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Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
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IDENTIFICATION OF KEY INDICATORS FOR QUALITY IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

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Abstract

Researchers and policymakers are increasingly interested in the issue of school accountability. Despite this, program standards for afterschool programs are not as fully developed as they are in other fields. This study bridges that gap and presents the results from a study that identifies benchmarks and indicators for high quality afterschool programs. This research employed a multi-method approach, including a synthesis of literature on afterschool programs, observations, and a survey data collection of 15 high-quality afterschool program sites. Results of the study suggest that most of the issues emphasized in the afterschool literature can be considered *core* components of a quality afterschool program. This finding was consistent across the three broad categories of program organization, program environment, and instructional features. This study also revealed that some issues emphasized in the afterschool literature should be considered extra components that can increase quality, but that are not necessary. As a result, this study argues for a checklist strategy in assessing programs in order to meet quality-based standards. With further testing, refinement, and validation from larger study samples, this checklist tool can help evaluate afterschool programs in order to not only obtain basic core standards, but also to assist in identifying and tackling weak and problematic areas.

Introduction

The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2002) has led to increased nationwide demands for school accountability. In particular, NCLB calls for school-based efforts to close the achievement gap and to ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged, gain academic proficiency. Under NCLB, schools must provide parents and the community with annual reports about their academic progress. Schools that lack progress may use afterschool programs as a supplemental service to help students learn more effectively. Although afterschool programs were initially created as safe havens for students, NCLB reinforces the important role that afterschool programs can have in increasing students' academic proficiency and school engagement.

At the same time, state legislation continues to promote the value of afterschool programs for the youth of California. In September 2005, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law SB 854 (Ashburn) which increased both per student and administrative funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (California AfterSchool Network, 2005).

Furthermore, under the mandates of Proposition 49, California increased its yearly budget for afterschool programs from $120 to $550 million dollars during the 2006–2007 fiscal year (California AfterSchool Network, 2007).[1] Legislation directed at increasing funding for afterschool programs is clearly an important priority, but the ability to simultaneously fund quality programs is an effort that requires immediate attention.

As published in the Governor's Guide to Extra Learning Opportunities (ELO; Wright, 2005), there is a call for "an accountability system for improved ELO quality" (p. 4); it is an opportunity for governors to "provide incentives for programs to meet upon agreed benchmarks of ELO quality" (p. 21). Reason being, the standards (or quality benchmarks) for afterschool programs, upon which these incentives would be based, are not as fully developed as they are in other fields. Based on a recent synthesis of the research, it was suggested that policymakers should:

1. Set standardized expectations for afterschool programs to run efficiently and effectively.
2. Consistently evaluate and improve upon the structure and implementation of afterschool programs; that is, examine what works and what needs to be changed in terms of organization, environment, and instruction of students.

This effort is complex. In order for policymakers to set realistic expectations for afterschool programs and use evaluations appropriately, they require information about tested indicators of quality and meaningful recommendations for those programs that need improvement.

Establishing a template for quality afterschool programs and generalizing the impact is difficult for several reasons: (a) not all programs serve children with similar characteristics (i.e., race, socioeconomic status, age); (b) different programs have different goals and approaches; and (c) many differ on the desired program outcome (e.g., academic achievement, enrichment, or drug use prevention). It is for these reasons that a flexible model is needed that include planning strategies and implementation steps broad enough to encompass the variability of existing afterschool programs, yet specific enough to include key components of quality in afterschool programming. In addition, in order for research to effectively inform current policy and funding allocations, the need continues for efforts on improving the quality of programs that target minority and low-income students.

Therefore, the primarily purpose of this study is to identify and establish quality benchmarks for afterschool programs in the areas of program environment, program

[1] As mandated by Proposition 49, funding for afterschool programs was increased once the California state budget reached a level making the release of funds feasible (California AfterSchool Network, 2007).

organization, and instructional features; and secondarily, to present a preliminary tool for the application of an indicator system. The research questions for this study were:

- What are the basic *core benchmarks* for quality afterschool programs?
- What are the *key indicators* that help define the *core benchmarks* in afterschool programs?
- How can afterschool programs use a data-based system to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and strive for continuous improvement?

Grounded in existing research, the study reported here was intended to inform policymakers about ways (shown as benchmarks and indicators) in which afterschool programs could benefit students by implementing strategies and components that promote program success and improvement. With access to a benchmark and indicator system, policymakers could make research-based decisions so that state funding could be applied toward programs that demonstrate promise and success. Furthermore, policymakers could also use this information to develop and implement appropriate guidelines for policy involving afterschool programs. Additionally, based on the findings of this study, an evaluative system could be developed to assist afterschool programs in the self-monitoring of their progress and demonstrate their effectiveness in aiding their students. Managers of afterschool programs could use this system to fine-tune their objectives and goals, and demonstrate accountability for policymakers, as well as promote positive outcomes for their students.

The purpose of this study was to identify benchmarks and indicators that could set standardized expectations for afterschool programs and apply the identified benchmarks and indicators in a data-based system that afterschool practitioners could use to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and assist them in striving for continuous improvement. A synthesis of literature was conducted to extract common indicators and benchmarks mentioned in the literature. The prevalence of these indicators and benchmarks were further examined in three high quality afterschool programs. Employing a weighting strategy, the established benchmarks and indicators were included in the design of a *Quality Benchmark Rating System*. The purpose of this system was to serve as a quick self-reference guide to practitioners for self-improvement, and a tool for policymakers so that they could use the system as an instrument for "quality at a glance" data-based decision making.

A literature review on quality indicators for afterschool programs are provided in the following section.

A Review of the Literature

Researchers have found afterschool programs beneficial to student outcomes in three critical ways. First, they provide children with supervision during afterschool hours—a time period where research has found rates for both victimization of juveniles and juvenile crimes peak. (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2000; Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). Secondly, they provide experiences that may benefit students' social skills and work habits (Fashola, 1998). Finally, afterschool programs may help improve academic achievement through tutoring and enrichment activities (Fashola, 1998). Quality afterschool programs can provide these basic benefits to students, as well as additional opportunities to acquire new skills and broaden their educational experiences. Recognizing the potential of afterschool programs to have a positive impact on the academic and social development of students, it is important to assess the critical factors necessary in providing a quality afterschool program.

Research suggests effective afterschool programs provide students with safety, opportunities for positive social development, and academic enrichment (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2000; Clark, 1988; Hetherington, Stanley-Ragan, & Anderson, 1989; Benard, 1991; Posner & Vandell, 1994; Miller, 1995; Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). The researchers build from these basic elements for effective programming to provide a more comprehensive view of the factors necessary for increasing quality in afterschool programs. Following an in-depth review of literature on quality afterschool programs, the researchers identified three major areas that can determine effectiveness. These areas include (a) program organization, (b) program environment, and (c) instructional features. The following sections provide a description of these three areas, as described by the literature, and identify key benchmarks for assessing and improving program effectiveness.

Program Organization

Research on quality afterschool programs consistently identifies strong program organization as a crucial element in effective programs (Alexander, 1986; Beckett, Hawken, & Jacknowitz, 2001; Fashola, 1998; Huang, 2001; C. S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; McElvain & Caplan, 2001; Philadelphia Youth Network, 2003; Schwendiman & Fager, 1999). In 2005, the C. S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice suggested a "theory of change" framework for afterschool programs that explicitly links program organization and participant outcomes to program effectiveness and quality. An in-depth review of literature conducted for this study (see Appendix A) indicated that seven specific elements of program

organization were consistently referenced in research. They included: (a) program management, (b) program administration, (c) staff support, (d) staff experience and training, (e) family and community involvement, (f) community partnerships, and (g) evaluation.

Program management and program administration. Effective program management is necessary for quality-based afterschool programs. Huang (2001) specified that effective program organization should include a strong team of program staff who demonstrate leadership skills, a positive organizational climate, and inclusive decision-making. More specifically, it is important to have leadership articulate a shared mission statement and program vision that motivates staff, provides a positive organizational climate that validates staff commitment to these goals, as well as open the communication channels between afterschool, day school, parent, and community (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; Wright, Deich, & Szekely, 2006). Strong program management also provides adequate compensation for staff, thus decreasing the likelihood of high turnover rates (Beckett et al., 2001; de Kanter, 2001; C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005). Moreover, a strong leadership team and committed staff must also plan for program sustainability and growth through effective administration (ERIC Development Team, 1998), including systematic organization of student records, program attendance, resource needs, program budget, a future financial plan, and marketing (St. Clair, 2004).

Staff support. A strong management team that is committed to achieving program goals should provide their staff with adequate support to help them perform their duties. At the basic level, staff must be provided with sufficient materials in order to conduct program activities (St. Clair, 2004). A positive working environment, such as clear expectations for staff performance, a job orientation prior to beginning work, time and space to express concerns, continuous feedback on their performance, a shared decision-making process, and opportunities for staff members to collaborate and express their individual talents are all strategies that will promote a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and provide opportunities for staff members to make an impact on program quality (Beckett et al., 2001).

