sense of ownership for student outcomes, higher efficiency, and generally, more job satisfaction in working with a group of students for more than a year.

Parents also appreciate the continuity in instructional style and expectations. They invest more in problem-solving when they know they will be building strategies with the same teacher for more than one year.

Only a few concerns are raised in the overwhelmingly positive research on looping. Practitioners warn that schools must be willing to switch students out of classrooms where they are clearly incompatible or have a serious personality conflict with their teachers. In rare cases, a whole class may have to be broken up because of profound social issues. Teachers must also be extra sensitive to new students in the class, to make them feel like insiders as quickly as possible.

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"Multiyear assignment is increasingly vital to the countless children whose lives are riddled with change — change of residence, change in family structure, change of economic status. Our kids come from broken homes, or go home to empty houses, or see parents only on weekends: they seem to really benefit from having a teacher as a role model, mentor, and friend."

Barbara J. Hanson, *Getting to Know You — Multiyear Teaching*

Promote Positive Peer Relations

Schools perform a vital socializing function in our society. As a mandatory daily gathering place for many people of diverse backgrounds, schools provide a stage for developing the life skills that communities are founded on: respecting one another, working out problems, sharing power, and valuing diversity. These skills don't come naturally. They are fostered through the experience of working in heterogeneous groups, adherence to firm, clear behavioral expectations, and involvement in processes to reconcile unavoidable controversies.

To create an atmosphere that promotes positive peer relationships, schools must focus time and energy on the social aspects of development. The following subjects, peer mediation and harassment-abatement, should be studied within broader thinking about conflict, school discipline, and student behavior.

■ Peer Mediation

As adults, we tend to view conflict between children as undesirable, and try to prevent it or intervene. We know that unresolved conflict can lead to poor academic performance, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems (National Association of School Psychologists 1998). But recent studies suggest peer conflict is an important contributor to children's development (Ross & Conant 1992). Many schools now focus on helping children develop strategies to resolve conflict among themselves.

Peer mediation programs have been shown to be an effective means of resolving disputes, with benefits for both the mediator and the disputants. Researchers have found success rates of 58 to 93 percent, noting that trained peer mediators also use their skills to resolve disputes at home and among their peers outside of school (Johnson et al. 1992).

Peer mediators are generally nominated by peers or teachers. They have good judgement, communication skills, and leadership abilities, but they are not necessarily the best behaved or academically superior students.

Peer mediation programs exist in elementary, middle, and high schools. At the elementary level, mediation is often immediate, with mediation teams offering to help settle problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, or in the classroom. At the secondary level, peer mediators generally have cases referred to them for consideration in more formal settings.

■ Curbing Harassment

Harassment and bullying are a constant feature of many schools cultures, distracting and discouraging students and dramatically impacting their ability to progress socially and academically. In a 1984 study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 25 percent of students surveyed said that one of their most serious concerns was fear of bullies. The Educational Excellence Alliance, in a survey of nearly 33,000 students in 13 schools, found that 9.6 percent said they were "insulted, teased, or made fun of to [their] face . . . almost every day." These students often fear school, tending toward depression and low self-esteem, problems that carry into adulthood (Olweus 1993).

Because few students report harassment, the problem is largely unacknowledged and minimized. The vast majority of students say they never go public with their abuse because they fear retribution or because they have had bad experiences with reporting the problems to teachers (Shakeshaft 1999).

Adults are generally hesitant to get involved or are confused about the best approach to take when confronted with bullying and verbal abuse. Some feel it is character-building and best left to students to work out themselves. Others go farther, blaming the victim or letting their own dislike of the victimized child show. When teachers tolerate abuse or punish the victims along with the perpetrators, the problem escalates.

The most effective interventions involve the entire school community, rather than focus on the perpetrators or victims alone (Smith & Sharp 1994). Schools must create a climate where students understand what harassment means, why it's wrong, and why they should not ignore it. Victims need to know how they can avoid harassment, how they should report it, and that they will be supported when they do. This means opening some difficult subjects to discussion and definition. Generally, it takes at least a year of close attention before students and teachers learn what is expected of them and what are the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

Since underreporting is such a common problem, a survey may be the first step toward clarifying how harassment is affecting school climate. Carefully written, a survey can

"What I experienced in my last two years of high school was hate, pure and simple . . . I remember name calling, taunting, and not being able to use the bathroom at my senior prom because most of the football team was waiting inside to beat me senseless . . . Somehow, my teacher never seemed to notice."

Chris Panagakis, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

separate the many definitions of harassment, from good-natured teasing to name calling to sexual harassment. It can be used to generate a list of words that hurt and that should be prohibited. The survey should probe teacher as well as student behavior, including the use of sarcasm and ridicule in the classroom.

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Web Resources:

Resolving Conflict Creatively
This nonprofit organization helps schools develop promote social responsibility through peaceable classrooms and schools.
www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html

Cultivate Caring Student/ Teacher Relations

Individual teachers may not be able to increase funding, change class size, or remedy conditions that place children at risk, but they can have a critical impact on students' feeling of belonging. By showing interest and concern, expressing respect, and holding their students to high expectations, teachers can foster emotional and intellectual development and a greater receptiveness to learning (Hayes et al. 1994).

Researchers Wubbels, Levy, and Brekelmans (1997) have been studying student-teacher relationships for 15 years. Through their research with more than 50,000 students and teachers, they have developed a model of interpersonal teacher behavior to measure the connection between student-teacher relationships and student achievement and attitudes. "According to students, the best teachers are strong classroom leaders who are friendlier and more understanding and less uncertain, dissatisfied, and critical than most teachers. Their best teachers also allow them more freedom than the norm." These ideals closely match teachers' description of exceptional teachers, and also check out quite well against measures of student achievement and attitudes.

"At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, schools must become places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, take delight in each other's company. . .it is obvious that children will work harder and do things — even odd things like adding fractions — for people they love and trust."

Nel Noddings, Stanford University,
Schools Face Crisis in Caring

Caring and compassionate teachers can turn sullen and uncooperative students around. Children who have been rejected or put down in important phases of their lives desperately need an emotional connection to the learning journey. Teachers who listen, assess individuals' strengths, and create ways for students to express themselves and demonstrate their understanding find that students become more engaged and take more risks in classroom activities. (Black 1999).

Evans (1996) has developed an "Encouragement Model" for inviting students into the learning process. The model addresses the human relations problems that teachers face daily — student discipline, responsibility, motivation, and their own isolation — and how to create cooperative classrooms that respond to these issues. Encouraging statements, pointing out some strength or improvement, take the place of praise or comparisons. Teachers avoid discouraging actions like setting unreasonable standards, making pessimistic interpretations, and dominating by being too helpful.

> *"The number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today's society."*
>
> Davidson P. Phelan and H.T. Cao, summing up a survey by the Stanford University Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching

A multicultural approach to teaching helps to establish better student-teacher relationships. (ASCD 1995). This means infusing the curriculum with studies of human cultures in all their diversity. Students who appreciate the honoring of their home cultures also develop cultural sensitivity about others'.

An understanding for student culture also lays the groundwork for a mutual respect between students and teacher. When the teacher lacks social insight, communication is less effective and classroom management can suffer. Gordon (1977) recommends the following strategies for staying in touch with students.

1. **Expose yourself to adolescent culture.** Know what students are listening to, watching, and doing.
2. **Affirm students' "weather."** Show you're in touch with the school events and interests that are distracting your students on any given day.
3. **Teach with images that interest them.** Metaphors that relate to current trends, relationships or feelings will be heard better and remembered longer.
4. **Know your students.** Attend sporting events and performances, read the school paper, and chat with students as they come into the classroom. Drop references to students' interests into lectures and discussions.
5. **Share your humanity.** Successful teachers are not afraid to show students their strengths and weaknesses in the proper context.

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"To me, it seems that teachers never stop to think what a teen does outside the classroom . . . When teachers relate to students and make tiny inquiries, students feel more comfortable with the situation."

Robert Haden, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

Involve All Parents and Guardians

A long history of research shows that parent and family involvement in schools is a strong indicator of children's academic achievement, attendance, attitude, and continued education. (Henderson & Berla 1994). The more parents participate at every age level, in advocacy, decision-making and oversight, as fundraisers and boosters, as volunteers and paraprofessionals, and as home teachers, the better for student achievement.

But while it's generally acknowledged that more parental involvement fosters connection and personal growth, many schools are daunted by the challenge of engaging all parents. Parents who don't respond to traditional methods of communication may be perceived as lacking interest in their children's education. School personnel may have preconceptions that single or dual working parents cannot be approached or relied on (Epstein 1984).

Research shows that schools can do a great deal to promote broader parent involvement. It requires establishing a climate where parent involvement is actively solicited, and where parents feel welcomed, respected, trusted, heard, and needed. A national study of 2,317 inner-city elementary and middle school students found that the best predictor of parent involvement was what the school did to promote it (Dauber & Epstein 1993). School attitudes and actions were more important than the parents' income, educational level, race, or previous school-volunteering experience in predicting whether the parent would be involved in the school.

More attention to parent involvement is especially critical at the middle school and high school levels, when parental involvement declines dramatically. Few middle schools have comprehensive programs for parental involvement and few parents volunteer at school (Epstein & Lee 1995). The majority of high school teachers (60 percent) report contacting almost none or few parents (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988). Studies suggest that if these schools were to create programs that encourage school-family contacts, more families would participate in schools and would be better able to guide their children's learning efforts.

Building a framework for better parent involvement can involve a broad-based team: teachers, administrators, parents, students and community members. This group may follow a traditional planning process, starting with a needs assessment, and building a goal statement, prioritization of activities, strategies, and evaluation tools. (Comer & Haynes 1991). Another option is an Action Research Team of teachers who study ways to improve their own methods of involving parents (Davies 1991). They meet at least monthly to do background reading in parent involvement, receive training, interview other faculty about attitudes toward parent involvement, discuss the success of past efforts to involve parents, and design projects to increase teacher-parent collaboration.

Strategies must take into account the diversity and time constraints — as well as the fears and prejudices — that keep some parents from becoming involved with their children's schools. Epstein (1990) recommends using a variety of strategies from among six major types of parent- involvement activities.

Type 1: Parenting

Type 1 activities assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students. For example, schools may help families understand and carry out their role in helping students get to school on time every day.

Type 2: Communicating

Type 2 activities include school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and students' progress. The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning reports that parents are more likely to participate in schools if they receive frequent and positive messages from teachers about classroom activities, the progress of their children, and how to work with their children at home.

Type 3: Volunteering

Type 3 activities enable families to give their time and talents to support schools, teachers, and children. This includes attendance at school events and activities because family members are volunteering their time to celebrate the accomplishments and talents of students.

Type 4: Learning at Home

This is the type of involvement that families are most interested in (Epstein 1995). Type 4 activities may occur on an individual teacher-parent basis or on a larger scale. For example, some schools offer workshops to help parents become better home educators — monitoring children's homework, reducing TV time, encouraging good study habits and high expectations.

Type 5: Decision-making

Type 5 activities enable families to participate in school decisions that affect their own and other children. Family representatives on school councils, committees and other decision-making bodies, and in the PTA, PTO, site councils, and other parent organizations ensure that parents' voices are heard and incorporated into school decisions.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community

Type 6 activities facilitate cooperation and collaboration among schools, families, community groups, agencies, and individuals. Some schools have developed a Parent Center, a special room where parents find a welcoming atmosphere, school information, and activities from clothing exchanges to ESL and GED classes. Others offer site-based social support services, including job training, career counseling, and health care for students and their families.

Exploring these strategies takes strong administrative leadership and continuous staff development. In schools of education, little attention is paid to preparing teachers and administrators to work with parents and communities to develop practices that inform and involve families. Ballen and Moles (1994) suggest that routine teacher training should include information on the benefits of and barriers to parental involvement, the awareness of different family backgrounds and lifestyles, and techniques for involving parents in helping their children learn in school and outside.

"The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students."

Joyce Epstein, *School-Family-Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share*

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http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/npin/crespar/texts/parschoo/parcntr.html

Web Resources:

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) Critical Issues
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnment/famncomm/pa100.htm
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnment/famncomm/pa300.htm

Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR)
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/reports.html

Build Connections to the Community

Few schools have the resources to create an infrastructure of caring adults solid enough to support every student. But a tremendous wealth of caring, knowledgeable adults exists outside the school walls. The challenge is to lower all barriers between inside and out: to extend the school's reach out into the community, and to bring the community into the school to improve the life chances of children and their families.

The more outside involvement in a school, the better students' sense of continuity and congruence among the institutions in their lives. School is clearly a necessary link between family and community, a caring environment that facilitates their passage to the world of work. Knowing they have the support of knowledgeable, trustworthy, understanding adults in the school environment — regardless of whether they have it at home — reinforces their sense of security and belonging. Positive social values, including both caregiving and care-seeking, are nurtured.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Collaboration with social and health service agencies is becoming increasingly common, especially in large urban schools. Partners may include providers of general medical, dental, eye care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and mental health services, interfaces with the juvenile justice system, job training, housing, and childcare referral services.

The most ambitious models bring these agencies right into the school on a regular schedule, in addition to maintaining strong referral links out to them. This may be more difficult in rural schools or in neighborhoods where social services are lacking or fragmented. Indeed, any school/community agency collaboration will present major challenges, but every obstacle removed improves the chances that a student will achieve the education he needs to become a contributing member of society.

Ideally, collaborations with other agencies are folded into a case management approach to student health and social needs. This creates not just a safety net, but a personal network of

"Merely hitching adults to kids without adequate infrastructure may create a sense of action, but is likely to accomplish little. It may even backfire. If a relationship engenders hurt or reinforces negative stereotypes, it is worse than no mentoring at all."

Marc Freedman, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

caring, dependable adults. Given staffing limitations, these programs may integrate community residents as well as agency personnel in providing a full gamut of services (Wehlage & White 1995). More individualized attention and long-term programs, support and follow-up increase the likelihood that these services will be used and will make a difference.

Stanford University researcher Michael Kirst (1994) suggests five components of effective school- linked, integrated services programs:

1. Co-location of a wide range of services and children's activities from public and private agencies. Such a program might be located on or near a school, be open from 6 to 6, and include parent education.

2. A complete change in the services delivery system. Usually, school-linked services programs bring about information exchange among service providers but do not change categorical program rules and regulations. Comprehensive change would mean multiple agency intake and assessments, confidentiality waivers, shared staff, case management, across-agency agreement on outcomes that would be used for accountability purposes, and reliance on established revenue streams rather that short-term grants.

3. School restructuring that builds upon and fosters the school-linked services initiative. In successful initiatives, teachers express ownership in the school-linked services initiative, have frequent conferences with agency staff, know how to refer students, enjoy regular feedback from health and social services personnel, and take advantage of the school-linked services to improve their own instructional and disciplinary practices.