Staff experience and training. In order to enhance staff efficacy, the staff must have the appropriate experience and training in working with afterschool students (Alexander, 1986; Harvard Family Research Project, 2005; Huang, 2001; Fashola, 1998; de Kanter, 2001; ERIC Development Team, 1998; Schwartz, 1996). For example, each staff member should be competent in core academic areas for the respective age groups that they work with. Beyond academic competency, the staff should also be culturally competent, knowledgeable of the diverse cultures and social influences that can impact the lives of the students in the program (Huang, 2001; Schwartz, 1996). When the demographics of program staff reflect the

diversity of the community in which the program is located, these staff members can better serve as mentors and role models to the student participants (Vandell & Shumow, 1999; Huang, 2001). To ensure high quality instruction, staff members should be consistently provided with opportunities for professional development (Wright, 2005). To demonstrate academic effects, it is also important for students in the program to have sufficient access to qualified staff—in order to ensure that each student is given sufficient attention, according to her or his individual needs. Thus, having an adequate staff-to-student ratio is an important indicator of quality for afterschool programs (Yohalem, Pittman, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004).

Family and community involvement. Research on afterschool programs consistently associates family and community involvement with program quality (Owens & Vallercamp, 2003; Tolman, Pittman, Yohalem, Thomases, & Trammel, 2002). Afterschool programs can promote family and community involvement by setting defined plans to involve parents, family members, and community volunteers. For example, programs might organize orientation sessions for incoming students and their families. At these sessions, families can be introduced to different involvement opportunities. Meanwhile, staff can regularly communicate with parents and families in order to provide a clear channel of communication that keeps parents informed of their children's progress within the program (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; Wright et al., 2006). With open communication, families may also feel more comfortable engaging with staff about how the program can better support the needs of the student participants. When family involvement is acknowledged and encouraged, families and staff are able to work together to ensure high quality programming (Chung, 2000; Tolman et al., 2002).

Community partnerships. Beyond students' families, the local community is another valuable resource for afterschool programs. Research shows that high quality programs are consistently engaged with local community members, leaders, and organizations that can form important partnerships in program planning and funding (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2005; Owens & Vallercamp, 2003; Wright, 2005). Through these partnerships, students can further develop knowledge of community resources, services, and histories. In turn, students may be encouraged to participate in community service projects that can reflect a sense of empowerment and pride in their respective communities. Programmatic efforts to form community partnerships could include inviting community members as guest speakers and recruiting local volunteers.

Evaluation. As an instrument to inform continuous self-improvement, periodic evaluations are critical for the sustainability of afterschool programs (Huang, 2001). Furthermore, having evidence of program outcomes is essential for continued and or

increased funding and support (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002; Wright et al., 2006). Therefore, evaluations should be administered regularly to ensure continuous improvement and assess program effectiveness (C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005).

Thus, high quality afterschool programs should have a detailed plan for evaluation of program activities, staff performance, and student development (Seppanen, et al., 1993). Students' academic improvement and social skills development can be especially important in documenting program outcomes. Overall satisfaction evaluations can also be assessed among staff, students, and families to ensure that expectations and the needs of all program participants are being met (Fashola, 1998). Evaluation findings should be consistently reviewed and made readily available in order to examine program progress.

Program Environment

The program environment focuses on how the structure of the afterschool program creates an atmosphere conducive to positive academic achievement and self-esteem for youth; they are "attractive affective contexts" for youth development (Kahne et al., 2001, p. 421). The four main elements of the program environment, which are consistently referenced by the research, include (a) safe environment, (b) student health and well-being, (c) well-equipped/suitable physical space, and (d) positive relationships.

Safe environment and well-equipped/suitable physical space. First and foremost, the most important feature of the program environment is safety and security within the indoor and outdoor space. It is well documented that program space should be safe, clean, and secure for cultivating confidence and self-esteem for students (Chung, 2000; North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs, n.d.; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2002; Philadelphia Youth Network, 2003; New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, 2002; St. Clair, 2004; Wright et al., 2006); no potential harm should be placed upon the health and physical/ emotional well-being of students (Safe and Sound, 1999). Adequate and comfortable space is needed for staff members to conduct a range of activities that promote both the mental and physical wellness of students. The indoor and outdoor space should also be used appropriately; catering to the activity being carried out (e.g., sports, creative arts, eating), so that the goals of the activities are sufficiently met. In addition, there should be ample storage space for equipment, materials, and personal possessions. Equipment should be able to be stored for easy student access and availability. The main aim is to make sure that students are in a safe, supervised environment that provides ample resources for mental and physical growth. The establishment of a physically and emotionally safe environment thus helps the development of positive relationships within the program environment.

Student health and well-being. Another facet of the program environment is the need to promote student wellness through health and nutrition education (de Kanter, 2001; North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs, n.d.; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2002; Philadelphia Youth Network, 2003; Wright, 2005). Nutritional time in afterschool programs offer students time to share meals and socialize with their peers while developing healthy snack habits that enhance students' well-being (Chung, 2000). Furthermore, quality-based afterschool programs also provide environments that enhance the well-being of students by educating students and providing them with nutritious snacks adequate to portion size; and instructing the staff to minimize the health risks of students (e.g., having students wash their hands, having frequent restroom breaks). Exposure to health and wellness practices in the program environment allow students to be active and more fully engaged in nutrition and fitness related activities in their own lives (Wright, 2005).

Positive relationships. The emotional climate of the program environment is characterized by warm, supportive relationships between the staff members and students, among the students themselves, and between staff members. These three types of relationships within the program setting signify positive, influential connections for the students (Beckett et al., 2001; Huang, 2001; Birmingham et al., 2005). First, the interaction between the staff members and students is vital for demonstrating affirmative adult-student relationships, aside from primary-based interactions within the home (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; Beckett et al., 2001; New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, 2002; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004; Birmingham et al., 2005; Bodily & Beckett, 2005). Quality-based afterschool programs are structured to have written guidelines for staff-student relations so that the staff members are able to set appropriate guidelines and limits for students through positive behavior management strategies.

Secondly, staff members should be expected to be emotionally invested in the lives of their students. Quality-based programs foster this relationship by enforcing a small staff-to-student ratio that provides a "family-like" atmosphere and contributes to positive social development for students (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1999; Chung, 1997, 2000; Beckett et al., 2001; Bodily & Beckett, 2005). Staff members are able to form more personable, one-on-one relationships with students through daily conversations and engagement (St. Clair, 2004). Consequently, this initiates a sense of community and belonging for the students because they are personally bonded to staff members (Wright et al., 2006).

Thirdly, positive peer relationships and friendships are a key ingredient in shaping students' social-emotional development (Safe and Sound, 1999; Huang, 2001; Pechman &

Marzke, 2003; Halpern, 2004; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004; Yohalem et al., 2004; Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Yu, 2005). Students need to interact with each other, building strong "partnerships" based on trust and respect with their peers (Yohalem et al., 2004). Healthy interaction with other students of various ages, and being involved in age appropriate activities helps students to demonstrate appropriate problem solving strategies, especially during times of conflict (Wright et al., 2006).

Finally, the adult relationships between staff members are also important in constructing an emotional climate within the program environment. Students observe positive adult interactions through effective communication and cooperation of the staff in working together to meet the needs of students and the program (Yohalem et al., 2005). This relationship is an appropriate way in which the staff can model positive behavior for students. Staff members, for that reason, need to embrace assessment-based improvement plans as "relevant, contextual, and potentially helpful" (Weisberg & McLaughin, 2004, p. 4). Staff members must see the relevance of quality-based standards in shaping positive developmental outcomes for students.

Thus, the program environment within high quality afterschool programs should offer a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for all participants. This includes a physical and social environment that fosters resilient outcomes through the reinforcement of positive relationships, nutrition, and physical/academic activities (Huang, 2001; New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, 2002; St. Clair, 2004; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004).

Instructional Features

Afterschool programs vary greatly in their emphasis: ranging from providing supervision or tutoring, to the promotion of specific learning and development. Increasingly, though, despite any specific curricular emphasis, programs are focusing on providing a well-rounded variety of activities and opportunities that support the physical, social, and cognitive development of their student participants. The three main instructional features, which are consistently referenced by the research, include (a) the quality of activity implementation, (b) offering a variety of activities, and (c) emphasizing principles of youth development.

Quality of implementation. According to Yohalem et al., (2005), setting and opportunities provided to participants vary greatly across programs. However, despite the variety that exists, there are steps that programs can take during the design of their curriculum and implementation of activities to help ensure quality. This is especially important for quality-based programs because the tailoring of teaching strategies and curricular content to the needs of students may be associated with student outcomes (Bodilly

& Beckett, 2005). Employing a variety of research-proven teaching and learning strategies can help staff members to increase engagement among students with different learning styles (Birmingham et al., 2005). Furthermore, a failure to design activities that meet the needs and interests of students may result in reduced program attendance. For example, Seppanen and colleagues (1993) suggested that reduced afterschool enrollment for students in upper elementary and above may be the result of a lack of age appropriate activities for older students.

Variety of activities. Providing a variety of activities is a practice supported in the afterschool literature. By emphasizing variety, programs are able to extend rather than duplicate the school day experience (Wright, 2005; Wright et al., 2006). This is important because afterschool programs that focus rigidly on the school day curriculum have been found to have lower participation (Kugler, 2001). In part, this may be due to gender differences. For example, Rosenthal and Vandell (1996) found an association between participation in programs offering a variety of activities and positive social relationships for boys. In addition, their research suggested that a long-term lack of variety in programming might be associated with negative outcomes for boys, but not for girls. Posner and Vandell (1999) extended this finding when they found gender differences concerning activity preferences. In their study, they found that girls spent greater amounts of time socializing and doing academic activities during out-of-school time than boys, whereas boys spent greater amounts of time than girls participating in coached sports.