4. A parent center that meets a range of expressed parent needs and extends itself to welcome parents as genuine partners. Successful initiatives understand that partnership is a two-way process in which schools respond to parent and family needs with positive educational, social, and recreational activities, and parents provide critical information about their children's needs.

5. The involvement and provision of services through youth organizations that can speak for adolescents rather than labeling them as problems. Adolescents face many dangers to health and well-being and rarely participate in a dialogue to identify problems and alternative solutions. Successful collaborations tap into the world and perspectives of youth they are trying to serve.

■ Mentoring and Tutoring

A solid, meaningful connection with just one very caring individual can make all the difference to a child's sense of belonging and overall resiliency (Benard 1991). Mentors, in whatever capacity children relate to them, provide a secure basis for the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative. The school community should support and celebrate their efforts.

Many schools have established firm relations with local companies, colleges, and community groups to build pools of mentors and tutors. Though these adults can play a wide variety of roles, it is important that mentor programs provide a clear sense of expectations through training and ongoing support. Mentors should receive extensive instruction in working effectively and compassionately with young people and in providing age-appropriate activities that follow sound youth development principles (American Youth Policy Forum 1999).

"Teachers and administrators have to help students build and use diverse social and strategic networks. Young people cannot be allowed to segregate or isolate themselves because of ignorance or fear."

Karen Pittman, *In School and Beyond: Constructing Supportive Environments for Youth*

While youngsters find it easier to identify with adults who are like them in gender, ethnicity, and language, they are most likely to turn to and bond with adults they think have the necessary knowledge, understanding, and interest to provide the help they need. Nothing seems to signal caring for youngsters so much as the helper's willingness to give time regularly and predictably (Ianni 1992). Through the mentoring relationship, young people learn values of the community and receive a unified view of the requirements for social competence.

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Web Resources:

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)
NCREL Pathways to School Improvement Series: School-Community Collaboration
www.ncrel.org/cscd/pubs/lead21/

Provide Special Help For Highly Mobile Students

Changing schools is extremely stressful for children because it disrupts their sense of belonging. Children who move once or more in the course of each school year may feel like they have never belonged anywhere. This alienation can impact their academic, social, and emotional learning.

Schools have a critical role to play in helping these students cope with the culture shock of moving. A wide range of anxieties — Will I be accepted? Will I make new friends? Will my records be transferred? Will I know what I need for my classes? — keep new students from focusing on learning. The sooner they reach a plateau of comfort and stability within the school culture, the sooner they can move on to academic pursuits.

> *"For children who are highly transient, the cycle of anticipation-relocation-adjustment may be perceived as nearly unending."*
>
> Donovan R. Walling, *Meeting the Needs of Transient Students*

The challenge for educators is to minimize the time that highly mobile students spend in adjusting to a new school. This may seem like a worthless investment: circumstances may force the family to move again, just when the student has begun to fit in. But each change of school for the transient student presents a turning point, where the actions of the school community can define either a positive or a negative step on the learning path. By taking deliberate action to facilitate quick integration, the school can help the student toward academic and personal success.

Schools with high levels of student mobility should develop formal programs to welcome students and their families. These may include:

preliminary school visits to meet teachers and tour the school before meeting other children

newcomer picnics or other occasions to build social networks

sponsors to act as guides and first friends for individual students and/or their families

mentors, adults who act as the student's advocate

peer support groups where students find security with others who have similar backgrounds

parent support groups where parents can connect with other new families

Schools can help newcomers become full participants in the school culture by giving them wide-ranging opportunities to meet and interact with their peers. Cooperative learning projects give new students a chance to identify themselves and get to know others in a small group. Inviting them to participate in extracurricular activities helps them gain self-confidence and a sense of social support.

At the classroom level, teachers can make a big impact by showing a personal interest in new students and giving them the opportunity to create positive identities for themselves. Small gestures such as learning how to pronounce the student's name correctly can make a student feel more welcome. In an elementary classroom, students may appreciate the opportunity to introduce themselves with a map of their travels or some items that represent their interests. It is critical to present high expectations and opportunities for students to demonstrate their personal strengths, interests, and learning styles.

Flexible administrative policies have a tremendous impact on the transition to a new school. In schools with multi-age classrooms and year-round schedules, students can start learning at an appropriate level more quickly. Electronic record transferral across districts can ease the nightmare of the administrative paper chase. Flexibility on policies of residency, attendance, medical records, credit and placement can remove obstacles to quick assimilation of transient or homeless children.

Schools can provide an invaluable service by helping to connect highly mobile families with other community resources. Administrators in schools with highly transient or homeless students should make sure it is easy for teachers, counselors and others to access information on area agencies and services.

For More Information:

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Nurture a Sense of Competence

Learning is only possible when students believe they have the skills, resources, and external support to succeed. They need opportunities to discover their own strengths, to perform work that is worthy of praise, and to experience genuine success.

A sense of competence stems from accurate appraisals, including appraisals that students make of themselves. With the experience of being held to a high standard, one that they understand and work to achieve incrementally, they gain the necessary confidence to repeat their success.

Hold High Expectations for All Students

Students' sense of belonging and their resilience to risk is strongly influenced by how much their schools and teachers expect of them. Studies of successful programs for students at-risk of academic failure consistently show that high expectations and the support to achieve them are critical factors in decreasing the number of students who drop out of school and increasing the number who go on to higher education (Mehan et al. 1994).

> *"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."*
>
> Franklin Roosevelt

Expectations are most directly relayed through the relationship between student and teacher. Research shows the overwhelming importance of the teacher's believing that all students can succeed in demanding activities. This isn't easy: there is a natural tendency to make assumptions about the way a student will behave and achieve, and given teachers' influence, these predictions can easily turn into self-fulfilling prophesies. It takes a strong commitment to look beyond the label of at-risk or low-achieving to see the individual's potential and reflect that vision back to the child.

High expectations build high self esteem — the authentic kind that comes from being offered challenges and succeeding at them. Students rise to the expectations of the adults they trust. Those who have been disruptive or resistant to learning can thrive when teachers use different strategies to bring them to the same standards as their more compliant and academically oriented peers.

Schools that put struggling students in remedial, watered down classes often do so in the belief that these students would fail in more challenging courses, and would be pushed toward dropping out of school. In fact, there is considerable evidence that greater learning gains occur when students are placed in diverse, cooperative learning situations with firm guidance and compelling academic content (Slavin et al. 1990). Programs targeted at at-risk students, no matter how well intentioned, tend to compound the inequities that may have placed these children behind in the first place.

High-expectation programs avoid rote, repetitive learning. They involve students in problem-solving, requiring them to use their judgement, form opinions, do research, do homework, use analytic skills, evaluate their work, make connections, and manage time effectively (ASCD 1995). They feature:

- rich reading materials and activities that encourage students to grapple with higher-order ideas
- varied evaluation systems that respond to multiple intelligences
- motivation derived by encouraging students to pursue their own interests, rather than by competition and extrinsic rewards and punishment
- student self-direction and responsibility for their own learning

"What I would like to know is why do you leave us in lower-level classes and learning disability classes and leave us out of a lot of your activities? It's kind of like saying we're not human, so we can't work with the other students. Yes, it sounds as cold as ice, but that's the way you make us feel."

J.T. Gribbon, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

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Web Resources:

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) Critical Issues
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at6lk11.htm

Provide Opportunities for Authentic Learning and Assessment

Students often don't recognize that what we teach them in school applies to their everyday lives. They may not connect the knowledge they already have with what we are trying to give them. Activities that allow students to use their knowledge in situations that mimic real life have important effects on their sense of competence.

Clearly, not everything we teach our students can be presented in an authentic context. Direct teaching of abstract concepts will always have its place. But much of what students learn does have a connection to their current life and the lives they will lead as adults. Understanding the practicality of what they're being taught can help anchor specific knowledge and in a larger sense, students' connection with the schooling process.

■ Work-Related Learning

As students get older, work-related experiences become a key vehicle for authentic learning. The integration of academic and vocational education, career guidance, and work-based learning experiences can forge a clear link between the skills learned in school and the ones they will need in their life beyond.

Employer involvement in designing these programs is critical to ensure that the skills students are learning and practicing are likely to lead to employment. Contacts in the employer community can act as job coaches, mentors, and advocates, providing the connection to the working world that many students lack. The incentive quality of work is a powerful motivator, providing focus for both teaching and learning. As schools and workplaces meld their resources, students' progression to the world of work becomes more natural and efficient.

■ Assessment

Assessment that is closely tied to the instructional process helps to feed the sense of competence, rather than breaking it down. Students should have a clear understanding of the standards and of what constitutes a successful product. They should have an ongoing sense of where they are in relation to these standards. With experience, they can develop the ability to decide what steps they need to take to succeed at a task, and recognize what may be impeding their progress.

When assessment is fully integrated with instruction, students are evaluated and given feedback continuously, not just at the end of a project. Regular performance assessments convey to students that their teacher values not only the final output, but also high-quality work, in-depth understanding, and the ability to apply knowledge in changing situations. Self-assessment and adjustment should also be encouraged.

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"Young people . . . need a range of basic functional skills — numeracy, literacy, and an ability to communicate . . .But they also increasingly need a range of higher-order skills as well — the ability to synthesize, to solve problems, to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty and, especially, to be creative and personally enterprising."

John Abbot, *Children Need Communities, Communities Need Children*

Develop Thinking Skills for Life

Teaching and reinforcing life skills helps students navigate the challenges and temptations of their school years and their life beyond. Resiliency researchers Henderson and Milstein (1996) identify key life skills as cooperation, healthy conflict-resolution, resistance, assertiveness, communication, problem-solving, and decision making.

Many of these skills are naturally developed through problem-solving activities. When students have the time and the tools to construct their own knowledge — by weighing evidence, considering varying viewpoints, making connections to prior knowledge, experimenting, and assessing the results — they develop competence that will transfer to contexts they encounter throughout their lives. Problem-solving activities also provide diverse opportunities to demonstrate their competence.

The best problem-solving activities are based on real-life events and problems, ideally issues that need to be resolved for the betterment of the school or community. In addressing these problems, students have the responsibility for unlocking knowledge, synthesizing it, and presenting it. Teachers act as coaches, asking questions and prodding students to reflect, reason, and analyze as they build their conclusions.

When they are offered in collaborative settings, problem-solving exercises also teach teamwork, negotiation, leadership, and conflict resolution skills. Competence in these areas builds students' confidence that they can acquire and apply the knowledge they need to resolve the problems they will encounter throughout their lives.

Habits of the Mind

- Weighing evidence: How credible is the evidence for what we think we know?
- Awareness of varying viewpoints: Whose viewpoint is this and what other viewpoints might there be?
- Seeing connections and relationships: How are things connected and what is here that we have seen before?
- Speculating on possibilities: Can we imagine alternatives?
- Assessing value both socially and personally: What difference does it make and who cares?

Developed by Central Park East Secondary School. From Studies of Schools and Students at Work, Linda Darling-Hammond.

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"Often, teachers let the acquisition of facts and basic skills become the end product of instruction, depriving youngsters of an education rich in nuances and deeper meanings. We do not want to disparage the learning of facts; a good knowledge base serves a foundation for growth. We prefer, though, to emphasize the acquisition and application of facts through thinking and problem solving."

National Association of Secondary School Principals, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*

Nurture a Sense of Empowerment

We all need to feel self-determining, able to make decisions about the things that affect us most. Opportunities for students to express their opinions, make choices, and work with others to solve problems give them the experience they will need as autonomous adults. Too often, hierarchal school policy encourages defenselessness and a victimlike attitude. Students can only learn to exercise responsibility when they have the opportunity to practice in a safe environment.

Participation in school and classroom decision making can alleviate discipline issues. A powerless child demands attention through negative behavior. Students who have a role in setting school policies have a vested interest in meeting them. They are less likely to demand attention in the extreme ways that result in discipline problems.

Help Students Become More Self-Directed

Research shows that levels of engagement increase and academic achievement rises in schools that use a student-centered approach (Kohn 1993; Lee & Smith 1994). This means identifying and accommodating students' learning styles and needs, giving them the flexibility and encouragement to work in their areas of greatest interest, and teaching them the skills to take responsibility for their own learning.

In student-centered classes, teachers use a variety of instructional methods to reach students with different learning styles. They diagnose individual students' needs, prescribe appropriate learning strategies, and set appropriate pacing and difficulty levels for their work. Students are assessed frequently and through a variety of formats. This approach takes time and reduces the amount of material that can be covered, but results in students who more thoroughly understand what they have studied.

"Youth interventions must set clear and high expectations for young people while also carefully supporting each young person so that he or she can attain them. The balances between limits and freedom, expectations and support must be consistently demonstrated and maintained."

American Youth Policy Forum. *Some Things Do Make a Difference.*

A prerequisite for self-direction is self-knowledge. Students need a variety of experiences to help them identify their own interests, their strengths and weaknesses in relation to those interests, and how those interests are applicable in social and work environments. Problem-based learning, where students work as a group to resolve a complex issue, is one instructional strategy that brings out students' priorities, abilities, and specific interests. Interest inventories, field trips, independent study opportunities and enrichment activities are some of the many others. As self-knowledge grows, teachers can tap into the student's intrinsic motivation, using her strengths, goals, and dreams as the starting point for instructional activities.

To create self-directed learners, teachers fade back from their role as knowledge providers, becoming coaches and facilitators instead. They may model a behavior, demonstrate a procedure, or role-play a situation to help students understand a concept, but gradually

they reduce assistance and transfer learning responsibility to the student. Students develop an awareness of their own learning processes. Through practice, they acquire the skills to direct their own learning, developing goals, planning how to achieve those goals, monitoring their own progress, and evaluating their results.

■ Students with Low Self-Efficacy

Some students with low self-efficacy need extra help to learn to direct their work. Self-efficacy is a term that encompasses how a person perceives his ability to perform a given task or behavior, the likely consequences of his performance, what kind of choices he has, and how he will fare in those choices. Students with low self-efficacy often limit how much they participate in activities, and give up at the first sign of difficulty.

Bandura (1977) says self-efficacy expectations are acquired from:

- receiving feedback on performance/accomplishments, ie.: poor grades
- observing others, ie.: modeling economic, gender, cultural or social class limitations
- receiving messages from others, ie: encouragement vs. criticism
- experiencing stress and anxiety

Teachers can help students improve their self-efficacy beliefs by increasing the range of students' experiences and channeling their self-efficacy beliefs toward positive outcomes. Brophy (1998) suggests the following strategies:

- act more as a resource person than as a judge
- focus more on learning process than on outcomes
- react to errors as natural and useful parts of the learning process rather than evidence of failure
- stress effort over ability and personal standards over normative standards when giving feedback
- attempt to stimulate achievement efforts through primarily intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivational strategies.

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Provide Opportunities for Students to Work Together

The more students are involved in a cooperative atmosphere, the more responsible they become. And the more responsible they become, the more they feel a sense of connection. This feeling gives them the courage to contribute and participate (Meredith and Evans 1990).

Group activities encourage students to be more curious, more caring, better reasoners and problem-solvers. As students work together in heterogeneous groups, they develop a general appreciation and understanding for how individuals can differ in attitudes, abilities, and approaches, and still contribute to a project they can all be proud of. All are valued members of the classroom community.

> *"Do students view their classmates primarily as collaborators in learning, or as competitors in the quest for grades and recognition?"*
>
> Catherine Lewis and colleagues from the Child Development Project, *The Caring Classroom's Academic Edge*

This is especially valuable for low-achieving students, who may be frustrated in a system of individual rewards and punishments. In a competitive skill-and-drill curriculum, less prepared children may preserve their self-esteem by reducing their efforts. They may psychologically withdraw, to the point where school loses its power to influence their social, ethical or intellectual development. (Nicholls 1989). Group work gives them a platform to take risks, contribute what they do best, and receive the support and encouragement to follow through on their commitments.

Group skills must be learned and practiced. Students do not know instinctively how to interact effectively with others. They must get to know and trust one another, learn to communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support one another, and resolve conflicts constructively.

Johnson and Johnson (1989) suggest the following framework for cooperative learning:

- Students must see themselves as positively interdependent so they take personal responsibility for working to achieve group goals.
- They must have considerable time for face-to-face interaction to help each other, share resources, give constructive feedback, and challenge each others' reasoning and ideas.

- They must commit to keeping an open mind, acting in a trustworthy manner, and promoting a feeling of safety to reduce anxiety for all group members.
- They must balance accomplishing tasks with maintaining group cohesiveness.

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"Maybe if accelerated students were in my building construction class, I could show them a thing or two. Maybe then they wouldn't look down on us."

Rich DiCanio, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

Promote Meaningful Participation in Policy and Decision Making

Opportunities to participate in shaping the school day can transform student apathy into engagement. When students have a hand in designing social and behavioral rules and making meaningful choices in the classroom, they develop confidence in their abilities and ideas. As they exercise responsibility individually and collectively, they learn important democratic skills, including concern for and appreciation of their peers. They learn that things don't just happen to them: they can affect their own lives and others'.

A large body of research shows that students who feel empowered and self-determined display positive effects in such wide-ranging areas as general health and well-being, behavior and values, and academic achievement. (Kohn 1993). Despite this evidence, many schools still encourage little or no student participation. Students spend every day following other people's rules, submitting to other people's evaluations, being told what to read, where to go, and what to do. Punishments and rewards are used to enforce compliance with an agenda that students have little opportunity to influence.

Moving toward a more participatory school structure requires administrative support for shared decision-making and responsibility throughout the hierarchy. Teachers who are subject to rigid directives from above may have little incentive to release controls over their students. Trust and respect among all the school populations — teachers, administrators, support staff, families, and students — make for a healthier school climate.

■ Topics of Study

In a participatory classroom, students have at least one block of time each day when they can decide what to do. They may help in choosing an assigned text, how their learning will be evaluated, and when they're reading for testing. The teacher guides the decision making process, by offering suggestions, questions and criticism, and helping the students to negotiate and narrow their choices. Sharing control over instruction may demand a difficult reorientation for some teachers, but it can also make the job of instruction more exciting and fulfilling.

■ Social Standards

When students are involved in shaping the norms of their classes and schools, they see those norms are not arbitrary standards set by powerful adults, but necessary standards for the general well-being (Lewis et al. 1996). They develop the skills for learning and living together by participating in everyday decisions: How should the room be arranged?

How much noise is acceptable? How can we accomplish this daily chore? They develop a social perspective, hearing multiple points of view and considering how the world looks to other people.

Older students should have the opportunity to participate on panels, site councils, evaluation groups, and other bodies that shape policy. Issues of current controversy should be at the top of the list for their consideration, in addition to routine questions of discipline, grading standards, participation on sports teams, and so forth. This does not mean completely overturning the decision making systems already in place: simply creating mechanisms to assure that those most directly impacted by schoolwide policies have some influence in setting them.

Younger students should also be encouraged to experience decision making at both the school and classroom levels. Waiting till children are mature enough to handle the responsibility is counter-productive: students need experience with decision making to be able to make decisions.

■ Discipline Issues

Traditional, punishment-based approaches to discipline have little effect on students who feel disconnected from school. Cracking down of these students may not only fail to solve the problem, but actually exacerbate it, giving them more grounds to blame others for their failure. Even students who comply with an authoritarian approach are missing the opportunity to develop self-discipline and responsibility.

"If we want to nurture students who will grow into lifelong learners, into self-directed seekers, into the kind of adults who are morally responsible even when someone is not looking, then we need to give them opportunities to practice making choices and reflecting on the outcomes."

Evelyn Schneider, *Giving Students a Voice in the Classroom*

A system that involves students in deciding discipline policies helps them understand that they choose fulfillment or frustration. They can make decisions that satisfy their needs without violating those of others. Ideally, a participatory system instills an intrinsic, longterm motivation to do the right thing. Students learn to behave in a socially responsible way without the constant pressure of threats and manipulation.

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Nurture a Sense of Usefulness

Resiliency researcher Emmy Werner (1984) has found that children who are most resilient have at some point in their lives been required to carry out some socially important task to help others in their family, neighborhood, or community. These acts led to enduring and positive changes in the young helpers

Students need the opportunity to show themselves, their parents, and their communities that they are able to contribute to society. Through helping other individuals or joining in real problem-solving teams, they develop a positive sense of self. Instead of recipients of services, they become contributors to their own growth and development, as well as key resources for their communities.

Organize Service-Learning Projects

Service-learning projects take students out of their classrooms to apply their academic and vocational skills to the real-life needs of their communities. Working with people of different ages and backgrounds, with authentic problems to solve and clear reflections of the consequences of their actions, students get a sense of their own significance in the world. Service-learning is associated with greater student engagement with schools, better attitudes towards schools, better attendance, fewer disciplinary actions, and fewer behavior problems (McPherson 1997).

Through their participation in service-learning projects, students develop attitudes, values, and behaviors that increase their potential as informed citizens and productive workers. Organization, teamwork, problem-solving and the capacity for critical thinking are all strengthened as students identify and tackle issues of concern to them. Their experiences build self-confidence, competence, and empathy for others and may open their minds to lifestyle choices and career possibilities they would never have considered.

Service-learning experiences are especially valuable for the student who is alienated from the school culture (Rosenberg 1999). Contributing as part of a positive peer group to a mutually agreed-upon project helps cultivate an identity and a position in the school community. Techniques for communication, problem-solving, anger and conflict management can be infused into the project. The change from outsider to insider can have important implications for the student's longterm health and productivity.

Parents broadly support school projects that nurture a sense of caring about the common good. But almost 9 out of 10 young people between the ages of 11 and 18 say their schools do not do enough to encourage them toward service in the community. Seven out of 10 say they also find no such encouragement from their parents (Prudential 1995).

> *"Volunteering made me realize that I want to work with people for the rest of my life . . .in career areas such as education or social services because I love working with people so much. I feel I am making a difference in someone's life and I want to give something back to the people that have made a difference in my life."*
>
> Julie Randazzo, student, *Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students*

These features are key to a successful service-learning project.

- Educational objectives and assessment criteria are established before the project begins. Service-learning is distinct from general community service in that it must include a clear and measurable learning component. Students reflect on their experience to draw the most meaning from it.
- Well-rounded, positive students are included in any service group. These students serve as unidentified role models by participating equally in the group process with students who have academic or behavior problems, or who tend to be disconnected from the school culture.
- Students have an important role in organizing the projects and creating solutions. This fosters individual accountability and responsibility.

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Give Students Roles in Helping Their Peers

Programs that provide a framework for students to help their peers have been shown to improve the academic and social development of both the help-seeker and the helper. Students thrive in becoming givers as well as receivers of knowledge. As these programs provide meaningful responsibilities for students, they also take some of the pressure off overcommitted adults. A greater number of skilled, compassionate people are available to help solve problems, making the school feel like a more supportive place.

■ Peer Helper Programs

Peer helper programs provide the kind of informal setting where students feel most comfortable expressing their frustrations and seeking advice. Students will often confide in their peers when they are just starting to worry, whereas they may not go to the school counselor until stress has caused them to fall far behind in their schoolwork.

Tanaka and Reid (1997) describe a well-researched, carefully structured peer helper program for middle and high schools. They stress that such programs should not use the term "peer counseling" because that suggests students have more expertise than they actually do, and reinforces the tendency of peer helpers to try to do more than is appropriate.

> *"The experience of being needed, valued, and respected by another person produced a new view of self as a worthwhile human being."*
>
> Diane Hedin, *Students as Teachers: A Tool for Improving School Climate and Productivity*

In effective peer helper programs, trusted instructors and counselors are involved in the training, providing a bridge from student helpers to adults. Peer helpers keep logs and meet regularly to support one another. Students are selected by schoolwide nomination based on how they meet program competencies. Avoiding criteria such as popularity, grades, or attendance helps attract those students who don't generally participate in school activities.

Peer helpers require:

- Helping skills, most notably, listening skills such as paraphrasing and asking questions, and the ability to express support and empathy.

- Skills, attitudes, and information to help students access a network of experts. Knowing who to turn to and when is important.
- The willingness to recognize and address their own pressures and needs.
- An understanding of the limits of their role.
- Confidence in knowing what kind of situations require referring a student to an appropriate adult, even after promising confidentiality.

(Tanaka and Reid 1997)

Tutoring

Peer tutoring is consistently more effective than computer-assisted instruction, reduction of class size, or increased instructional time for raising the reading and mathematics achievement of both tutors and tutees (Levin 1984). Most research shows that peer tutors get even more out of the job than the students they are tutoring. Tutors learn about the subject matter they are teaching, but also how to listen, communicate effectively, and respond to various learning styles.

For this reason, a new tutor-centered model is being developed to give all students — not just the proficient ones — the opportunity to be tutors, and to make tutoring an integrated instructional strategy, rather than an out-of-class peripheral. Often, this model involves matching two classes of students at least two years apart. The older students tutor the younger ones, who will eventually convert to tutors themselves. This removes the negative perception around receiving help, since all students participate as both tutors and tutees.

These tutoring programs are carefully facilitated by the classroom teachers, who work together during tutoring to make program and curriculum decisions. Sometimes, tutors and/or tutees take part in the planning and ongoing assessment of the program. Teachers need considerable training to put the program in place and to maintain it.

It is important that tutoring programs be as heterogeneous as possible in terms of academic ability, ethnicity, and physical ability. In some programs, students tutor students who have recently arrived from other countries, learning about the cultures of their proteges as they induct them into the American school system.

Cross-Grade Buddy Programs

Buddy programs are some elementary schools' answer to problems of harassment, bullying, and other school climate problems. Students in one classroom are matched with students in another classroom at least two grades lower. Buddies may help in any number of academic areas, from reading to joint science fair projects. The relationship develops security, respect and affection in younger students, and a sense of responsibility and nurturance in the older ones.

As much as possible, teachers should be allowed to choose their preferred colleagues for the year's buddying program. They will have extensive contact with this colleague, and may benefit by new ideas and encouraging interaction. Teachers also appreciate the consistency in instruction that can be cultivated through buddying with a younger class.

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Connections Beyond The School Day

Cocurricular Activities

In its pivotal treatise *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution,* the National Association of Secondary School Principals argues that student activities and clubs are so indispensable to the educational program that they should be called cocurricular rather than extracurricular activities. Cocurricular activities help students learn the value of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, and diversity. They develop a sense of culture and community, and give students a place to exercise their academic skills. They offer opportunities far beyond what most classrooms can provide to develop principles and personalities.

Students in cocurricular activities show more consistent attendance, better academic achievement, and higher aspirations for their education and careers than non-participants. (O'Brien & Rollefson 1995). Recent research suggests that participating in cocurricular activities may increase students' sense of connection to their school, and decrease the likelihood of disengagement and dropping out (Lamborn et al. 1992; Finn 1993).

Critics point out that research in this field is inherently weak, because students who go out for cocurricular activities may have stronger talents and motivation to begin with than their non-participating peers. Also, there is no clear indication that students' academic progress is affected by some types of activities more than others, or by the number or diversity of activities in which they participate.

Still, an overwhelmingly positive body of evidence supports the importance of cocurricular activities, associating them with many positive effects:

- A greater sense of connection to school indirectly increases students' commitment to academics.
- Close relationships with coaches and advisors can be used to encourage students' motivation to achieve in the classroom.
- Cocurricular activities may expose students to more academically oriented peer groups.
- Some cocurricular activities provide a real-world context for skills and knowledge that students are learning in the classroom.
- Some help develop concentration and planning skills that contribute to better academic achievement.

- Cocurricular activities allow students to define themselves by their strengths, offering opportunities for them to gain competence and build self-esteem.
- They promote better interpersonal relations and civic participation among diverse students.

One frequently voiced concern is that cocurricular activities demand so much of students' time and concentration that they may be too tired or preoccupied to focus on schoolwork. A comprehensive nine high-school study found, to the contrary, that academic effort and achievement tended to increase as hours spent on extracurricular activities increased (to a limit of 20 hours, which few students attain). The more activities students were involved in, the better they scored on a range of positive outcome measures. This advantage was more pronounced for students in leadership activities and clubs or interest groups than for those in sports or performing activities (Lamborn et al. 1992).

■ Equity In Cocurricular Activities

The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) finds that about four out of every five high school seniors participates in cocurricular activities. Sports has the widest participation (42 percent in 1992), followed by performing arts (27 percent), academic clubs (26 percent), and vocational/professional clubs (21 percent).

According to NELS, there are no important differences in availability of cocurricular activities in relatively less affluent and more affluent schools. However, the study finds that students of low socioeconomic status participate at lower rates in every type of activity except vocational or professional clubs (in which they are almost twice as likely to participate than more affluent students). If cocurricular activities are a means of connecting students to the school community, and increasing their chances of school success, this participation gap is a cause for concern. (O'Brien & Rollefson 1995).

Barriers to student participation range from the more concrete, including family or work responsibilities, limited resources for equipment, fees, or other expenses, and transportation or other logistical difficulties, to the more complex, such as lack of interest in or alienation from school and its activities (Kleese & D'Onofrio 1994).

Some schools have a "no pass/no play" policy, limiting participation in sports and other clubs to students who maintain a specified grade-point average. These restrictions make the cocurriculum even more exclusive, dividing students into two groups: those engaged in the life of the school and those on the outside (Lewis 1989). The reaction to this policy can be insidious and very damaging:

- Some teachers may inflate grades.
- Students may be discouraged from taking more challenging courses.
- Cheating may be encouraged.

- Staff sponsors of cocurricular activities may be tempted to offer watered-down courses.
- Students may drop out when the primary source of their success is eliminated.