Support youth development. Increasingly, among the educational community, there is a call for the development of the whole child. In 2004, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD; 2004) adopted the position that educational practice and policy should focus on development of the whole child. As part of this position, they provided a framework for how communities, schools, and teachers can contribute to this movement. The child development literature also describes a whole child approach to cultivate the students' intellectual, social and emotional well-being in order for them to achieve their full potential (Schaps, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2006).

In order to develop the whole child, education programs need to focus on a variety of youth outcomes (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006). As schools are increasingly emphasizing cognitive outcomes on core academics, afterschool programs have the opportunity to fill an important gap. In other words, afterschool programs can provide students with additional opportunities to develop skills, knowledge, resiliency, and self-esteem that will help them to succeed in life (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; Beckett et al., 2001; Huang, 2001; Wright et al., 2006). With this in mind, researchers and

policymakers are placing increasing emphasis on the inclusion of youth development principles within afterschool settings (Birmingham et al., 2005; Kahne et al., 2001).

Therefore, the instructional features of afterschool programs should emphasize the quality and variety of activities, as well as principles of youth development. This includes giving students opportunities to develop personal responsibility, a sense of self-direction, and leadership skills (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004; 2005; 2006).

The purpose of this study is to identify benchmarks and indicators for high quality afterschool programs. The research questions for this study are:

- What are the key benchmarks for quality afterschool programs?
- What are the *key indicators* that help define the *key benchmarks*?
- How can afterschool programs use a data-based system to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and strive for continuous improvement?

Identifying quality indicators and benchmarks that are not only preventive of negative outcomes, but also promote positive student development will be an important step toward informing policy on afterschool activities and instruction. According to the literature reviewed, efficient organization, environment, and instruction are crucial for maintaining quality in afterschool programs. Mission and vision statements that enable staff to take leadership in achieving stated goals and organizing programmatic efforts to achieve those goals are essential. Having a strong team of staff members who are qualified, experienced, and open to professional development opportunities is critical for successful organization and an overall program quality. Beyond program staff, involvement of students' families and communities can enhance the afterschool program experience, foster program growth, and increase program sustainability. It is also important for quality afterschool programs to continuously strive for improvement. Thus, consistent and systematic methods of evaluation are important to ensure students, families, and communities involved in the program are being effectively served.

Based on these literature reviews, a theoretical model of the indicator system was designed. This indicator system focus on four main components of afterschool programs: (a) program environment, (b) program organization, (c) instructional features, and (d) program self-evaluation and fine tuning of program features. Figure 1 shows the theoretical model of the indicator system and its components.

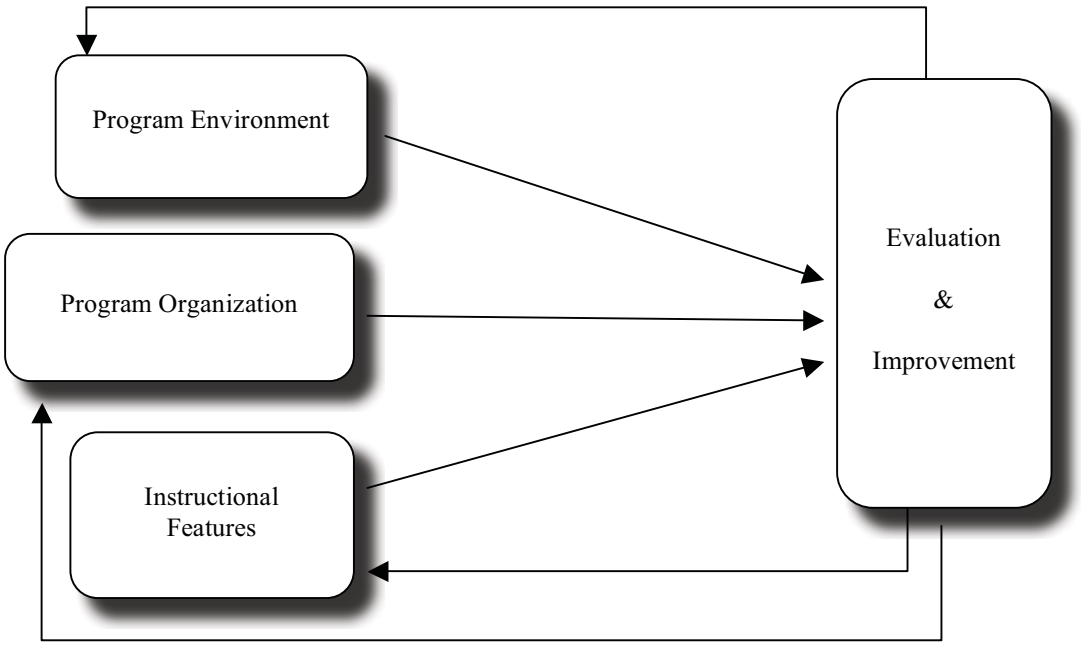

Figure 1. The Theoretical Model of the Indicator System.

This model sets the framework for the development of study instruments and the establishment of benchmarks for each of the program component listed in the model. In addition, a synthesis of literature on afterschool studies is conducted to extract program elements that afterschool experts frequently mentioned as essential features for high-functioning, high quality programs. The following section describes the methodology employed in this study.

Methodology

This section provides detailed descriptions of the study design, synthesis of literature, study procedures, and data analysis methodologies.

Study Design

This study employed a multi-method approach to address the study questions:

- What are the *core benchmarks* for quality afterschool programs?
- What are the *key indicators* that help define the *core benchmarks* for quality afterschool programs?
- How can afterschool programs use a data-based system to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and strive for continuous improvements?

The review of literature provided a theoretical model (Figure 1) in framing the study design. Three major program categories were defined: program organization, program environment, and instructional features. A comprehensive search and synthesis of literature

on quality indicators of afterschool programs was also conducted (see Appendix A for a list of literature and frequencies of the benchmarks which surfaced). In order to reference the prevalence of these indicators as benchmarks for quality programs, instruments (including surveys), and interview and observation protocols were developed by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

Next, three well established and high-functioning afterschool programs were identified through a strategic recommendation procedure. A referral list was passed among the California State-coordinators for them to recommend afterschool programs that they deemed as functioning "above the par." The most frequently mentioned top five programs were identified. A comprehensive examination on program histories, profiles on parent satisfactions, and performance records was conducted. The records examined affirmed that these programs were well-recognized in the field as indicated by their associated field records, recognition and awards received, and performance records. Finally, the list of programs was presented to the California Policy Research Center of the University of California, and three programs were approved for further investigations.

Site visits were then conducted at 15 locations for these three programs. The purpose of the site visits were two-fold: first, site observations would further confirm that these programs were in fact high-functioning quality programs (e.g., students were observed to be actively engaged and adequately challenged); secondly, in order to establish the indicators extracted from the synthesis of literature as benchmarks of high-functioning quality programs, the degree of prevalence of the indicators in these programs were examined through instruments developed by CRESST. The rationale was that if these indicators were first affirmed in the literature by frequency with which afterschool scholars mentioned them as indicators of quality programs, and again confirmed in practices of high-functioning quality program sites, they could be established as quality benchmarks of afterschool programs.

After the benchmarks were established, our next step was to facilitate the application of their usage in assisting policymakers and program funders in decision-making; and to guide practitioners in their own program improvements. Our goal was to create a preliminary tool that was user friendly, efficient, and adaptive to different program types. A weighting method was employed in developing this tool. This method utilized strategies such as statistical weighting.[2] Appropriate weights were assigned to all indicators in the process of developing

[2] Most often non-linear regression is done without weighting. The program minimizes the sum-of-squares of the vertical distances of the data from the curve. This method gives equal weight to all points, as is appropriate

a scale for each benchmark. Following the example of the universal rating scale that most testing employs (e.g., a typical score of 70 as a satisfactory passing score) a two-thirds rule was applied in scoring the benchmarks. The resulted Quality Benchmark Rating System could serve as a quick self-reference guide for afterschool programs. More specifically, this Quality Benchmark Rating System was divided into three major categories (program organization, program environment, and instructional features). Each category could yield a rating score that could serve as a quality index for that benchmark (e.g., as a whole for program organization), or be used as a platform to inform programs on their own strengths and weaknesses (e.g., based on how they scored under each indicator, they could decide where the program needed to focus its future professional development) for continuous program improvement. In the following sections, each study procedure is discussed in detail.

Synthesis of Literature

A synthesis of literature was conducted for this study. This approach was similar to a meta-analysis of literature, defined as a "type of systematic review that uses statistical methods to combine and summarize the results of several primary studies" (Cook, Mulrow, & Haynes, 1997, p. 376). This was the preferred model for analysis in reviewing a large body of literature. In this study, the strategy of synthesizing literature was chosen because few studies with qualifying quantitative data or empirical evidences emerged from the literature search. In acknowledging the limitations of this process, it is cautioned here that the synthesis results were limited in the ability to draw formal inferences to the larger population.

Literature search. Two literature searches were conducted for this study. The initial literature search took place in December 2006. This formed the basis of the initial theoretical model, indicators, and benchmarks. The literature review was further expanded and the benchmarks and indicators were revised in May 2007. Searches were conducted using CSA Illumina: ERIC, Education: A Sage Full-text Collection, NITS, and PsycINFO. Searches were conducted using the terms "after school program," "after-school program" or "afterschool program" as keywords or descriptors, and with the following parameters: 1985–2007, and English-language-only. This identified a total of 1,269 citations, which included 582 journal articles, 318 peer-reviewed journals, 115 books, and 62 conference papers.

The abstracts of the 1,269 citations obtained from the searches were then carefully reviewed and discussed by the research team members. Titles that indicated the studies

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when you expect experimental scatter to be the same in all parts of the curve. If you expect experimental scatter to vary along the curve, you can weight points differentially.

should be excluded from the synthesis, such as studies of college students, were eliminated. Criteria were then established for inclusion into the study:

- Studies that referred to afterschool programs for K–12 students
- Studies that either concluded or commented on quality indicators of afterschool programs. This means that the study could be either an empirical investigation that aimed to identify characteristics of effective afterschool programs, or a review of literature that summarized quality indicators based on existing literature and/or the author's own experience and knowledge.

When abstracts met the criteria mentioned, the research team obtained the full articles. These articles were reviewed and discussed by the team members. Out of 1,269 citations, 216 full articles were reviewed.

In addition to the databases, the researchers also reviewed the following websites for afterschool program evaluation studies and obtained reports on those that were relevant: Afterschool Alliance, After School Corporation, Harvard Family Research Project, Rand Corporation, and the Private and Public Ventures.

From all the previously mentioned sources, the research team identified 54 studies that met the criteria for inclusion. These studies included review articles, summaries, policy reports, and evaluation reports, and were often written by researchers and experts who had extensive experience in the field of afterschool programming. Each of the 54 studies was coded for information regarding benchmarks/indicators of quality for afterschool programs. After carefully coding the quality indicators and engaging in extensive debate and deliberate discussions, 13 benchmarks were extracted. They were: (a) safety, (b) health, (c) physical resources, (d) human relationships, (e) programming/activities, (f) family/community involvements, (g) staffing/professional development, (h) academic support, (i) social development, (j) enrichments, (k) positive youth development, (l) evaluation, and (m) management/administration. For details of the literature reviewed, please see Appendix A.

Despite observed differences among the 54 articles, there were substantial overlapping consistencies in opinions. Each benchmark received support from at least one-quarter of the sources. Benchmarks that received the strongest levels of support (at least 75% or 40 sources) all focused on issues of program environment: Staffing/Professional Development, Programming/Activities, and Management/Administration. In contrast, those that received moderate support (less than 50% or 27 sources) were distributed across the broad categories like safety, human relationships, and health. Positive youth development, a relatively recent focus in the afterschool curriculum, was mentioned the least at the time the literature were

reviewed (15 sources), following by social development (18 sources), evaluation (19 sources), and physical space/resources (21 sources).

Following the structure of the theoretical model, the 13 benchmarks were then grouped under the three broad categories of program organization, program environment, and instructional features, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Benchmarks Across Categories

Program organization	Program environment	Instructional features
Safety	Programming/Activities	Academic Support
Health	Family/Community Involvement	Social Development
Physical space/resources	Staff/Professional Development	Enrichment
Human relationships	Management/Administration	Positive Youth Development
	Evaluation	

Instrument Development

Survey and observation protocols were developed by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) to examine the identified quality indicators at high functioning afterschool program sites in Los Angeles County. All items for the protocols were either extracted from the literature synthesis or adapted from existing instruments for the evaluation of afterschool programs.[3] A description of each instrument is provided in the following text.

Observation protocol. The observation protocol was designed to examine quality indicators of program environment and instructional features. The observation protocol focused on the examination of instructional methods and strategies; academics and enrichment provided; personal responsibility, self-direction, and leadership of staff; collaboration with day schools; safety, health, and physical space; code of conduct; relationships; and overall program climate (see Appendix B).

Site staff survey. The site staff survey was designed to examine indicators in all three components of program organization, program environment, and instructional features. The survey included items on staff support, health and safety, indoor space, staff and student

[3] Examples such as the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Checklist for Quality Indicators, and the Safe and Sound Workbook, and instruments developed and validated in previous CRESST studies.

relationships, activities and goals, academics and enrichment, as well as having a code of conduct (see Appendix C).

Program director survey. The program director survey was designed to examine indicators of program organization. The program director survey included items on management, administration, staff experience and training, family involvement, community partnerships, and evaluation (see Appendix D).

Program Identification and Recruitment of Participants

As a result of the strategic afterschool program search, three well established and well-referenced afterschool programs in Los Angeles County were identified. These programs were: Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST), Lawndale Realizing Amazing Potential (RAP), and Pasadena Leading Educational Achievement—Revitalizing Neighborhoods (LEARNs).[4]

These three programs were considered appropriate candidates for this study because of their reputations within the afterschool community, the similarity in student populations that they serve, and the evidences of high-functioning records they produced (such as external evaluation reports; testimonies of parent satisfaction; perceived improvements on student performances as referred by school teachers, program staff, and parents). Each has been designated as a California After-School Partnership (CASP) Regional Learning Center, and LA's BEST was selected by World Hunger Year (WHY) as one of the top afterschool programs in the State of California. All three programs serve similar student populations and implement a specific set of goals that guide their programmatic efforts to provide quality afterschool care. Each individual site included in the study provided a program structure and instructional features that met the stated goal of their afterschool program. Although the individual sites varied in structure, all three afterschool programs had a clear emphasis on academic enrichment balanced with physical activities, performing and visual arts, and cultural activities. The student population at all three programs were predominately Latina/o, followed by African American students. Furthermore, White, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander students composed approximately 15% of the total population served at each program. On average, most of the students enrolled in the programs qualified for free or reduced lunch (see Appendix E for more detailed individual program descriptions). Table 2 shows the specific number of participants who were recruited at each afterschool program.

[4] Although Pasadena LEARNs and Lawndale RAP offer middle school and/or high school components, data collection was limited to program sites geared toward elementary school students.

Table 2

Study Participants by Role and Afterschool Program

Participant	Survey
Program Coordinators (Total)	17
LA's BEST	5
Lawndale RAP	5
Pasadena LEARNs	7
Site Staff (Total)	102
LA's BEST	39
Lawndale RAP	26
Pasadena LEARNs	37

Note. LA's BEST = Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow, RAP = Realizing Amazing Potential, LEARNs = Leading Educational Achievement—Revitalizing Neighborhoods.

Data Collection Procedures

Approval was obtained from the UCLA Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects concerning the appropriateness of the study procedures and instruments on April 13, 2007. Appropriate permissions and consent forms were obtained from all study subjects. The operation offices at each of the three programs recommended five individual sites from their programs for site visits.

Survey administration. Site staff members and program directors were each surveyed once during the period of study. Survey instruments were mailed to the sites along with the staff information sheets used for consent. The instruments were completed by site staff and program directors during the operation of the afterschool program and returned to the CRESST researchers at the time of the site visits.

Observations. Four observations (two at a time) were conducted at each of the 15 study sites during 2007. After coordinating with the program directors, the study researchers visited each of the afterschool sites and observed different grade levels and different activities offered. Observations of the different programs were conducted at three different times during the school year: LA's BEST during spring 2007, Lawndale RAP during summer 2007, and Pasadena LEARNs during fall 2007.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed in analyzing the observation and survey data. A weighting system was developed to examine whether certain indicators were prevalent at

the afterschool sites and to determine which indicators should be considered core benchmark components.

Step 1 – Establishing the two-thirds rule. The primary objective of this study was to identify key benchmarks for quality afterschool programs, and secondarily to design a preliminary system for the application of these benchmarks in determining program quality. For ease of use, this study designed a rating tool that was user friendly, efficient, and adaptive to different afterschool program types; in order to provide a point of reference in scoring the indicators and benchmarks, a two-thirds rule was applied. This rule was established following the universal example of a rating scale that most curriculum scoring employs (i.e., 70% correct is usually considered as a satisfactory passing score).

The two-thirds rule was used to make determinations as to whether the indicators identified were prevalent at the afterschool sites visited. Data were analyzed at the site level. If an indicator was examined by a single item from the instruments, then two-thirds of the responses aggregated to the site level would be required in order to consider the indicator as prevalent or "met." If an indicator was examined using multiple items from the instruments, then two-thirds of the responses, or at least two-thirds of those items aggregated to the site level would be required to consider the indicator as "met." For example, if a site with 10 staff members responded to a benchmark instrument with 4 indicators or items, and the responses from the site staff were 6 positive responses to item one, 6 positive responses to item two, 8 positive responses to item three, and 9 positive responses to item four; this site would fail to meet the benchmark based on the two-thirds rule (only 2 items have passed the two-thirds rule). If, however, the site had 6, 7, 8, and 9 positive responses to the four respective items, the site would be considered to have met the benchmark because three of the four items would have passed the two-thirds rule. All items or indicators under the benchmark would then be accepted into the Quality Benchmark Rating System. This same procedure was applied to all instruments. When an indicator was analyzed with items from different surveys (staff surveys, project director surveys), aggregate responses were weighted equally. When an indicator was analyzed with items from survey and observation protocol, aggregate survey responses were weighted more heavily (2:1) than the observers' responses.