(Frith & Clark 1984)

Sports Perspectives

In the public eye and in the budgets of most schools, sports dominate other cocurricular activities. Sports offer a way to engage the public in the life of the school, and generally succeed at that task better than newsletters, school board, or PTA meetings. But *Breaking Ranks*, among others, cautions against letting the passion for sports and competitiveness overwhelm the school environment and eclipse other important initiatives for keeping students connected. All school-sponsored activities, including sports, should support the overall values and objectives of the school.

The research on sports and student engagement draws mixed conclusions. Braddock et al. (1991) found that sports participation was positively related to eighth graders' aspirations to enroll in academic programs and complete high school. Students in the study had good relations with schoolmates and were less likely to be involved in school-related discipline problems. They looked forward to attending school and teachers judged them as giving full effort in class.

"The life of a suburban teenager can tend to be insulated from the realities of the world. Involvement in extracurricular activities can begin to open a student's mind to the diverse conditions that exist outside the classroom."

Meghan M. Jackowski, student,
Welcome to Our World: Realities of High School Students

A major study of high school dropouts found that athletics significantly reduces a student's likelihood of dropping out, whereas participation in academic or vocational clubs has no effect (McNeal 1995). This study examined the continuum of cocurricular activities, from the highly prized (such as athletics) to the moderate status (such as music) to the devalued (such as hobby clubs). It found that students in higher-status activities have more power than students in other groups or in no groups. This impacts how students identify with the school culture and mediates a student's likelihood of dropping out. Sports participation gives students prominence in the school and peer culture that serves to keep them in school.

Lamborn et al. (1992), on the other hand, compared various types of cocurricular activities, and found that students in high-visibility "glory sports" (a separate category from other athletics) did less well on academic outcomes than those involved in clubs or leader-

ship activities. Glory-sport participants also had higher rates of school deviance, such as cutting class, cheating on exams, and skipping school. The researchers related these differences to several factors:

- **Advisor's support:** how often the sponsoring adult would allow the student to miss practice in order to study, how often the advisor spoke to the student about college, and whether the advisor cared more about the student's achievement in classes or in the activity
- **Peer's support:** how often students received advice about classes from fellow activity participants, whether peers cared more about studying or partying, and whether they planned to go on to college
- **Personal resources:** how much the activity contributed to planning homework time better and developing academic skills and confidence
- **Degree of distraction:** how much participation undermined achievement by making students too tired to study or too nervous or excited to concentrate in class

Evaluating Cocurricular Activities

Today's schools face heavy, often competing demands that undermine the ability to offer a wide range of student activities. Bringing students to high academic standards in the face of severe budgetary restrictions has forced many schools to drop or cut back cocurricular programs. At the same time, students in the lower and middle levels of achievement are taking more courses in the core academic subjects, at the expense of elective and vocational courses — those courses that may have seemed most relevant and motivating for them to stay in school.

Without the balance of the social/personal and the academic, school becomes nothing but a hardship for struggling students. Administrators must find ways to protect and promote the menu of cocurricular activities, to offer as many students as possible the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of areas. This may require a full-scale reexamination of existing programs, to evaluate their relevance to the courses and purposes of the school. Some longstanding icons may have to be changed or sacrificed to provide for more relevant, more inclusive alternatives.

As in every other dimension of the school experience, the effects of participation in cocurricular activities depend greatly on relationships with caring adults: coaches, advisors, and involved parents. These adults can establish a climate of respect, trust, support, and challenge, looking for each student's strengths and mirroring those strengths back to the student. They must convey hope and optimism, no matter what the student's past behavior or current challenges. In cocurricular activities, we have the opportunity to find every student's talents, and to guide those talents into useful, satisfying paths.

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"One characteristic that most distinguishes healthy communities from less healthy communities is the percentage of youth who are engaged in some form of positive youth activity."

N. Leffert, *Making the Case: Measuring the Impact of Youth Development Programs*

Extended-Day Programs

In previous generations, children's after-school activities were considered a family matter. Today, an estimated 28 million children (65 percent) have parents who work outside the home. The demand for safe, enriching after-school care is mounting as moms and dads struggle to be both good parents and good workers.

In recent years, educators and policy makers have also shown increasing interest in out-of-school time. Standards-based reform has put pressure on teachers and administrators to meet high expectations for academic performance. While changing curricula and classroom practices, educators are also looking toward after-school programs as one of the vehicles for improving student achievement.

The typical academic day takes up only about 20 percent of a child's waking hours. Today, the gap between parents' work schedules and students' school schedules can amount to 20-25 hours per week (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1998). A scarcity of extra learning experiences during these hours may account for a large part of the achievement differential between minority and non-minority and low- and middle-income students.

Lack of supervision during this time also exposes children to risk. For this reason, whole communities, not just families and schools, stand to benefit from structured after-school programs. While media attention in recent years has focused on dramatic incidents of violence within schools, public safety officials have been seeking a solution to the more common problem of after-school delinquency. Violent crime triples between the hours of 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Children are also at much greater risk of becoming victims of violent crime during these hours. Structured after-school programs have been shown to reduce rates of juvenile crime, as well as incidents involving the victimization of juveniles, during that high-risk period (U.S. Dept. of Education 1998).

Positive Effects of After-School Programs: Some Research Findings

The benefits of a well-structured program are many. According to Wellesley College's National Institute on Out-of-School Time (1998), a good after-school program provides four significant assets:

- Relationships with caring, competent, and consistent adults
- Access to enriching learning activities

- Access to safe and healthy environments
- Partnerships with families, schools, and communities

Increased interaction with peers in a warm, structured environment contributes to enhanced social development in children. Research shows that children who participate in school programs may behave better in class, handle conflict more effectively, and cooperate more with authority figures and their peers (Posner & Vandell 1994; Baker & Witt 1995).

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. After-school programs have been shown to reduce both juvenile delinquency and victimization. They can also improve attendance and reduce the drop-out rate (U.S. Dept. of Education 1998).

A study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1996) found that students who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities are 49 percent less likely to use drugs and 37 percent less likely to become teen parents than students who do not participate in extracurricular activities.

Not all children engage in high-risk behavior after school, but the most frequent discretionary activity during these hours, television watching, can also be detrimental to a child's development. Children and teens watch, on average, about 23 hours of television per week. Roughly 90 percent of the time is spent watching programs that are not specifically designed for children. By age 18, the average child has seen 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders, on television (U.S. Dept. of Education 1998). Children who participate in effective, structured after-school programs spend significantly less time watching television than children who are unsupervised or informally supervised after school (Posner & Vandell 1994; Baker & Witt 1995).

Communities as a whole can benefit from effective after-school programs through reduced criminal activity costs. In addition, school districts can save over the long term because of a decrease in special education placements.

Students who participate in good after-school programs develop new skills and interests and express higher aspirations for the future, including a desire to obtain a college education (U.S. Dept. of Education 1998).

"Students whose families are poor urgently require more of the sort of social capital that shapes the networks, values, norms, and relationships that make it possible for lives to have happy endings . . . They need activities during all of their waking hours, not just the traditional school day, that embellish intellectual growth."

Gene I. Maeroff, *Altering Destinies*

■ Types of Programs

Effective after-school programs address developmental needs of the whole child. The overall focus of a program may be academic, recreational, or cultural. Programs may be community-based or school-based.

While the enrichment component of after-school programs can be directly or indirectly tied to the school curriculum, some basic consistency with regard to academic goals is generally considered desirable, even if the program only offers homework assistance and basic skills learning. Certain successful after-school programs, such as the Murfreesboro City Schools project (Jones 1995), have ensured a connection with school-day curricula by employing regular school day teaching staff. Others choose to employ qualified instructors who attend weekly meetings with school-day staff in order to maintain a close connection.

Organized sports, drama, music, dance, chess clubs, and science clubs are all activities which promote teamwork, good sportsmanship, coping strategies, and problem solving. Today, these activities are less available to children, particularly those from low-income and inner-city families, than they were a generation ago. After-school programs can fill a valuable role by providing such opportunities.

Many cultural skills important to human development are not taught in the classroom. These include hobbies such as woodwork, sewing, knitting, cooking, and gardening, and skills such as etiquette, personal grooming, conflict resolution, and respect for elders. Though non-academic, these skills contribute to students' sense of their own competence, an important factor in connection and overall resiliency.

■ Most Important Features of Effective Programs

Successful programs of all types, whether academic, recreational, or cultural in focus, have four basic features in common: consistent structure, active community involvement, responsiveness to participants' needs and interests, and extensive training for teachers and volunteers.

Structure

At least one study (Pierce et al. 1997) has shown that all children, but especially boys, respond best to a program that offers limited, structured activities as opposed to a wide array of optional, unstructured activities. Another study (Posner & Vandell 1994) found that low-income children involved in formally structured programs had better work habits, better peer relations, and were rated as being more "emotionally adjusted" than students who were informally supervised.

Community Involvement

Often, after-school programs widen their pool of resources, expertise, and activities by using the services of parents and other community volunteers. In some cases, community partners assume primary responsibility for working with kids after school, allowing teachers to focus exclusively on their academic-day responsibilities. Whether or not com-

munity volunteers are involved in a program, children can forge a connection with their communities by taking part in service-learning activities as part of the after-school curriculum. It is generally recommended that all programs establish an external advisory board made up of school and community members to maintain a link between the two and help things run smoothly.

Responsiveness to Participants' Needs

The more ownership parents and children feel, the more likely it is that they will stay involved. Families and children should be invited to participate in the planning stages of after-school programs. In turn, programs can play an active role in providing social support to disadvantaged students and their families. Some policy makers believe that schools and communities should get more involved in the whole lives of disadvantaged students (Maeroff 1998). This support can take a variety of forms. Bilingual support staff at the Youth Employment Program for At-Risk students in Indiana visit participants' families to help with housing, employment, and health needs which can interfere with a student's educational success (U.S. Dept. of Education 1999). Support can also take the form of modeling good parenting practices. The Chicago Lighthouse After School Program teaches parents how to help children with homework. Ninety-five percent of parents of children in New Hampshire's Y.O.U. program reported that they have learned how to be a better parent by observing after-school staff interact in positive ways with their children (U.S. Dept. of Education 1998).

Training

Many pre-packaged programs have relatively structured materials and training procedures. This does not mean that schools should necessarily implement programs from outside vendors. If a school plans to create and implement its own program, however, time must be allowed for extensive structural planning, curriculum development, and training.

Regardless of the goals of the program, adequate training and supervision of the staff is a critical component of the program's success. Training must include teaching staff and volunteers to work well with children, help to resolve disputes, adapt to the needs of children of different ages and backgrounds, and implement the program's academic, cultural, and recreational components

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Web Resources:

21st Century Community Learning Centers
This U.S. Department of Education program provides resources and funding opportunities for schools to develop before, after, and summer extended learning programs. Publications available through this site offer practical information for every phase of community learning center development, from community assessment to budgeting and evaluation. Publications are also available by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN or by e-mail at partner@ed.gov.
www.ed.gov/21stcclc/

National Network for Child Care
This organization offers a wide range of articles on the philosophy and the nuts and bolts of setting up extended-day programs.
www.nncc.org/SACC/sacc.page.html

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
NCREL offers excellent background information and an extensive list of extended learning publications and web sites.
www.ncrel.org/sdrs/timely/extiss.htm
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"Before and after school and summer programs help kids stay on the right track from the beginning, by providing reading tutoring to younger children, mentors to guide older children through the math and science courses — like Algebra and Geometry — that pave the way to college, as well as opportunities in the arts, sports, and recreation and help from caring adults to guide kids to grow and develop into strong individuals."

Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers: Extending Learning in a Safe, Drug- Free Environment Before and After School

Summer Learning Programs

Many schools are abandoning the traditional school calendar, with its three months of summer vacation, and approaching learning as a year-round opportunity. Summer programs added to the traditional 180-day school year provide unique opportunities for remediation and enrichment.

As every teacher knows, students typically forget a great deal over the summer. For reasons that are not immediately clear, children from low-income families tend to lose even more ground than children of higher socionomic status (Heyns 1978, 1987). In an effort to counteract the effects of the summer break, September is traditionally devoted to review of the previous year's curriculum. But even with this review, some students are not able to regain their foothold. They may remain behind during the entire school year, with the result that at the end of the following summer they are even further behind. If this trend is not addressed early in elementary school, these students are at risk of becoming chronic low-achievers (Guskey 1985).

While summer programs are no substitute for improved school-year instruction, summer school can significantly enhance the self-confidence of under-achieving students, replacing their sense of failure with a sense of pride and competence. Summer school has come a long way since the days when it was considered a kind of punishment. Even remedial programs can encourage children to combine what they consider fun with learning about math, science, reading, writing, art, music, and computers.

Not all summer programs focus on academic enrichment. But declining academic achievement nationwide has led to a recent resurgence of summer school programs. In 1997, Chicago was the first large district to require summer school for low-achieving students. Gains in test scores there led many other communities to follow suit. In the summer of 1999, half of the nation's large city school systems offered remedial summer school, and many of them required students who had failed state exams to attend (White & Johnston 1999).

Summer enrichment programs for gifted students are also gaining in popularity. Such programs offer students an opportunity to explore a special interest intensively, often with teacher/mentors who are professionals in the field. For children whose abilities surpass those of their age group, summer programs based on skill and interest rather than age can be particularly rewarding (Ware 1990).

Classroom teachers can also benefit from the condensed, more intimate scale of summer programs, using them as a kind of teaching practicum. In this way, students in regular academic-year classrooms get to benefit from what their teachers learn over the summer (Aidman 1998).

Essential Components of Effective Summer Programs

Effective programs, whether academically focused or not, are balanced to meet the needs of the whole child, social and emotional as well as intellectual (Ware 1990).

Denoya (1998) says that successful extended-day programs are characterized by:

- well-defined program vision with activities tailored to needs of participants
- recognition of the value of diverse backgrounds and experiences
- respect, trust, and caring between staff and students
- solid organizational structure
- high expectations for attendance and behavior
- effective collaboration between community organizations, schools, and other groups

Ineffective programs are ones in which teachers have large classes containing students of widely varying abilities, with little accountability for outcomes, inadequate curriculum planning, and insufficient resources (Aidman 1997).

Denoya (1998) discusses four logistical considerations which must be addressed before an academic program can succeed: curriculum development, orientation, facilities, and field trips. These considerations are also relevant to other kinds of programs.

Curriculum development. Academic programs should incorporate enrichment and skills-improvement activities, career counseling if directed toward older children, and an academic year follow-up component. Curricula can include remedial or advanced coursework, tutorials, lab projects, research, field work, mentoring by professionals, and even business internships. A comprehensive program should integrate non-instructional "electives." Summer is an ideal time for students to apply classroom learning to real-world experience. This exposure can spark enthusiasm for academics in students who are struggling, and reinforce the interest of successful students.

Orientation. A program handbook can be a valuable reference for participants, delineating the program's objectives, schedule, and behavior expectations, and introducing the staff. A face-to-face orientation involving parents and students is also recommended.