Step 2 – Establishing the weighting system. In applying the indicators extracted from the literature to the Quality Benchmark Rating System, a weighting method was used. This method assumed strategies as used in statistical weighting. This allowed the study to give equal weight to all extracted indicators, as appropriate to their importance referenced in the literature.

Each benchmark was assigned a maximum of 10 points (see Tables 21–23). The indicators within each benchmark were discussed and weighted by the research team based on the team's understanding of their relative importance after conducting the synthesis of literature. More specifically, the weight for each indicator was established by revisiting the literature synthesis (see Appendix A). The research team reviewed all the literature under each individual indicator. A checklist or numerical scoring tablet was created for each benchmark with all the indicators for that benchmark listed underneath. Each time an indicator was mentioned in the literature a check was marked under the appropriate indicator. When all the literature under the benchmark was re-examined, a numerical score was calculated for each indicator. The percentage of the frequency of each indicator mentioned was then rounded to the first decimal as the preliminary resulted score for that indicator. Weekly research team discussions on the appropriateness of assigned weight to the rating score were conducted until consensus had been reached on all items.

To provide a concrete example on the weighting system, if there were three indicators for a given benchmark, and the third indicator was considered slightly more important than the first two indicators, the assigned weights for the three indicators might be set at 3, 3, and 4, respectively. If a site was determined to have met all three indicators they would receive a score of 10 points (3 + 3 + 4) for that benchmark. Likewise, if a site was determined to have met only the first and third indicators, they would receive a score of 7 points (3 + 0 + 4) for that benchmark.

The following section describes the procedures used to establish the core benchmarks for high functioning quality programs. Given that all benchmarks and indicators were extracted from the synthesis of literature, these indicators should be considered as research results of what high quality afterschool programs (*under ideal conditions)* ought to have in place. However, in daily practices, the afterschool field conditions might not have always been '*ideal,*' and not all afterschool programs had the same emphasis. In fact, afterschool practitioners constantly had to juggle with multiple daily demands, limited time, space, and resources; they may not have been able to practice all the key benchmarks and indicators for high quality programs. At the same time, afterschool programs that focused on developing the academic skills of their students may not have been as concerned about the "character development" of their students as programs that focus on social development might be. Under this rationale, the two-thirds rule was established: that is, if the benchmarks were confirmed to be prevalent at most of these high-functioning sites (two-thirds), they were considered as necessary components for the daily operation of quality afterschool programs. In another words, these were indicators that were prevalent in most of the high-functioning

sites studied, and therefore, considered necessary conditions for afterschool programs to ensure program quality. Under the same rationale, the benchmarks that received a score below 7 were benchmarks that were confirmed by the literature as important indicators of quality program components that could lead to positive student outcomes, but that failed to be practiced regularly at these high functioning programs. These indicators were thus defined as additional or "exemplary" components that programs could use to further enhance their program quality.

Each indicator was also examined individually. As a result, a benchmark may have had two indicators that passed the two-thirds rule, but one that did not. Using the same rationale that these were indicators identified in the literature, as long as the benchmark as a whole passed the two-thirds rule, all indicators were accepted under the benchmark, but given different weight as described in the analysis section.

Utilizing the results of the weighting system, means were calculated for each benchmark under program organizations. These means represented the aggregated results across the 15 afterschool sites in the study. As discussed previously, benchmarks that received a mean score of 7 out of 10 were considered as "core" components of quality afterschool programs. Benchmarks that received a mean score lower than 7 were considered as "additional" or "exemplary" benchmarks that afterschool programs could use to enhance their program quality.

Establishing the Core Benchmarks

Under the performance of the weighting system, means were calculated to determine which benchmarks should be considered as core components of quality afterschool programs. These determinations were made by aggregating the results across the 15 sites. Following previous examples, a threshold of 70%, or just over two-thirds, was established to determine if a benchmark should be considered a core component. In this case, a mean score of 7 across the program sites was required to establish a benchmark as core. The following section describes the analysis and the procedures used in establishing the prevalence of the quality indicators.

Formulating the "Quality Indicator System"

In order to provide more clarity to the construction of the "Quality Indicator System," the analysis was presented under the three major components of afterschool effectiveness: program organization, program structure, and instructional features.

Program Organization

For program organization, seven benchmarks were extracted from the synthesis of literature: (a) program management, (b) administration, (c) staff support, (d) staff training, (e) family involvement, (f) community partnership, and (d) program evaluation. Figure 2 illustrates the structure of this benchmark.

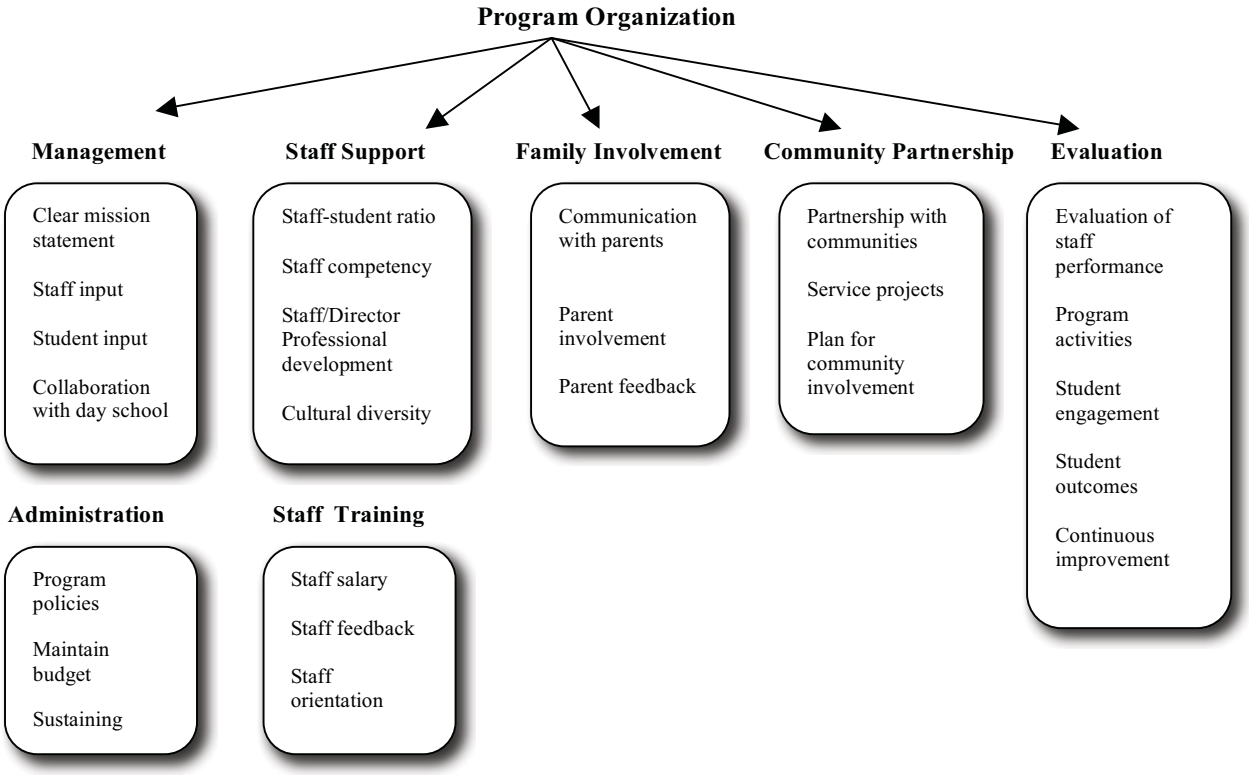

Figure 2. Indicators for Program organization.

Program management. Program management describes the capacity of a program to have "a collaborative management system to meet specific goals outlined in the mission statement." The four indicators for this benchmark included: 1) Considers staff input in decision-making; 2) Considers student input in decision-making; 3) Clear mission statement is present; and 4) There is day school and afterschool collaboration. Among the strongest indicators for determining quality program management were having a clear program mission statement (M = 1.00) and the incorporation of staff in program decision-making (M = 0.93). In other words, all 15 sites included in this study indicated that their program had a clear mission statement, and staff inputs were considered strongly in program decision-making. Student input in decision-making was also strong (M = 0.80), with the indicator

being met at 12 sites. In contrast, only 10 sites (M = 0.67) indicated that they collaborated with the day school at their sites. All indicators were accepted as core benchmarks.

Please note here that once a benchmark was established as core, all the indicators under the benchmark were accepted as well. It was beyond the scope of this study to conduct any further examination. Future studies should make use of the preliminary analysis on the indicators and conduct further testing of the instrument to make refinements/attunements on the selection of indicators according to the study results.

Program administration. Program administration was defined as having "effective management and plan for long-term sustainability and growth." The three indicators for this benchmark were: 1) Develops program policies for student participation and attendance; 2) Budget is maintained and adjusted to meet resource needs; and 3) Long-term financial plan in place for sustaining and fostering program growth. The strongest indicator measured for this benchmark was developing program policies for student participation and attendance, with all 15 sites reporting that these policies were in place at their programs (M = 1.00). Most program directors also reported that they had established long-term financial plans to maintain program quality and sustainability as outlined in the third indicator (M = 0.80).