Facilities. Depending on the scope and duration of the program, as much as six months of advance work may be required to coordinate computer and science labs, recreational facilities, transportation, and health services, as well as housing and food service if the program is residential.

Field trips. Connecting field trips with a program's theme is a good way to enhance the learning experience. Certain arrangements must be made in advance for most field trips, including tickets, transportation, and parking. Staff will want to preview the site before taking the students, in order to make on-site arrangements for the group and anticipate potential problems.

All programs, but particularly those targeting a low-income student body, will need to take into consideration transportation and funding barriers to student participation. Ideally, programs will either provide busing or find a location convenient to public transportation (Denoya 1998). Students may be required to pay tuition at some level, but scholarships will have to be available, and the majority of program funding should come from other sources (see funding section).

■ Research Findings on the Positive Effects of Good Summer Programs

Students on average lose about a month of grade-level equivalent skills from the day school is dismissed to the first day of school in the fall (Cooper 1996). Loss of skills is particularly pronounced among students of lower socionomic status (Heyns 1978). This may be partly due to the fact that many enriching activities—traveling, museum visits, summer camp—are costly.

Grade level is another variable in the effect of summer vacation. Students in fourth grade and beyond have been shown to experience significant academic slippage over the summer, while first- through third-graders gained or remained constant (Allinder et al. 1992; Entwistle & Alexander 1992).

Summer programs that provide opportunities for gaining and retaining knowledge can mitigate the negative effects of summer break (Denoya 1998). With their smaller class sizes, more individualized attention, and greater access to resources, they can serve to enhance a reluctant student's motivation (Aidman 1997). Students who are performing above grade level also find reason to thrive in summer programs, placed among peers who share their enthusiasm and skill (Ware 1990).

■ Types of Programs

All summer programs have educational benefits, but not all are strictly academic. Academic programs emphasize overall educational goals in math, science, and reading. Non-academic programs focus on extra-curricular learning, and might include an arts camp, a jump rope camp, a soccer clinic, a cooking class, or a drug-abuse prevention workshop. All programs, whether academic, arts, or recreational, benefit from field trips, mentoring, and parental involvement (Denoya et al. 1997). Any program may be either residential or commuter. The duration of the program is partly dependent on student age. Younger children will benefit from briefer, more hands-on programs, where more mature students might prefer an extended program offering a variety of activities (Denoya 1998).

Student and Staff Recruitment

Criteria for selection of staff will vary based on the goals of the program. If the goals are general academic ones for the elementary level, a qualified elementary teacher is required. If the program is a remedial one, teachers should have specific qualifications for working with disadvantaged or at-risk youth. A competent, experienced program director also will be needed. Large-scale programs should also employ an assistant director, a secretary, and a community coordinator (Denoya 1998).

A number of barriers exist which can prevent young people—especially low-income youth—from taking part in summer programs. These barriers include transportation problems, high costs, and lack of knowledge about programs. If a program is remedial, students will likely be advised to enroll based on academic performance. Otherwise, several strategies can be used to recruit students from the target populations, including:

- school-sponsored student visits to summer program sites
- publicity about upcoming summer programs in local and school newspapers
- informational meetings with prospective students and their parents where teachers, program directors, and previous students are available to answer questions
- distribution of brochures and applications (Denoya 1998)

Problems in student and staff recruitment can arise in spite of good planning. It is important that program administrators rely on clear documentation and frequent communication with students, staff, and parents. To compensate for last minute pull-outs, it is a good idea to keep enrollment numbers flexible, while not exceeding an ideal ratio of 10 - 15 students per teacher (Denoya 1998).

Evaluation

Thorough documentation of the outcomes of summer programs is essential to ensuring future funding and support. There are several ways to evaluate a program's effects. Leffert and colleagues suggest the following (1996):

Outcome Study. This is most practical when the program has specifically stated goals. Many summer programs have general aims, so measurable outcomes on an individual or group level are difficult to achieve.

Conceptual framework review. For programs that are guided by a certain theoretical approach, short-term evaluation involves assessing the degree to which the program conforms to the theoretical framework.

Integrated Approach. Combining the above methods provides the most useful information for program improvement, expansion, or restructuring.

Questions to consider when developing an evaluation plan include: Is the program ready—i.e. well-established and stable enough—for a summary evaluation? Are goals realistic and clear? Is the program of adequate duration and intensity to achieve the desired outcomes? The goal of any evaluation strategy should be to gather information that can be used to strengthen the program (Denoya 1998).

A self-evaluative questionnaire to be completed by everyone invested in the program, including teachers, administrators, parents, and students, is a crucial piece of any comprehensive evaluation plan.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

School Resiliency-Building Assessment

Evaluate the following elements of school resiliency building using a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating "we have this together," 2 indicating "we've done a lot in this area, but could do more," 3 indicating "we are getting started," and 4 indicating "nothing has been done."

Belonging

- ☐ *Students* have a positive bond with at least one caring adult in the school.
- ☐ *Students* feel cared for and supported in the school.
- ☐ *Students* experience many types of incentives, recognitions, and rewards.
- ☐ *Students* belong to a caring advisory group that helps them when they are having problems.
- ☐ *Students* are engaged in lots of interest-based before-, after-, and during-school activities.
- ☐ *Staff* feels cared for and appreciated in the school.
- ☐ *Staff* engages in meaningful interactions with one another.
- ☐ *Staff* experiences many types of incentives, recognitions, and rewards.
- ☐ *Staff* has been involved in creating meaningful vision and mission statements.
- ☐ Families are positively bonded to the *school*.
- ☐ The *school* has a climate of kindness and encouragement.
- ☐ The physical environment of the *school* is warm, positive, and inviting.
- ☐ Resources needed by students and staff are secured and distributed fairly in the *school*.
- ☐ **SCORE**

Competence

- ☐ *Students* believe they can succeed.
- ☐ *Students* experience little or no labeling (formally or informally) or tracking.
- ☐ *Students* use refusal skills, assertiveness, healthy conflict resolution, good decision making and problem solving, and healthy stress-management skills most of the time.
- ☐ *Staff* works cooperatively together and emphasizes the importance of cooperation.
- ☐ *Staff* believes members can succeed.
- ☐ *Staff* has the interpersonal skills necessary to engage in effective organizational functioning and the professional skills necessary for effective teaching.
- ☐ *Staff* is rewarded for risk-taking and excellence.
- ☐ The *school* promotes a philosophy of lifelong learning.
- ☐ The *school* provides growth plans for staff and students with clear outcomes, regular reviews, and supportive feedback.
- ☐ The *school* provides the skill development needed by all members of the school community.
- ☐ An attitude of "can do" permeates the *school.*
- ☐ **SCORE**

Empowerment

- ☐ *Students* are engaged in cooperative learning that focuses on both social skills and academic outcomes.
- ☐ *Students* are involved in school decision making, including governance and policy.
- ☐ *Students* are clear about the behaviors expected of them and experience consistency in boundary enforcement.
- ☐ *Staff* is clear about what is expected of them and experience consistency of expectations.
- ☐ *Staff* is involved in school decision making, including governance and policy.
- ☐ The *school* fosters an ongoing discussion of norms, rules, goals, and expectations for staff and students.
- ☐ The *school* provides training necessary for members of the school community to effectively set and live by behavioral expectations.
- ☐ **SCORE**

Usefulness

- ☐ *Students* are involved in programs that emphasize service to other students, school, and the community.
- ☐ *Staff* is engaged in both job-specific and organizationwide responsibilities.
- ☐ All people in the *school* community (students, parents, staff) are viewed as resources rather than problems, objects, or clients.
- ☐ The *school* climate emphasizes "doing what really matters."
- ☐ **SCORE**
- ☐ **TOTAL SCORE**

Range of Scores

Overall:	35-140	Belonging:	13-52
Students:	12 - 48	Competence:	11-44
Staff:	11 - 44	Empowerment:	7-28
School:	12 - 48	Usefulness:	4-16

Appendix B

Analysis of Extended-Day Programs

From CRESPAR Technical Report No. 24, *A Review of Extended-Day and After-School Programs and Their Effectiveness,* by Olatokunbo S. Fashola.

After-school programs are often not linked to the regular school day, so studying their effects is very difficult. Relatively few specific programs have been thoroughly evaluated, and the evaluations that have been done are quite inconsistent. The 33 program reviews that follow are based on a broad search and analysis of existing evaluations. Some are more detailed than others, or offer different kinds of information, reflecting the diversity of their sources. However, all of the programs show some evidence of effectiveness and replicability.

Two broad types of programs for school-age children are included in these reviews:

After-School Programs. These programs seek to help children make creative use of their free time through opportunities to explore and develop skills, talents, and hobbies. Academic achievement, attendance, or other school-related outcomes may not be primary goals.

School-Based Academic Extended-Day Programs. In these programs, the goals, outcomes, and methods of academic instruction are directly connected to what takes place during the school day. They usually take place on the school grounds and may provide a mixture of academic, recreational, and cultural programs. Teachers and paraprofessionals are usually paid to oversee these programs.

This report describes programs that have strong evidence of effectiveness. It also includes some programs that have little evidence of effectiveness yet, but do have active dissemination and replicability materials that could be used by other after-school programs. Some of the programs were developed specifically for use after school, and others are adaptable. All of the programs have been used with at-risk students.

Evidence of effectiveness in this review is reported in the form of effect sizes or NCEs. An effect size is the proportion of a standard deviation by which an experimental group exceeds a control group. To give a sense of scale, an effect size of +1.0 would be equivalent to 100 points on the Standford Achievement Test scale, two stanines, 15 points of IQ, or about 21 NCEs. In general, an effect size of +0.25 or more would be considered educationally significant.

The 34 programs reviewed by CRESPAR fall into four major categories:

- Language Arts After-School Programs
- Academically Oriented After-School Programs in Other Areas
- Study Skills Programs
- Tutoring Programs to Improve Reading

For more details on the focus and methodology of this review, see CRESPAR Technical Report No. 24:
www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report24entire.htm

Language Arts After-School Programs

These programs were designed to help students experiencing difficulties or to provide enriching opportunities for students in language arts.

Books and Beyond

GRADE LEVEL: K-8

OVERVIEW

Books and Beyond is a voluntary reading program aimed at helping and motivating students in grades K-8 to read more recreationally and watch less television. The program strives to help students become more critical about the types of television shows that they watch. With the combination of discriminate television watching and enjoyable recreational reading, the ultimate goal of Books and Beyond is to improve reading skills and to improve students' attitudes towards books and reading. Students earn small awards such as theme folders, pencils, and gold medals if they read a certain number of books, depending upon grade level. Books and Beyond supplements the school's regular reading program, and has also been implemented in after-school or extended school-day programs.

When schools implement Books and Beyond, they develop a coordinating team which consists of the principal, library-media specialist, three teachers, and three parents. All teachers are informed about the program and encouraged to participate by reading aloud to their classes on a regular basis and by acting as role models who record their own recreational reading. The main implementation and operation of the program are usually the responsibility of the core team — including parents — rather than the individual classroom teacher.

When after-school programs implement the after-school version of Books and Beyond, the core team consists of a director and two or three staff coordinators who take on the

responsibilities of the core team. Additionally, older students (junior high school and high school students) can be used as reading models, and they, along with parents, are responsible for keeping track of the books read.

The intended audience for this program is all students from varying backgrounds, including gifted, at-risk, special education, and bilingual students. Non-readers can participate in the program by having books read to them; readers can include tutors, study buddies, community readers, and/or caregivers. Schools operate Books and Beyond for six to eight months, allowing sufficient time to build positive reading habits, and the program is implemented in the form of a read-a-thon.

Books and Beyond includes a parental component. Parent volunteers coordinate the record-keeping activities of the program, including tracking the books read by the students and the various awards presented. The program asks parents who work with the program at home to read to their children, take them to the public library, help them keep records of the books they read at home and at school, chart the amount of time they spend watching television, and model reading themselves.

Students in kindergarten through third grade have a goal of 120 books over the course of the program that they are required to read, or have read to them, if they wish to earn a gold medal award at the end of the program. Children in grades 4-8 are required to read 2,400 pages in order to obtain a gold medal. These goals are adaptable, depending on the needs of the children involved in the program. Books and Beyond typically receives support and endorsement from local businesses. Read-a-thon theme topics include Travel through Time, Jog America, Quest for Knowledge, Sports Decathlon, Around the World with Books, and Mysteries of the Deep.

EVALUATION

The evaluations of Books and Beyond do not include evaluations of the program in after-school or extended school-day settings. The pilot evaluation of Books and Beyond was done in three evaluation sites, and the replication evaluation included a diverse group of students. In a Missouri study, the students in grades 2-8 were predominantly Caucasian middle-class students. In a Connecticut study, the students were in grades 2-6, and were of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. These students had been labeled at-risk for dropping out of school. Finally, students in a New York study were in grades 2-8, were of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and had shown very low standardized test scores. The evaluation consisted of surveys of the students and their parents about the number of hours that the students had spent watching television as well as the number of books the students had read during the program. Students involved in the evaluations did not include all of the participants in the program, but rather, students who had read a minimum number of books (for example, 60 books in grades 2-3). Surveys were administered at the beginning and end of the sessions. The original study included a control group, but the differences in responses between the treatment and control groups were not statistically significant. All students, experimental as well as control, stated that they had decreased the amount of time they spent watching television, increased discrimination in their selection of television

programs, increased the number of books they read, would be more likely to choose to read a book than watch television (compared to the beginning of the program), and read more at home.

The limitations of these studies are clear. They rely on self-report data only and have no assessment of actual gains in reading achievement. The gains that were noted on pre-to-post surveys were also seen among non-participants, and the studies were limited to students who had read at least a certain number of books. These findings can only be considered suggestive at best.

SCOPE

Books and Beyond currently exists in over 5,000 schools in forty-five states, has been expanded to the preschool level with the Ready to Read program, and has also been adopted by 130 elementary schools in the United Kingdom. Books and Beyond has also been used as a stand-alone after-school and extended school-day program in schools, in boys and girls' clubs, and in some after-school community efforts in low-income housing projects. Books and Beyond has added a new program titled Math, Science, and Beyond, seeking to teach children mathematics and science during the after-school hours. This program is currently being developed and evaluated under the auspices of a National Science Foundation grant for use in after-school programs.

REVIEWS

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Junior Great Books Curriculum of Interpretive Reading, Writing, and Discussion

GRADE LEVEL: 2-12

OVERVIEW

The Junior Great Books Curriculum of Interpretive Reading, Writing, and Discussion (JGBC) is a junior version of the Great Books Foundation program. It strives to promote cognitive processing in reading comprehension and literacy in children in grades 2-12 by emphasizing three kinds of thinking: factual, interpretive, and evaluative. These three types of information about text are explored by children using a method of shared inquiry and interpretive questioning, which encourages children to realize that there is more than one answer to questions asked about the text they have read.

The JGBC is not a stand-alone program, but is used as a partial replacement of or supplement to the regular reading program during the regular school day. Some activities that the children in the JGBC program participate in include text-opener, reading the story twice, sharing questions, directed notes, interpreting words, shared inquiry discussion, and writing after the discussion.

When schools choose to engage in the JGBC program, the school is provided with a two-day, ten-hour, "Basic Leader" training course. Schools can also choose to enroll in optional one- or two-day curriculum leader training courses. During this training, core leaders are taught to conduct activities such as preparing units and discussing interpretive issues together. Students who participate in the program are usually enrolled for one semester, in which they study an anthology consisting of twelve selections.

EVALUATION

In an evaluation of JGBC that researched the effects of the program on academic achievement in reading vocabulary during the school day, 150 JGBC students were matched with 120 control students in four schools, and tested on the ITBS (3 schools) and CTBS (1 school). This study included both urban and suburban populations. The JGBC schools on each site involved a control classroom and a treatment (JGBC) classroom. Teachers were randomly assigned to a group (using a coin flip) to determine whether they would be in the control group or the experimental group. In four of the schools, JGBC students outscored their control group counterparts (ES= +.24, +.34, +.39, and +.32). An additional internal evaluation of the program showed that students involved in JGBC demonstrated stronger interpretive thinking skills than did the students in the control group.

These results show the effects of JGBC in programs used during the school day, and not after school. JGBC was not originally created for use in after-school settings and has not been evaluated for such use, but has often been used in that way. The creators of the program are able and willing to help after-school programs implement JGBC in their specific programs either with teachers or paraprofessionals (volunteers, parents, and college students).

SCOPE

JGBC exists in schools across the country. The Great Books Foundation, established in 1947, trains more than 12,000 people each year to lead Junior Great Books programs.

REVIEWS

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CONTACT

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Murfreesboro Extended School Program (ESP)

GRADE LEVEL: K-6

OVERVIEW

One of the most widely known community-based extended-day school programs is the Murfreesboro Extended School Program (ESP) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This program began in 1986 at one elementary school. The program has a clear academic focus, but also includes cultural and recreational elements.

The hours of the Extended School Program are in the morning from 6:00 a.m. until 7:45 a.m., and then after school from 2:25 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. At the end of the school day, students involved in the ESP program are divided into groups of 12 and provided with a qualified staff person who provides academic enrichment and support. Each day for 30 minutes, students are provided with tutors from Middle Tennessee State University, parents, and staff from the school, who help them with their homework. Following this, the

students involved in the program are able to choose additional academic skills classes, in which they learn basic reading skills and basic mathematics skills, geography, science, study skills, and other higher order thinking skills, using the Paideia philosophy as the basis for the curriculum and instructional program. The Paideia program emphasizes engaging all students in intellectual inquiry, with a particular focus on great books and great thinkers. It uses small group "Socratic" seminars, coaching by teachers, peer tutoring, project-based learning, and other means of engaging students as active learners. Paideia principles are used as a general guide to reform, not as a specific strategy.

Cultural activities include music, violin and guitar, arts, computer clubs, and foreign language. Additionally, students have opportunities to engage in recreational activities, such as physical education, movies, handicrafts, dance, Brownies, and 4-H.

EVALUATION

The ESP program does not have evidence of effectiveness. It exists only in Murfreesboro, but has been sustained for 11 years.

SCOPE

The program is now institutionalized in the Murfreesboro school district, with support from the central school district as well as site-based support. About half of the school-aged students in the district (25,000 students) are involved. Each school has a staff person provided by the district, the equivalent of a half-time assistant principal, who is mainly responsible for the extended school program

REVIEWS

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The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

GRADE LEVEL: K-12

OVERVIEW

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (1991) is a cross-age tutoring program designed to increase the self-esteem and school success of at-risk middle and high school students by placing them in positions of responsibility as tutors of younger elementary school students. The Valued Youth Program (VYP) was originally developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association in San Antonio, Texas. The original implementation of the program was funded by Coca-Cola, and implemented in collaboration with five school districts in San Antonio between 1984 and 1988, with approximately 525 high school tutors and 1575 elementary tutees.

The overall goal of the program is to reduce the dropout rates of at-risk students by improving their self-concepts and academic skills. This is done by making them tutors, and providing assistance with basic academic skills. The program also emphasizes elimination of non-academic and disciplinary factors that contribute to dropping out. For example, it attempts to develop students' sense of self-control, decrease student truancy, and reduce disciplinary referrals. It also seeks to form home-school partnerships to increase the level of support available to students.

When students agree to serve as tutors, they are required to enroll in a special tutoring class, which allows them to improve their own basic academic skills as well as their tutoring skills. The students who are involved as tutors are paid a minimum wage stipend. The tutors work with three elementary students at a time for a total of about four hours per week. They are taught to develop self-awareness and pride, which is expected to make them less likely to exhibit disciplinary problems.

Functions are held to honor and recognize the tutors as role models. They receive T-shirts, caps, and certificates of merit for their efforts.

EVALUATION

The main evaluation of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program compared 63 VYP tutors to 70 students in a comparison group (Cardenas, Montecel, Supik & Harris, 1992). The students in four San Antonio schools were matched on the basis of age, ethnicity, lunch eligibility, percentage of students retained in grade, scores on tests of reading, quality of school life, and self-concept. They were selected (not randomly) into the experimental group based on scheduling and availability, and the remaining students were placed into the comparison group. Nearly all of the students in both groups were Latino and limited English proficient. The control students were somewhat less likely to qualify for free lunch or to have been retained in grade.

Two years after the program began, 12% of the comparison students but only 1% of the VYP students had dropped out. Reading grades were significantly higher for the VYP group, as were scores on a self-esteem measure and on a measure of attitude towards school.

SCOPE

The VYP has been widely replicated throughout the southwest and elsewhere. In 1990, additional funding was provided by Coca-Cola for sites in California, Florida, New York, and Texas, and the program is now being extended into schools in Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and other states. The Coca-Cola VYP has also been used in after-school settings.

REVIEWS

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. (1991). Proposal submitted to the Program Effectiveness Panel of the U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

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Project Success Enrichment

GRADE LEVEL: K-12

OVERVIEW

Project Success Enrichment was originally developed to enrich the language arts of gifted and talented students (including low-income students) in elementary schools during the regular school day by providing them with learning activities that include higher order thinking skills, cooperative learning, interactive discussions, and shared decision making. Since its original development, it has been used among children of varying socio-economic, racial, and academic achievement levels. Teachers who incorporate PSE into their curriculum attend a two-day workshop and learn how to adapt their curriculum to the program's goals. Teachers plan their PSE curriculum in a structured and hierarchical manner specified

by the model. Project Success Enrichment uses a whole-language approach to teach language arts, incorporating and connecting reading, writing, and thinking to specific academic processes. Students work on such language arts skills as imagery (use of metaphors and similes), vocabulary, sentences, literature, and formatting their work. They engage in writing short stories and poetry, drafting and editing their work, analyzing literature, and completing and evaluating projects.

EVALUATION

Although PSE has a language arts and a visual arts K-12 component, the area that received validation from the National Diffusion Network (NDN) was language arts in grades 4-6, when used during the regular school day. In the main evaluation of PSE, the language arts performance of over 700 PSE students in gifted programs in grades 3 through 7 was compared to a control group, using an alternative assessment developed and validated by Sebesta (PSE, 1995). The work of all of the students in both the control and the experimental groups was randomly paired (using a random number table) and then given to the evaluators. Evaluators were asked to evaluate the products with ratings of whether the portfolio products were better than those of an average gifted student for the grade level being assessed, without knowing which students belonged to which groups. Results were analyzed using the sign test, and effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's "g." Overall, gifted students who had received PSE outperformed comparison gifted students with respect to the number of "better" ratings. All of the differences between the two groups showed effect sizes between +.44 and +.50.

PSE is also involved in other national and developmental projects such as Applying Technology in Rural Education (ATIRE) and Project Step-Up.

REVIEWS

Project Success Enrichment. (1995). Submission to the Program Effectiveness Panel of the U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

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Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction

GRADE LEVEL: K-12

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI) is to improve elementary school students' reading ability. This program emphasizes such reading-related skills as word recognition, study skills, spelling, penmanship, proofing, and writing skills, leading to improvement in decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. ECRI has been developed and evaluated as a regular school-day and an after-school program.

ECRI teachers expect all students to excel. The lessons for ECRI are scripted and incorporate multisensory and sequential methods and strategies of teaching. In a typical lesson, teachers introduce new concepts in lessons using at least seven methods of instruction, teaching at least one comprehension skill, one study skill, and one grammar or creative writing skill. Initially, students are prompted for answers by teachers. As the students begin to master the information presented, fewer and fewer prompts are provided until students can perform independently.

EVALUATION

In one evaluation of ECRI (Reid 1989) during the regular school day, researchers investigated the effects of ECRI on students in grades 2 through 7 in Morgan County, Tennessee, and compared them to students in a control group who were using a commercial reading program. Both schools were tested using the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) reading and comprehension vocabulary subtests. ECRI students outperformed those in the control group, with effect sizes ranging from +.48 to +.90 in reading comprehension, and from +.31 to 1.40 in vocabulary. Another evaluation of the effectiveness of ECRI on Latino bilingual students in Oceanside, California, Killeen, Texas, and Calexico, California showed NCE gains that ranged from +6.4 to +25.7.

Although ECRI has been used mostly as a language arts program, it has also been frequently used as an after-school remedial tutoring program. The main evaluation of this program was done comparing two groups of randomly assigned high school students with reading difficulties either to a control group that provided a generic method of reading remediation (control) or to a treatment group (ECRI). At the end of the school year, students in both groups were tested using a standardized test, and results showed that students who had been involved in ECRI made significantly greater gains on the standardized tests than did students in the control groups.

SCOPE

ECRI is used in hundreds of schools nationwide. The ECRI after-school program began as a remedial tutoring program at Brigham Young University in Utah, with goals of improving the reading skills of special education students and high school students who were

behind in reading. The program currently exists as a reading clinic, in which future and current teachers are trained to help students with reading difficulties, using the ECRI method.

REVIEWS

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ACADEMICALLY ORIENTED AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN OTHER AREAS

This section consists of independent (sometimes commercial) programs developed specifically for use in after-school settings. Five of the programs (Voyager, Explore, Mindsurf™, Foundations, Inc.™, and Hands On Science Outreach) were developed and are used by private organizations. These programs are currently being implemented in after-school settings across the country.

Voyager Expanded Learning

GRADE LEVEL: K-6

OVERVIEW

Voyager Expanded Learning is an extended school-day (before- and after-school, summer, and intersession) program. It has a variety of academically enriching themes, designed to help elementary school children in grades K-6 become active learners in mathematics, reading, science, arts, and social studies.

When a school adopts the Voyager model, a district administrator is selected to conduct training sessions prior to the implementation of the program, and to serve as a facilitator whenever problems may arise. Reporting to the district director is a site director, typically

a teacher in the participating school. This person receives weekly training in the philosophy, curriculum, and teaching methods, and then facilitates execution of the program with a maximum of eighteen children per class.

Using a curriculum designed by a staff of curriculum writers in collaboration with subject area experts, the Voyager Expanded Learning program has designed curriculum units in reading (Timewarp), math (Lightspeed), biology (Dragonfly), business (Success City), the arts (Kaleidoscope), history (Marco Polo), astronomy (Spaceship of the Imagination), physics (Mainspring), archaeology and anthropology (Ice Age), and health (Pre+Med), among others. The goal of these units is to make learning interactive and meaningful by providing a "thematic, multidisciplinary approach to instruction" that will allow students to learn "theories, facts, and concepts, while at the same time requiring them to learn higher order thinking skills by solving real-life problems." The units are divided into daily activities, with active learning projects and outcome objectives for the teachers and the students. The development of the curriculum is research based, and the lessons for each theme are aligned with state and national standards.

EVALUATION

Voyager is currently undergoing an extensive evaluation process using nationally recognized experts. Results reported to date are based largely on teacher-parent surveys, supported by an independent study conducted by the Houston Independent School District involving over 950 students in the control group. The major evaluation has not reported results as yet. On average, results of the analysis showed that students in both groups made gains in math and reading. The results of the information obtained in this study are limited in their generalizability, as it is unknown how the students were selected to be in the two groups. The issue of selection bias was not addressed in the study. Results of the Houston Independent School District study showed that students enjoyed the program and teachers and administrators felt that it helped the students, and that they would use it again.

SCOPE

Voyager currently has sites in over 250 schools across the country and is expanding rapidly.

CONTACT

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Hands On Science Outreach

GRADE LEVEL: pre-K - 6

OVERVIEW

Hands On Science Outreach (HOSO) is an extended school-day and after-school program developed to encourage all children, including minority, low-income, and at-risk students in grades pre-K to 6, to have fun learning science, and to learn by example and experience that anyone can engage in scientific inquiry. HOSO aims to improve problem-solving skills and confidence in participating in science activities.

When schools and community groups adopt Hands On Science Outreach, they are provided with adult leader training activities, program activities, and materials that children are able to take home. These include everyday materials such as paper, water, rubber bands, tapes, and other common things that children can use to perform scientific experiments both during the after-school hours and at home. The activities are divided into grade levels pre-K, K-1, 2-3, and 4-6, and are carried out in eight-week sessions each year.

EVALUATION

Hands On Science Outreach was evaluated in 1993 by Sierra Research Associates (Goodman & Rylander, 1993) to investigate the effects of the program on children's attitudes and understanding of Hands On Science during one session (eight weeks). The study consisted of 51 Hands On Science Outreach participants and 39 control group students. Control students attended the same schools and were in the same classes and grades as the participants. Students were not randomly selected to participate in the program, but they were matched with the control groups on the basis of grade. The assessment tool used in the study included interviews and questions about scientific inquiry, having students recall what they had been taught during the eight-week class, and student perceptions of who can do science and what it takes to do science.

Results of the analysis showed that the HOSO participants made statistically significant gains in their understandings compared to the control group. At the end of the evaluation, the HOSO students understood what science involved, and displayed significantly better content knowledge and significantly better understanding and perceptions of who can do science, as compared to the control group. Other results showed that within the Hands On Science Outreach group, children who were able to recall the information about what had happened during the previous eight weeks did better when asked "what is science?" than students who did not recall as much.

Parents of the students were surveyed to see if their children showed any interest in science at home. Anecdotally, parents of children who scored higher grades on the assessment reported that their children showed more interest in science. Results also showed an

instructor effect; the more highly rated the teachers by the observers, the better the students recalled the information.

This study exhibits many of the characteristics endemic to many after-school evaluational studies. The students were self-selected, and can be assumed to have higher motivation. The assessment focused on the specific material taught in the program, to which the control students were not exposed. The evaluation results, therefore, can be seen only as suggestive, not conclusive or having evidence of effectiveness.

SCOPE

Hands On Science Outreach currently exists in 26 states and the District of Columbia, and in 250 schools and sites around the country.