Maintaining a program budget to meet resource needs was the only indicator for the program administration benchmark that did not meet the two-thirds rule when aggregated across the programs (M = 0.60). As shown in Table 3, this indicator was analyzed with one item from the program director survey, which received a mean of 63.33. Furthermore, the standard deviation was high (SD = 48.00) indicating that maintaining and adjusting the budget was not a consistent goal across the 15 sites included in this analysis.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 2 of the Program Administration Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program Director					
Program budget periodically adjusted based on resource needs	15	63.33	48.06	0.00	100.00

Staff Support. The three indicators for this benchmark included: 1) Staff is well-paid; 2) Staff are provided performance feedback; and 3) Staff receives an orientation before working with youth. Indicators 2 and 3 were both strongly present across the sites (M = 0.87 and M = 0.93, respectively). Program staff reported that they received an orientation to

review their job responsibilities before working with students and were provided with performance feedbacks.

Staff being paid well was the only weak indicator for the staff support benchmark (M = 0.40). Two items from the staff survey were used to measure this indicator. Table 4 shows that although the mean for the item regarding salary structure was strong (M = 80.89), the mean for the second item regarding being paid well was low (M = 60.30). This shows that although a clear salary structure was in place at most of the sites, the indicator failed to be met because staff at many of the sites did not feel that the compensation was adequate for the work.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 1 of the Staff Support Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Clear salary structure in place for staff	15	80.89	18.77	33.30	100.00
Staff are paid well for the work they do in the program	15	60.30	28.68	0.00	100.00

Staff Experience and Training. The fourth benchmark for program organization was defined as "all staff members have adequate training and experience to ensure high quality instruction." Five indicators were used to measure this benchmark. The indicators were: 1) There is an adequate staff-to-student ratio; 2) Staff is competent in core academic areas; 3) Staff participates in professional development; 4) Program director participates in professional development; and 5) Staff reflects the cultural diversity of the community. The majority of the indicators for this benchmark met the two-thirds rule. The strongest indictor for this benchmark was Indicator 5, concerning whether the program staff reflected the cultural diversity of the community (M = 1.00). Indicators 2 and 4 were equally strong, having the same mean score of (M = 0.93). Indicator 3 was also present at a majority of the sites (M = 0.80).

Of the five indicators for the staff experience and training benchmark, only the staff-to-student ratio indicator failed to hold up to the two-thirds rule (M = 0.53). Table 5 shows that this indicator was measured by one item from the site staff survey and one item from the program director survey. Although it appeared that both means were fairly high (M = 76.49 and M = 93.33, respectively), the standard deviations and minimum scores showed that

variability existed across the sites. In other words, many site staff felt the staff-to-student ratio was not adequate at their respective sites. In contrast, most program directors felt confident that they had enough qualified staff to provide high quality instruction. These findings suggest a possible conflict between site staff and program directors in regards to their perceptions on the adequacy of the staff-to-student ratio in meeting staff and student needs.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 1 of the Staff Experience and Training Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
With the current staff-to-student ratio, staff are able to give sufficient attention to all students	15	74.69	24.20	33.30	100.00
Program director					
Enough qualified instructors on staff to ensure high quality instruction	15	93.33	25.82	0.00	100.00

Family involvement. Overall, the indicators for family and community involvement were considered weak. Family involvement was defined as a program that "has a clear plan for family involvement." The three indicators for this benchmark included: 1) Staff regularly communicates with parents/families; 2) There is a program plan in place for parent involvement; and 3) Provides parents with opportunities to provide feedback about the program. Only one of the three indicators for this benchmark met the two-thirds rule. Examining these indicators at site level showed that Indicator 1, concerning staff and parent communication was prevalent at 14 sites (M = 0.93). In contrast, the remaining two indicators were only present at 7 sites ($M = 0.47$).

Table 6 illustrates the means of the items under Indicator 2. The table illustrates a moderate mean for the item: families being welcomed to visit the program at anytime (M = 73.33). There was a higher mean for the item: encouraging families to be involved in the afterschool program (M = 86.67), but the remaining items had low and very low mean scores (M = 53.33 and M = 32.14, respectively). Additionally, very few program directors felt that a clear plan was established to encourage parent involvement at their sites, and even fewer felt that their programs provided learning opportunities to parents. Subsequently, this indicator failed to meet the two-thirds rule.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 2 of the Family Involvement Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program Director					
Clearly defined plan for program involvement	15	53.33	51.64	0.00	100.00
Family is welcome to visit anytime	15	73.33	45.77	0.00	100.00
Staff encourages families to get involved	15	86.67	35.19	0.00	100.00
Learning opportunities for parents	15	32.14	46.44	0.00	100.00

Table 7 illustrates the means for the items used to examine indicator 3. The table shows that two items were used from the program director survey. Although the item concerning parent input in decisions about programming resulted in a moderate mean (M = 70.00), the mean for the second item regarding whether parents are surveyed about their satisfaction was low (M = 60.00). Furthermore, both items had high standard deviations (SD = 45.51 and SD = 50.71, respectively) indicating a lot of variability among sites. This indicator also failed to meet the two-thirds rule.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 3 of the Family Involvement Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program Director					
Parent input is considered in decisions about programming	15	70.00	45.51	0.00	100.00
Parents are surveyed to measure their satisfaction	15	60.00	50.71	0.00	100.00

Community partnerships. Three indicators were used to measure this benchmark: 1) There are established partnerships with local community organizations; 2) Program encourages student to participate in service projects and programs; and 3) There is a plan in place for community involvement. Similar to the benchmark concerning family involvements, the indicators for community partnerships were generally weak. The only indicator that met the two-thirds rule was youth encouragement to participate in service

projects and programs (M = 0.73). Indicators 1 and 3 had means lower than 0.67 (M = 0.60 and M = 0.46, respectively).

As shown in Table 8, indicator 1 was measured by one item from the program director survey. The table shows that this item received a mean of (M = 63.33). Furthermore, there was a high standard deviation of 48.06 showing variability across the sites. In other words, establishing partnerships with local community organizations was not a priority at many of the sites included in this analysis.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 1 of the Community Partnerships Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program director					
Have established partnerships with local community orgs.	15	63.33	48.06	0.00	100.00

As for indicator 3 (see Table 9), three of the four items from the program director survey received moderate to high means (M = 73.33 and above). The only item that received a low mean was: "bringing in guest speakers" (M = 36.67). It should be noted that all four items had large standard deviations, ranging from 37.25 to 48.06, indicating that program sites differed greatly in how they planned for community involvement.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 3 of the Community Partnerships Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program director					
Qualified volunteers are recruited to work in the afterschool program.	15	73.33	45.77	0.00	100.00
We involve local community partnerships in program planning.	15	73.33	41.69	0.00	100.00
We regularly bring in community members as guest speakers.	15	36.67	48.06	0.00	100.00
We recruit volunteers from the community.	15	82.14	37.25	0.00	100.00

Evaluation. The final benchmark under program organization examined whether the "program has a system in place for evaluation of students, staff, parents, and program activities." There were five indicators for this benchmark including: 1) Method of evaluation for staff performance; 2) Method of evaluation for program activities; 3) Method of evaluation for student engagement; 4) Evaluation of students' improvement on academic and/or social skills; and 5) Evaluation findings are used for program improvement. Most of the indicators met the two-thirds rule. Indicators 1 and 2 each had a mean of 1.00, signifying that all 15 sites had an evaluation method in place for staff and program activities. Furthermore, indicators 3 and 5 were also strong, with both having a mean of 0.80.

Evaluating students' academic and/or social skills improvement was the only indicator that did not meet the two-thirds rule for this benchmark (M = 0.53). Table 10 shows the results of the two items under this indicator (from the program director survey). The table shows that the means for both academic and social improvement were moderate (M = 70.00 and M = 71.43, respectively). However, the standard deviations were high (ranging from 42.58 to 45.51) indicating a great deal of variability across the 15 sites.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 4 of the Evaluation Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Program director					
Students' academic improvement	15	70.00	45.51	0.00	100.00
Students' social skills development	14	71.43	42.58	0.00	100.00

Setting up the System for Program Organization. Given that all indicators were extracted from the synthesis of literature, these indicators should be considered as research results of what high quality afterschool programs (*under ideal conditions)* ought to have in place. However, in daily practices, the afterschool field conditions may not have always been "*ideal.*" In fact, afterschool practitioners constantly had to juggle with multiple daily demands, limited time, space, and resources; they may not have been able to practice all the key indicators for high quality programs. Under this rationale, the two-thirds rule was established: that if the benchmarks were confirmed to be prevalent at most of these high-functioning sites (two-thirds), they were considered as necessary components for the daily operation of quality afterschool programs. In another words, these were indicators that were prevalent in most of these high-functioning sites, and therefore, considered necessary

conditions for afterschool programs to ensure program quality. Under the same rationale, the benchmarks that received a score below 7 were benchmarks that were confirmed by literature as important indicators of quality program components that could lead to positive student outcomes, but failed to be practiced regularly at these high-functioning programs. These indicators were thus defined as additional, or "exemplary" components that programs can use to further enhance their program quality.

Utilizing the results of the weighting system, means were calculated for each benchmark under program organizations. These means represented the aggregated results across the 15 afterschool sites in the study. As discussed previously, benchmarks that received a mean score of 7 out of 10 were considered as "core" components of quality afterschool programs. Benchmarks that received a mean score lower than 7 were considered as "additional" or "exemplary" benchmarks that afterschool programs could use to enhance their program quality.

This categorization procedure is illustrated in Table 11, showing the means and the strategies employed to categorize the program organization benchmarks as core or exemplary.

Table 11

Program Organization – Mean Scores, Core and High Quality Benchmarks

Benchmark	Mean score	Core benchmark	Exemplary benchmark
1. Program Management	8.50	℘	
2. Program Administration	8.00	℘	
3. Staff Support	8.00	℘	
4. Staff Experience and Training	8.40	℘	
5. Family Involvement	7.00		℘
6. Community Partnerships	5.73		℘
7. Evaluation	8.27	℘	

As shown in Table 11, five of the seven benchmarks under program organization were established as core components. The most prevalent benchmarks (as indicated by the mean scores) were program management (M = 8.50), followed by staff experience and training (M = 8.40), and evaluation (M = 8.27). The program administration and staff support benchmarks both had equally strong means (M = 8.00). The benchmark for family

involvement just barely met the threshold of 70%, with a mean of exactly 7.00. Because the other benchmarks were rated considerably higher, the benchmark of family involvement was grouped under the exemplary category. The only benchmark that scored below .70 was community partnerships (M = 5.73), which was also grouped under the exemplary category.

Program Environment

Under the framework of the literature synthesis, program environment was represented by four benchmarks: safe environment, student health and well-being, well equipped and suitable physical spaces, and positive relations. Figure 3 illustrates the outline of this program component.

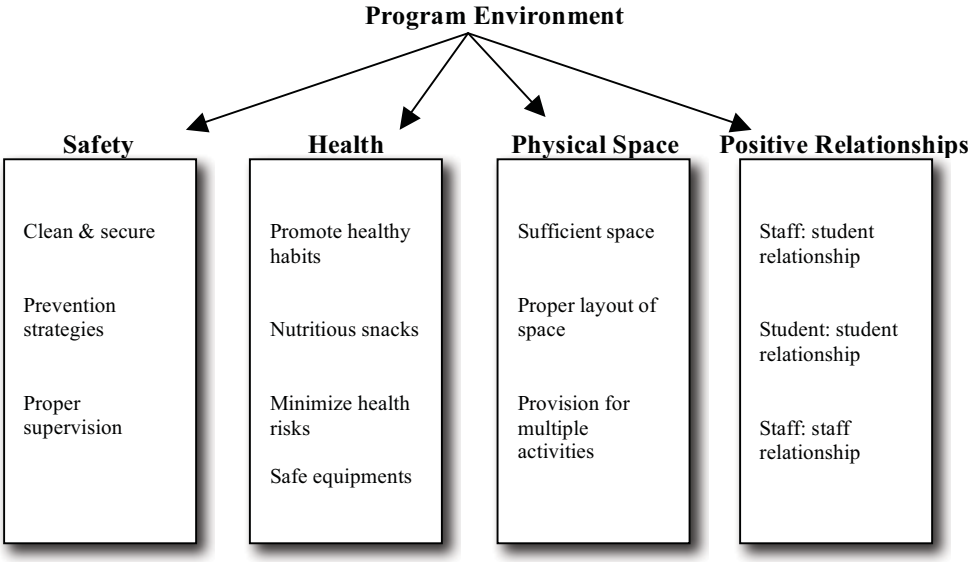

Figure 3. Indicators for program environment.

Safe environment. Safe environment was defined as "a space that is safe, clean, and secure." This benchmark had three indicators, which included: 1) Program space that is safe, clean and secure; 2) System is in place that keeps unauthorized people from taking students from the program; and 3) Students are carefully supervised. Indicators 2 and 3 were very strong, each having a mean score of 1.00. The indicator regarding having a safe, clean, and secure environment also had a very high mean score of 0.93. This suggests that having a system in place to keep unauthorized people from taking students and ensuring that students were well supervised were considered as priorities at all 15 sites.

Student health and well-being. Student health and well-being was defined as the "program environment should enhance students' health." The indicators for this benchmark were: 1) Program environment should enhance students' health; 2) Provides healthy and nutritious snacks; 3) Staff work hard to minimize health risks; and 4) Equipment is safe for

activities and play. The majority of indicators for this benchmark met the two-thirds rule. Enhancing students' health and having safe equipment were strongly present across the sites (M = 0.93 and M = 1.00, respectively). The indicator concerning the providing of nutritious snacks was also moderately present (M = 0.73).

Staff minimizing health risks was the only weak indicator for the student health and well-being benchmark (M = 0.20). One item from the site staff survey and one item from the observation protocol were used to examine this indictor. As mentioned previously, the staff responses and observation responses were weighted 2:1. Table 12 shows that although the mean for the item concerning the minimizing of health risks was moderate (M = 69.44), the mean for the item in regards to attending to students' allergy and medical needs was low (M = 57.00). Furthermore, the standard deviations were moderate for both items (SD = 24.16 and SD = 30.48, respectively), indicating variability across the sites.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 3 of the Student Health and Well-Being Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Allergy and medical needs provided to staff	15	57.00	24.16	16.70	90.00
Observation					
Staff take steps to minimize health risks	15	69.44	30.48	0.00	100.00

Well-equipped and suitable physical space. The fourth benchmark for program environment was defined as "the provision of physical space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for afterschool." There were three indicators for this benchmark: 1) The program's indoor and outdoor space meets the needs of all program activities; 2) Space is arranged well for a range of activities; and 3) Space is arranged well for simultaneous activities. All three indicators met the two-thirds rule. Indicator 1 regarding sufficient space in meeting the students' needs for all activities was the strongest and was present at all 15 sites (M = 1.00). Indicators 2 and 3 were also very strong (M = 0.93 and M = 0.87, respectively), suggesting that most of the sites had spaces for a range of activities and simultaneous activities.

Positive relationships. The final benchmark for program environment was defined as a "program that develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships." This benchmark included 10 indicators spanning the following three subcategories: (a) staff-student

relationships; (b) student-student relationships; and (c) staff-staff relationships. Results for each of the subcategories will be presented separately.

The six indicators for the staff-student relationships subcategory included: 1) Small staff-to-student ratio; 2) Program has guidelines about staff-student expectations; 3) Staff members relate to students in positive ways; 4) Staff members respond appropriately to the individual needs of the students; 5) Staff members encourage students to become more responsible; and 6) Staff members interact with students to help them learn. All six indicators concerning the staff and students met the two-thirds rule when aggregated across the program sites. More specifically, indicators 1, 2, 4, and 6 were present at all of the sites (M = 1.00). The indicator concerning whether staff members relate positively to students also resulted in a very high mean (M = 0.87). Indicator 5 was also moderately present (M = 0.73), which implies that the staff encouraged students to act responsibly.

The seventh indicator for the positive relationships benchmark was part of the student-student subcategory: 7) Students interact with one another in positive ways. This indicator was strong with a mean of 1.00, demonstrating that students were interacting in a positive manner with one another at all 15 program sites.

The final subcategory for the positive relationships benchmark focused on staff-staff relationships. The three indicators for this subcategory included: 8) Staff members work well together to meet the needs of students; 9) Staff members communicate with each other while the program is in session; and 10) Staff members provide role models of positive adult relationships. All three indicators were strong to very strong, resulting in means of 1.00, 0.93, and 0.80, respectively. In other words, all of the staff-staff relationship indicators met the two-thirds rule for establishment as core benchmarks.

Setting up the System for Program Environment. Similar to establishing the core benchmarks for program organization, the results of the weighting system and calculated means were used to make the final determination. The means represented the aggregated results across the 15 afterschool sites. Benchmarks that resulted in a mean score of 7 or higher were considered as core components for quality afterschool programs, whereas those that received a score below 7 were defined as "exemplary" components that could further enhance program quality. Table 13 shows the means and categorizations of benchmarks for program environment.

Table 13

Program Environment – Mean Scores, Core, and High Quality Benchmarks

Benchmarks	Mean score	Core benchmarks	High quality benchmarks
8. Safe Environment	9.73	℘	
9. Student Health and Well-Being	6.60		℘
10. Well-Equipped and Suitable Physical Space	9.33	℘	
11. Positive Relationships	9.37	℘	

As shown in Table 13, all but one of the benchmarks was established as a core component for program environment. The most prevalent benchmarks (as indicated by the mean scores) were safe environment (M = 9.73), followed by positive relationships (M = 9.37), and well equipped and suitable physical space (M = 9.33). The only benchmark that could not be established as core was the benchmark for student health and well-being (M = 6.60).

Instructional Features

Instructional features were represented by three benchmarks: quality of implementation, variety of activities, and supporting youth development. Figure 4 illustrates the benchmarks and indicators for this program component.