REVIEW

Goodman, I.F. & Rylander, K. (1993). *An evaluation of children's participation in the Hands On Science Outreach Program.* Cambridge, MA: Sierra Research Associates.

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Fifth Dimension

GRADE LEVEL: K-8

OVERVIEW

Fifth Dimension is a cognitively based extended school-day program, developed at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC) of the University of California at San Diego.

The program operates from a Vygotskyan perspective, based on the theory that exposing young children to increased opportunities to learn academic and social skills in collaboration with more capable others will allow them to develop their academic and social skills. The program stresses social interaction, communication, and problem solving in approaching the various tasks. The children are given choices about what tasks to learn, but are required to follow directions.

Each of the sites creates a mythical "creature" that also serves as a mentor to the students. Each mythical creature is created with input from the students, and its role is to serve as a "sounding board"/mentor/friend to the children. All of the creatures live inside the computer, and enjoy receiving e-mail messages from the students. Students in the program update the creature about their progress, celebrate their successes, share their frustrations, and seek advice from the creature as they work on their tasks. Additionally, the students have their peers and college students or other volunteers to serve as mentors when solving their tasks.

Each program has a site coordinator, who serves as a bridge between the entity where the program exists (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, church) and the sponsoring/training entity (e.g., the university). The program coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day running of the program and for troubleshooting. The staff of the program mainly consists of undergraduates from local universities (preferably from the sponsoring institute). Prior to working in the program, the undergraduates enroll in a cognition class that explores theories of learning, language, culture, literacy, and cognition. They become "junior researchers," take field notes, observe interactions between children, and attempt to interpret their observations. Then the undergraduates enter into the Fifth Dimension program, where they serve as assistants to and mentors for the students as they guide them through the maze.

Fifth Dimension emphasizes active learning through "playing." In this program, most of the activities use computers, with the exception of a few manual board games. In the after-school programs, the Fifth Dimension is a "maze" or a "map" of tasks that each student must navigate in order to finally become a "wizard's assistant." Each step on the map is usually characterized as a room, and each room has three tasks. Each of these tasks has three levels (beginning, middle, and expert). The types of tasks are developed to meet the needs of the students, and each maze is personalized. Before the students move from one activity to the next, they must complete the requirements of the activity at all three levels. After completing one activity, the students have the opportunity to either move to the next linear task, or to go to the "dare room," where they can choose any activity they like. As the students progress through the maze, they earn points, certificates, and merit badges. When the participants have completed the tasks, they receive certificates and awards that recognize them as "wizards' assistants."

The program is intended to enhance work-study habits, social skills, social consciousness, working with peers, following instructions, and problem solving, and to improve academic achievement in mathematics, reading, and word problems.

EVALUATION

Numerous site-based evaluations have investigated the effects of participation in the program on various cognitive and academic outcomes. However, because participation in this program is voluntary, it was difficult to find an appropriate control group. The program established experimental groups by selecting students who had attended at least a minimal number of sessions. Control groups generally consisted of students who did not

attend the program at all. As a result of the voluntary nature of the program, at some of the sites, turnover made it difficult to establish an experimental group.

Effects of participation in Fifth Dimension were assessed on near transfer, medium transfer, and far transfer of general academic abilities (Blanton Mayer, & Shustack, 1995). Near transfer studies investigated the transfer of skills and knowledge that the children had learned in the Fifth Dimension programs that were specific to the program. Examples of these included improvement in playing computer and board games (study 1), factual knowledge of computers (study 2), hands-on proficiency using computers (study 3), and computer terminology (study 4). In four studies, students in the program showed improvement over time in playing computer and board games. Regarding improvement of factual knowledge of computers, students showed improvement in areas that they had been taught, and this was similar for the four near-transfer studies. These studies did not involve control groups.

Four studies explored the effects of Fifth Dimension on medium transfer of basic literacy skills to new tasks, investigating students' comprehension of computer game instructions. Two studies (studies 5 and 6) were conducted at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, and at California State University, San Marcos. Another investigated the effects of the Fifth Dimension program on improving students' ease of learning to play a new math-related computer game. This study (study 7) took place at the University of California at Santa Barbara. All of the medium-transfer studies included control groups.

The students in studies 5 and 6 were tested on an instrument that had been developed based on a specific computer game. All of the students were administered the pretest, played the game once, and then were administered the post-test. Studies 5 and 6 showed differences in comprehension of instructions between the groups of students who had been involved in the program and those who had not.

SCOPE

Fifth Dimension is headquartered in California, with at sites at ten California university campuses. It also has sites in Boone, North Carolina and Burlington, North Carolina. Fifth Dimension also has international sites in Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Israel, Mexico, and Australia.

REVIEWS

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Blanton, W., Moorman, G.B., Hayes, B.A., & Warner, M.L. (1996, April). *Effects of participation in the Fifth Dimension on far transfer (Technical Report No.3)*. Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, College of Education, Laboratory on Technology and Learning. (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association at New York).

Cole, M. (1994). *First year report: July 1994-June 1995: Using new information technologies in the creation of sustainable after-school literacy activities: From invention to maximizing potential.* Andrew W. Mellon Foundation research proposal [UCSD 94-7098]. La Jolla, CA: The Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition.

Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition. (1994). *How-to manual to La Clase Magica: A bilingual/bicultural Fifth Dimension site.* La Jolla, CA: University of California, San Diego, Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition.

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The Imaginitis Learning System

GRADE LEVEL: 3-12

OVERVIEW

The Imaginitis Learning System is a cooperative learning after-school language arts program created for students in grades 3-12. The goal of the program is to expose the participants to skills needed for effective and productive learning, in hopes that these will help the participants develop strong workplace competencies. The Imaginitis Learning System uses a language arts curriculum created at the University of Minnesota to teach such skills as cooperation, team building, and conflict resolution.

When schools take on the Imaginitis Learning System, teachers are provided with a one-day training program that emphasizes the principles of cooperative learning. Students in the program are divided into groups by age and grade, and provided with a task of working together in a team to creatively construct a book that eventually becomes a portfolio exhibition. The participants work individually on their own books, as well as collectively as a team, to create a class finished product. The team members work together and vote on what should be included or excluded in the process as well as in the final product. The teachers are trained to be "coaches" who keep scores based on the process of cooperative learning as they observe the various teams engage in collaboration. These scores are taken into account at the end of the session when the teachers evaluate the final product. The teachers evaluate the end-products for improvement of the students' writing, speaking, listening, and collaborating skills, as well as quality of the process that the students went through while planning the product.

EVALUATION

The Imaginitis Learning System program has been evaluated in four sites across the country. The evaluations given to all of the sites consisted of two parts. Students were asked to respond to two surveys that measured responses toward cooperative learning and working with others, mastering academic environments, and overall perceptions of student-teacher relationships. The second part of the evaluation measured the extent to which students reported that they would solve problems and resolve conflicts productively.

Four sites were used as test sites: Lynnwood, California, Baltimore, Maryland, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Overall, the results showed that Imaginitis students were significantly higher than control students in the areas of academic self-esteem, cooperation, and perceptions of student-teacher relationships. However, as with other after-school programs, it was difficult to maintain a control group. In some cases, the groups were not evenly matched; in others the groups were evenly matched, but the researchers were unable to gather data for all of the sessions of the program. Because the Imaginitis students were self-selected, even "matched" cannot be considered equivalent, as the Imaginitis students were presumably more motivated. However, when the groups were evenly matched and the results were gathered for all sessions, Imaginitis students reported more positive results than non-Imaginitis students.

Overall, students who had been involved in Imaginitis the previous year were more likely to carry over the effects of the program the following year. This was the case in elementary schools and alternative high schools.

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Explore Incorporated

GRADE LEVEL: K-8

OVERVIEW

Another extended school-day program that attempts to improve students' academic achievement is Explore Incorporated (Explore Inc.). Explore Inc. has main themes incorporated in a curriculum written by academics in consultation with professionals in various academic fields. These themes include experiential learning, community service, physical

education, homework support, and individual activities. As with other programs developed for similar purposes, Explore, Inc. creates modular curriculum materials that are aligned with national, state, and district standards. Some of the curricular modules include social studies (Community, Our Sense of Place), geography (One Earth, One Planet), entrepreneurship (Main Street Inc.), history (Time Traveler), life and biological sciences (Wildlife Discovery), computer science and literacy (Journey to the 21st Century), chemistry and physics (Invention Lab), visual and performing arts (Culture Club), leadership development (Trailblazers), and physical education and fitness (Young Olympians).

Using these themes and modules, Explore connects the goals of each lesson to state and national standards. The goal is to teach children to think critically, with expected outcomes being improved test scores.

When schools take on Explore Inc., the program hires certified teachers and community people (such as scout leaders and community volunteers) who receive an initial intensive training from Explore developers and trainers, followed by monthly monitoring and mini-inservices for the area directors. Explore Inc. also has family and community service components, and provides children with homework assistance.

EVALUATION

No evaluation data are available.

SCOPE

Explore Inc. currently exists in four states (Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland) in thirty schools.

CONTACT
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www.exploreinc.com

JASON Project

GRADE LEVEL: 4-9

OVERVIEW

The JASON Project is a supplemental science education program, engaging students in a year-long scientific expedition through curriculum and supplemental video programs, internet access and activities, and professional development and support. It was founded by explorer Dr. Robert Ballard, discoverer of the *Titanic.*

The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) is making preparations to become a JASON Project Interactive Network site, and later this spring will be contacting schools

about opportunities to participate. Participating schools may offer JASON Project enrichment activities as the framework for an after-school program.

Each year, JASON mounts a major scientific expedition that examines one or more of Earth's physical systems. This project becomes the basis for developing a year-long, interdisciplinary curriculum for students in grades 4-9. Hands-on activities model the work of the expedition researchers. The standards-based, inquiry-driven curriculum is endorsed by the National Science Teachers' Association and is keyed to the national content standards for science and geography.

A satellite broadcast facility on location links the expedition team live to JASON participants, providing direct audio, visual, and data contact with the expedition site. Through the project website, students and teachers can draw on a wealth of resources, touch base with expedition scientists and other experts, and post and share data from local experiments with other students around the world. Throughout the academic year, the online program provides interactive classroom activities as well as discussion groups, moderated chat sessions, online broadcasts, and additional curricular exercises.

JASON also produces and distributes a number of topical videos that illuminate the subjects under study. Teachers use these to zero in on the multi-discipline research being conducted at the expedition site and relate it to their students' own research.

EVALUATION

The JASON Project has been the subject of several external evaluations, including focus groups, interviews with participants, national and local surveys of students and teachers, and independent evaluations of particular components of the project. In 1997, the JASON Project retained Eastern Research Group (ERG) to summarize the evaluations to date, describing consistently identified strengths and limitations.

ERG found that JASON:

- Motivated students and teachers to learn more about science and technology
- Changed students' stereotypes about scientists and the world of work
- Incrementally changed teaching and learning processes
- Provided teachers and students access to technological resources and learning tools

ERG also found that JASON had effectively responded to constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement in the four major components of the program: teacher training, curriculum, telepresence experience, and JASON Online Systems. The summary recommended that a standardized, annual evaluation would more effectively identify areas for improvement.

ERG conducted the first of these evaluations, reviewing the JASON X project in 1999. The survey involved approximately 23 teachers from Primary Interactive Network (PIN) sites

in Las Vegas, Minneapolis, and Long Island. It compared data from this review to findings from the JASON IX and VIII reports.

For these three years, almost all teachers surveyed reported that JASON exceeded or met their personal objectives and goals for their students. JASON assessment and standards tools helped approximately three-fourths of teachers meet national requirements, record student achievement and provide opportunities for sharing knowledge, and assess students' work. Teachers reported that JASON was able to reach non-traditional learners, improve participation, and improve performance based on increased interest.

The data suggest that teachers may not be utilizing the program to its fullest potential. Only about a quarter of students surveyed after JASON X participated in chat sessions, digital activities, or message boards. Evaluators suggest more extensive professional development in this area.

SCOPE

Since starting in 1989, the JASON Project has involved more than five million students and their teachers. The program currently involves about 600,000 students and teachers in the United States, Mexico, England, and Bermuda.

REVIEWS

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Study Skills Programs

Study skills programs can be useful to at-risk students whose academic skills suffer as a result of lack of study skills. These programs do not provide specific curriculum content, but emphasize how to successfully organize and retain information taught in the classroom. This section describes two study skills programs that were not originally created as after-school programs, but can be used in this manner.

Study Skills Across the Curriculum

GRADE LEVEL: 5-8

OVERVIEW

Study Skills Across the Curriculum is a program designed for students in grades 5-8 to improve their academic performance by teaching study skills. Particularly, the program seeks to improve performance in content areas and to better prepare the students for active, independent, and successful learning in high school.

This program teaches students a variety of active learning strategies for studying, and also teaches them how to prepare for different types of tests and examinations, such as multiple choice, true-false, essay, and short answer. Students are taught time management principles and strategies, SQ3R (a system for reading textbooks more efficiently), note-taking from lectures and readings, semantic mapping, and additional study skills such as underlining, highlighting, and listening skills.

When schools take on Study Skills Across the Curriculum, a core group of representatives from the school receives training. This team typically consists of representatives from science, social studies, math, and English. The group then forms an implementation plan for the program to ensure the use of the study skills across the curriculum. Additionally, parents are trained and encouraged to reinforce study skills when their children are engaged in homework activities.

EVALUATION

This evaluation does not include evaluations of Study Skills Across the Curriculum in after-school settings. The evaluation consisted of two parts. The first study compared the study skill patterns and performances of a group of 647 SSAC students to a group of 347 control students. Controlling for pretest differences, the SSAC students outperformed the control group on the study skills inventory (ES=+.52), which measured the extent to which different components of study skills taught in the program were used. The second part measured the performance of the students on a criterion-referenced study skills test created by the Study Skills group. Once again, the SSAC group students outscored the control group (ES=+2.76). However, the set of skills that were measured had not been taught to the control group.

The second part of the evaluation consisted of a comparison of academic report card grades earned by the students in the two groups at the end of the first and third quarters in English and science. Controlling for pretest differences, SSAC students outperformed the control students in English (ES=+.88) and science (ES=+.22).

SCOPE

Study Skills Across the Curriculum was not originally created for use in after-school settings, but has often been used in that way. The creators of the program are able and willing to help after-school programs tailor SSAC to meet their needs. SSAC exists in 1,000 schools across the country.

REVIEWS

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Study Skills Across the Curriculum. (1991). Submission to the Program Effectiveness Panel of the U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

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Project IMPACT

GRADE LEVEL: 3-12

OVERVIEW

Increasing Maximal Performance by Activating Critical Thinking (IMPACT) is a language arts and mathematics program that trains teachers to use critical thinking, problem solving, and higher order thinking in mathematics and language arts with children in grades 3-12. Project IMPACT was not designed for but could be implemented in after-school settings.

With the help of Project IMPACT trainers, classroom teachers learn how to revise their current curriculum and include such critical thinking skills as inductive and deductive reasoning, problem solving, and decision making into their daily teaching. Implementation of the curriculum is self-monitored and peer-monitored, which involves other teachers,

administrators, and project staff. Although the Project IMPACT curriculum was developed for use in mathematics and language arts, it has been expanded for implementation in science classes. Project IMPACT is used with high- and low-achieving students in urban, rural, suburban, public, and private schools.

EVALUATION

Two evaluations of Project IMPACT have been done. These evaluations did not include the use of Project IMPACT in after-school settings. The most recent evaluation compared IMPACT students in grades 6-9 to matched students in a control group. The treatment students outperformed the control group on the Cornell Test of Critical Thinking with effect sizes of +1.81, +.64, +.42, and +.47 in grades six, seven, eight, and nine, respectively (Winocur 1977).

SCOPE

Project IMPACT began in California, and has been adopted by 480 public school districts, 2,384 public schools, and 124 private schools. The program now has adoption sites in 42 states in the U.S. plus Guam and Puerto Rico.

REVIEW

Winocur, S.L. (1977). *A curriculum for choosing.* Newport Beach, CA: Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

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Tutoring Programs to Improve Reading

This section, adapted from Wasik (1997), briefly addresses some structured tutoring programs that exist either as after-school programs or as in-school programs that could be implemented during the after-school hours. For more detailed information on the programs, readers should refer to Wasik (1997). Some of the programs selected for this review have evidence of effectiveness or evaluation, but some do not.

Howard Street Tutoring Program

GRADE LEVEL: 2-3

OVERVIEW

The Howard Street Tutoring Program (Morris 1990a, b) is a remedial tutoring program created for students in grades two and three who are reading below grade level.

When schools become involved in the Howard Street Tutoring Program, a reading specialist or reading teacher becomes the on-site coordinator of the program. This person is trained on how to tutor the students, how to write the lessons and lesson plans to be used by the volunteers, and how to train the tutoring staff. As this is a volunteer program, the staff consists of non-paid adults and college students who must go through the training program before they become tutors.

Classroom teachers, using an informal reading inventory, initially assess potential student participants in the program. If the students are performing significantly below grade level, they are placed in the program. Once enrolled, students engage in daily one-hour one-to-one tutoring sessions, which take place every week.

EVALUATION

The program has been evaluated on a small scale. In two Chicago evaluations, the Howard Street Tutoring Program students outperformed randomly assigned comparison groups in word recognition and word-passage reading (Morris, 1990 a, b).

SCOPE

The program still exists around the country, but its creator has since moved on to another institution (Appalachian State University in North Carolina), where he has begun a similar program (Early Steps) for first grade students encountering similar difficulties in reading.

REVIEWS

Morris, D. (1990). *The Howard Street Tutoring Manual: Case studies in teaching beginning readers.* Boone, NC: Appalachian State University Reading Clinic.

Morris, D., Shaw, B. & Perney, J. (1990). Helping Low Readers in Grades 2 and 3: An After-School Volunteer Tutoring Program. *Elementary School Journal.* 91, 132-150.

CONTACT

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Book Buddies

GRADE LEVEL: 1

OVERVIEW

Book Buddies is a tutoring program created for first grade students who have been identified by their classroom teachers as having reading problems. It was originally developed at the University of Virginia.

When schools take on the Book Buddies program, they hire an on-site program coordinator who is trained to implement the program. The tutorial training consists of eight hours of initial training provided by the creators of the program, and additional hours of training on an ongoing basis. The on-site coordinator is responsible for training and observing the tutors, who are mostly graduate students working on a master's degree, or who have already earned a master's degree. The tutoring session is highly structured, and tutors are expected to follow the lessons prepared by the coordinator.

Potential Book Buddies students are identified by teachers as having reading problems. Once the students enroll, they attend one-to-one tutoring sessions twice per week, where they learn to read by rereading familiar storybooks, engaging in word study, and writing and reading new stories. The students use storybooks, a tutoring manual prepared with the help of the coordinators and the researchers, and other materials.

This program has not been evaluated in comparison to a control group. Book Buddies students who had received many sessions were compared with a group that had received fewer sessions. As would be expected, the group receiving more tutoring sessions did better. As there are many reasons (such as poor attendance) that could explain why some students received fewer sessions, this is not a conclusive evaluation. Book Buddies is currently used during the school day, but it could be adapted for use during the non-school hours.

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Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS)

GRADE LEVEL: K-12

OVERVIEW

HOSTS is a model that helps schools create tutoring programs for at-risk students using a mentoring approach. HOSTS schools provide one-to-one, usually after-school tutorial services to Title I students in elementary through high school who are performing below the 30th percentile. This includes limited English proficient students and those who have been retained or are in special education classes. HOSTS trains volunteers from businesses and the community, as well as peers and cross-age mentors, to serve as tutors.

HOSTS helps school staff choose curriculum materials that are especially tailored to the individual needs of the children receiving services and aligned with what is being taught in the regular classroom. Schools involved in HOSTS have access to learning materials that have been specially designed to help the targeted population. The mentor or tutor follows a carefully designed lesson plan generated by the Title I teacher from a comprehensive database that aligns the curriculum of the schools to local objectives or state frameworks.

EVALUATION

HOSTS evaluations have not included pre-post experimental-control group comparisons. They have measured student success by looking at NCE scores, NCE gains, and the number of students who pass at grade level.

In a multi-state study of HOSTS done for Title I national validation (HOSTS, 1994), students in grades 1, 2, and 3 made substantial NCE spring-to-spring gains (15, 25, and 25, respectively), and students in other grades also made significant NCE gains. In a spring-to-spring California evaluation involving second, third, and fifth graders who were 95% Latino, the HOSTS students had NCE gains of 11.4, 9.5, and 9.9 respectively. These NCE gains exceeded those of the school and the state.

SCOPE

Since its inception in Vancouver, Washington in 1972, HOSTS has involved over 150,000 students and 100,000 mentors in more than 4,000 programs nationwide, many of which are after-school programs.

REVIEWS

Gallegos, G. (1995). *Investing in the future: HOSTS evaluation for the Pasadena Independent School District.* Vancouver, WA: Hosts Corporation.

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Reading Recovery with AmeriCorps

GRADE LEVEL: 1

OVERVIEW

Reading Recovery with AmeriCorps is a variation of the original Reading Recovery tutoring program substantially adapted for use by volunteers. Whereas the original program (Wasik & Slavin 1993; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk & Seltzer 1994) was designed for use only by certified reading tutors who are already credentialed teachers or reading specialists, the AmeriCorps version of the program trains community volunteers who are paid by AmeriCorps to deliver tutoring services to the students. As with the original Reading Recovery, this program is designed for students in grade 1 who are reading below grade level.

Schools participating in the AmeriCorps/Reading Recovery program must already be Reading Recovery schools. The main overseer of the program is the Reading Recovery teacher, who is, of course, very familiar with the original Reading Recovery training program. This person provides AmeriCorps volunteers with 150 hours of initial training, plus additional training and follow-up sessions. The Reading Recovery teacher/leader also provides the materials used in the program. Students are selected into the program upon identification by their classroom teachers. They are students with less severe reading problems who would not therefore meet the standard Reading Recovery criteria for tutoring services. Typically, the most at-risk children, those reading below the 20th percentile, would receive standard Reading Recovery tutoring from a certified teacher, while a less at-risk student would receive AmeriCorps volunteers as tutors. Once enrolled in the program, students receive one-to-one tutoring sessions every day. Some of the skills that the students learn include word knowledge, letter identification, concepts of print, text comprehension, and oral storybook reading.

While AmeriCorps/Reading Recovery was mainly designed for use during school hours, it could be adapted for use during non-school hours.

EVALUATION

Although the original Reading Recovery model has been evaluated many times using control groups, the AmeriCorps adaptation has not been evaluated in the same way. The research on AmeriCorps/Reading Recovery shows that students involved in the program made NCE gains, but it is not clear what gains they might have made without the program.

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Intergenerational Reading Program (IRP)

GRADE LEVEL: 1

OVERVIEW

This program was designed to improve the reading skills of first grade students experiencing difficulties with reading, using an intergenerational model. This program trains and sometimes pays senior citizens and foster grandparents as tutors.

When schools adopt the Intergenerational Reading Program, they hire a certified teacher who trains and supervises the volunteer tutors. The tutors are given three initial three-hour training sessions in which they learn about metacognitive aspects of reading, such as grapho-phonemic relationships and phonics. Additionally, tutors meet at least twice every month for continuing training.

Students who enter the program are first graders who are identified by their teachers as being at risk for reading problems. They receive one-to-one tutoring at least three times per week. The sessions consist of individualized tutoring sessions in which they learn basic elements of reading, such as phonics, spelling, and text in context, using storybooks and word strategy materials developed by the creators of the program.

EVALUATION

The Intergenerational Reading Program is being evaluated, but there are no data yet available.

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Reading Together/VISTA

GRADE LEVEL: K

OVERVIEW

Reading Together/VISTA is an early intervention reading program designed for low-income kindergartners and pre-first grade children (Neuman 1997, 1996, 1995; Neuman & Gallagher 1994; Shanahan & Neuman 1997; Neuman & Roskos1997; Roskos & Neuman 1993; Neuman & Roskos 1994). The program is designed to expose young children to concepts of literacy and reading, using prop boxes to improve children's languages and skills. The prop boxes consist of a variety of articles put together to stimulate the use of new vocabulary and language among the children. Some of the contents include crayons, paper, pencils, interesting objects, and books.

Each Reading Together/VISTA school has a program coordinator. This person receives training on how to create, use, and train additional staff to use the prop boxes. The staff consists mostly of paid, trained VISTA volunteers, who then train parents of low-income children to work with their own children two hours per week. The VISTA staff members do not interact directly with the children; instead, they prepare and distribute the prop boxes and show the parents how to use them with their children. Additionally, they observe parents' interactions with their children and continuously provide feedback to the parents.

Students enrolled in the Reading Together/VISTA program do not have to be diagnosed as having reading problems prior to participation in the program. The goal of the program is to enrich the language arts experiences of the children before they enter first grade, so that they will be less likely to be diagnosed as "behind" in reading or "at risk" for school failure.

EVALUATION

A small evaluation of this program (Neuman, 1995) showed that students involved in the program made gains in reading when they entered first grade. This evaluation, however, did not include a control group.

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Early Identification Program

GRADE LEVEL: K

OVERVIEW

The Early Identification Program (EIP) is an in-school program designed to improve students' reading performance in kindergarten.

When schools enroll in the EIP program, they hire two part-time program coordinators who become responsible for the training of volunteer tutors. The initial training consists of teaching the tutors to use the tutoring manuals, which contain sequenced materials for students and tutors. The staff that implements the tutoring program consists mainly of non-paid community volunteers. Prospective Early Intervention Program participants are identified by their kindergarten teachers.

Students in EIP are provided with one-to-one tutoring sessions. These sessions focus on perceptual motor and fine-motor skills, categorization concepts, and reading readiness skills.

EVALUATION

The Early Identification Program was involved in an evaluation that compared EIP students with non-EIP students. Although the EIP students improved their scores, the non-tutored group actually performed better than the tutored group on the tasks required of them. However, students were not randomly assigned to the groups, and those in the control group (less at-risk) scored higher than the experimental group at the outset of the comparison.

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READ*WRITE*NOW

GRADE LEVEL: K-3

OVERVIEW

READ*WRITE*NOW is a comprehensive effort to encourage children to enjoy reading in hopes of improving reading among at-risk youth before age nine. The goal of READ*WRITE*NOW is to increase the amount of reading done by children (especially low-income), and to encourage parents, volunteers, and teachers to participate in this process. READ*WRITE*NOW is not a specific method of tutoring, but is more of a model that could be used to organize schools, cities, and local agencies (e.g., libraries) to set up tutoring programs for young children.

When schools or community centers participate in READ*WRITE*NOW, the main person responsible for the administration of the program is a hired program coordinator. READ*WRITE*NOW does not require that the program coordinator be a certified teacher. This person then trains prospective tutors who are non-paid parents and commu-

nity volunteers. The tutors involved in the program receive training that is not necessarily uniform from site to site.

Unlike many of the other programs reviewed, READ*WRITE*NOW does not diagnose students before they enter the program. Participation is open to everyone. It is more of a "reading partner" or "reading buddies" program than a tutoring program. The adult listens to children reading, providing minimum guidance when needed. Adults are encouraged to play positive roles in the lives of children by reading with them. The expected result of this program is that students will have a joy for reading and will progressively become better readers with increased opportunities to read.

Students engage in these activities at least once a week for thirty minutes, and are encouraged to read the stories that they have already gone over from the materials provided. Students read storybooks mostly from their school and the public library.

The program does not have a prescribed method for teaching or training the tutors. READ*WRITE*NOW is basically an organizational effort providing information about some aspects of how to set up a "reading buddies" program.

EVALUATION

READ*WRITE*NOW does not have evidence of effectiveness, but it is currently being evaluated formatively.

SCOPE

READ*WRITE*NOW packages are available for schools, communities, and neighborhoods interested in implementing the program across the country.

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CONTACT

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APPENDIX C

Annotated Bibliography

The following resources provide a broad base of information on issues related to school connection. They were enormously valuable in assembling this document.

Resiliency in Schools: Making it Happen for Students and Educators
by Nan Henderson and Mike M. Milstein
Corwin Press, ©1996

This book offers a blueprint for creating schools that build students' resiliency. It suggests a schoolwide approach, emphasizing nurturing educators as an important part of the process. The authors describe six major areas in which resilience can be built, and provide numerous activities and assessment tools for schools to use.

Educating Everybody's Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners
ASCD Improving Student Achievement Research Panel, Robert W. Cole, Editor
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, ©1995

This document takes a hard look at recent education reform, identifying the strategies that have proven most successful in reaching the wide diversity of students in our schools today. It offers suggestions for the specific content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and oral communications, as well as general instructional and organizational strategies.

Building Educational Resilience
by Margaret C. Wang, Geneva D. Haertel, and Herbert J. Walberg
Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, ©1998

This booklet is one of the Fastback series, which summarizes a wide range of topics related to education. Building Educational Resilience offers information on the resilience-promoting attributes of a dozen national reform models, as well as general direction on building resilience through family, peer group, community, and school initiatives.

Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution
National Association of Secondary School Principals, ©1996

Breaking Ranks provides more than 80 thoughtfully crafted, challenging recommendations for high schools to improve the welfare and preparation of their students. It draws from the best thinking of educational reformers to address the complex needs and opportunities of young people today.

Fostering Resiliency: Expecting All Students to Use Their Minds and Hearts Well
by Martin L. Krovetz
Corwin Press, ©1996

Krovetz offers detailed case studies of seven model resiliency-building schools. The text has a practical feel, with questions for self-reflection sprinkled throughout. The Resource section offers a number of tools for schools to review and assess their progress toward resiliency-building environments.

APPENDIX D

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