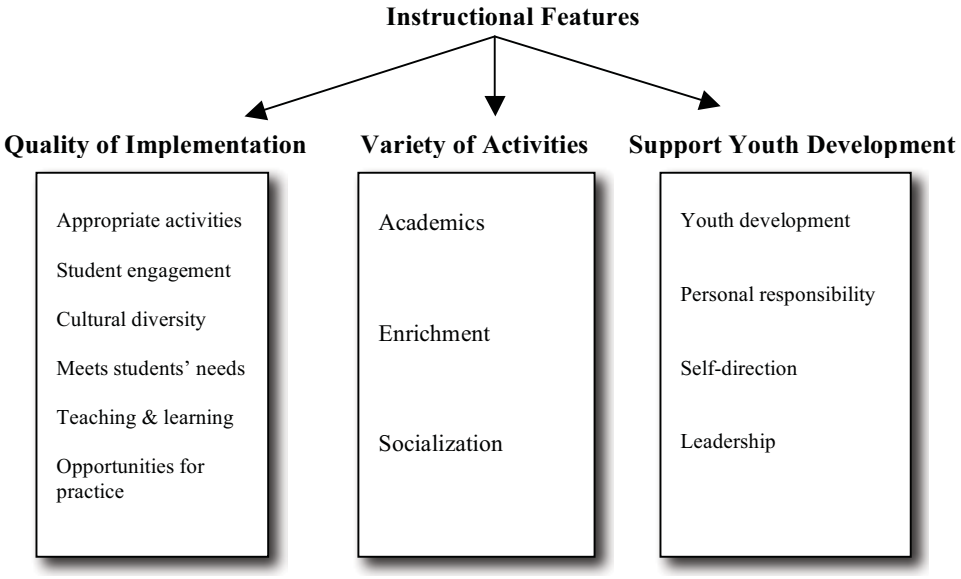

Figure 4. Indicators for Instructional Features.

Quality of implementation. Quality of implication was defined as the "program provides a variety of age-appropriate activities that reflect the goals and philosophy of the program." The six indicators for this benchmark included: 1) Activities are appropriate (i.e., ages, learning styles, and abilities) for students in the program; 2) Activities are in line with the interests of the students in the program; 3) Activities reflect the languages and cultures of the families served; 4) Activities meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the students; 5) Program uses a variety of instructional methods and strategies that reflect current research and policies on teaching and learning; and 6) Program offers multiple opportunities for students to develop and practice new skills. All six indicators met the two-thirds rule. Five indicators were very strong, with each being prevalent at all 15 sites (M = 1.00). The indicator concerning whether activities reflect the languages and culture of their student population was also very strong, and resulted in a mean of 0.93. This implies that issues of appropriateness and pedagogy of teaching methods were taken into serious consideration at all 15 sites.

Variety of activities. The second benchmark for instructional features described whether afterschool programs provided "a balance between academics and enrichment." This benchmark included five indicators spanning the following three subcategories: (a) core academics, (b) enrichment, and (c) socialization. Results for each of the subcategories will be presented separately.

The core academics subcategory includes the indicators of: 1) Offers high quality academic support, such as tutoring and homework help; and 2) Offers instruction in a variety of core academic areas. Only one of the indicators for this subcategory met the two-thirds rule for establishing core benchmarks. Indicator 2, concerning having activities that focus on core academics, was present at all 15 sites (M = 1.00). In contrast, the indicator regarding the offering of tutoring and/or homework was only present at 9 sites (M = 0.60).

Table 14 illustrates the detailed results for examining indicator 1 (regarding tutoring and homework help). Two items from the site staff survey and one item from the observation protocol were used. The site staff items were weighted more heavily than observation items (2:1). Table 14 shows that although the mean for the site staff item concerning homework was strong (M = 98.43), the mean for the second site staff item concerning tutoring was moderate (M = 70.95). Likewise, the mean for the observation item concerning homework was moderate (M = 70.00); Furthermore, both of the items with lower means had moderate to high standard deviations, indicating variability across the program sites. As a result, only the site staff homework item met the two-thirds threshold. It should also be noted that the mean for the observation item may have been affected by the timing of data collection. More

precisely, some observations took place during summer intersession or on a Friday; times when elementary students were generally not assigned homework by their day school teachers. It should also be noted that although most afterschool programs provided homework help, not many programs conducted serious tutoring as part of their program.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 1 of the Variety of Activities Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Homework	15	98.43	4.16	87.50	100.00
Tutoring	15	70.95	22.58	28.60	100.00
Observation					
Homework	15	70.00	42.47	0.00	100.00

The third and fourth indicators for the variety of activities benchmark were part of the enrichment subcategory. These indicators included: 3) Offers enrichment opportunities in a variety of content areas; and 4) When provided, athletic programs include both competitive and noncompetitive team sports. Although the indicator that focused on a variety of enrichment opportunities had a strong mean of 0.87, the one focusing on sports had a low mean of 0.40.

As can be seen in Table 15, the sports indicator was measured using two site staff items and two matching observation protocol items. As mentioned previously, the site staff items were weighted more heavily than the observation items (2:1), making it necessary for both site staff items, or one site staff item and both observation items to meet the two-thirds threshold.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 4 of the Variety of Activities Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Competitive sports	15	83.78	12.00	60.00	100.00
Noncompetitive sports	15	67.78	18.23	42.90	100.00
Observation					
Competitive Sports	15	25.00	16.37	0.00	50.00
Noncompetitive Sports	15	26.67	30.57	0.00	100.00

Although the site staff item of competitive sports had a high mean (M = 83.78), the matching observation item was very low (M = 25.00). Likewise, the noncompetitive sports item received a moderate mean score from site staff (M = 67.78) and a very low mean score from observers (M = 26.67). In other words, the site staff and observers failed to agree about the presence of the different types of sports at the program sites. These findings also suggested that many of the program sites did not provide a balance between competitive and noncompetitive sports.

The final subcategory for the variety of activities benchmark focused on socialization. The sole indicator for this benchmark was: 5) Provides children with regular opportunities for socializing. This indicator was strong with a mean of 1.00, demonstrating that socialization was encouraged at all 15 program sites.

Activities support youth development. The final benchmark in the program component of instructional features examines whether "activities provide opportunities for development of personal responsibility, self-direction, and leadership." This benchmark was comprised of six total indicators: 1) The program promotes youth development; 2) Enables participants to develop life skills, resiliency, and self-esteem via activities; 3) Let participants take ownership of program selection and development; 4) Provides participants opportunities to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions; 5) Program allows for student choice and self-direction; and 6) Program promotes the development of leadership abilities. Only two of the indicators concerning youth development met the two-thirds rule. Indicators 1 and 2 each had a mean of 1.00, signifying that all 15 sites promoted youth development and supported the development of life skills, resiliency, and self-esteem.

Indicator 3, concerning student involvement in program selection and development, resulted in a low mean (M = 0.47). There were five site staff items and three observation

items used to examine this indicator. Table 16 shows that four of the staff items were moderate to strong (M = 72.62 or above). The exception was the students setting personal goals item, which had a low mean of 56.48. The observation items were all low to moderate, ranging from 15.00 to 50.00. Because not all of the site staff items met the threshold, and none of the observation items met the threshold, this indicator failed to be met.

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 3 of the Activities that Support Youth Development Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Student feedback about setting	15	72.62	19.99	33.30	100.00
Student feedback about activities	15	83.10	12.57	57.10	100.00
Students setting personal goals	15	56.48	25.76	0.00	100.00
Students suggesting activities	15	83.75	12.62	66.70	100.00
Students helping plan activities	15	72.98	18.41	42.90	100.00
Observation					
Student feedback about setting	15	15.00	18.42	0.00	50.00
Student feedback about activities	15	50.00	31.34	0.00	100.00
Students suggesting activities	15	21.67	20.85	0.00	75.00

The indicator regarding providing students with opportunities to express ideas, concerns, and opinions also resulted in a low mean (M = 0.60). As shown in Table 17, one site staff item and two observation items were used to examine this indicator. Thus, it was necessary for the site staff item and at least one of the observation items to meet the two-thirds threshold in order for the indicator to meet the two-thirds rule. The table shows that the items concerning students reflecting about the program were moderate to weak (M = 72.39 and M = 16.67, respectively). The remaining item, measuring the acceptance of alternate viewpoints, also resulted in a moderate mean (M = 73.33). When examining the responses by sites, it was revealed that only 9 of the 15 program sites met the requirement of having two-thirds agreement for both the site staff item and one of the observation items. In other words, many of the program sites provided limited opportunities for students to express their opinions.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 4 of the Activities that Support Youth Development Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Students reflect about program	15	72.39	18.18	33.30	100.00
Observation					
Students reflect about program	15	16.67	18.09	0.00	50.00
Acceptance of alternate viewpoints	15	73.33	19.97	25.00	100.00

The indicator concerning student choice and self-direction was among the weakest for the youth development benchmark $M = 0.40$). As shown in Table 18, this indicator was examined using two site staff survey and three observation items. Although the table shows high means for both of the staff items concerning student self-direction and choice ($M = 95.65$ and $M = 80.06$, respectively), the means for the observation items were all low to very low (ranging from $M = 23.33$ to $M = 58.33$). Because none of the observation items met the threshold, the indicator failed to be met.

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 5 of the Activities that Support Youth Development Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Promote self-direction	15	95.65	8.01	75.00	100.00
Students select activities	15	80.06	16.56	42.90	100.00
Observation					
Students select activities	15	58.33	27.82	25.00	100.00
Student choice (what, how, whom)	15	40.00	28.03	0.00	100.00
Informed/responsible choices	15	23.33	14.84	0.00	50.00

Promoting leadership abilities (see Table 19) was the least prevalent indicator for the youth development benchmark, and for the program component of instructional features. This indicator had a very low mean of 0.27, indicating that it met the two-thirds rule at only four of the program sites. Although the item was examined using three site staff and five observation items, only the site staff items received moderate to very high means (ranging from 69.26 to 97.47). All of the observation items received means of 48.33 or less. Because

of the weighting system (2:1), it was necessary for a combination of site staff and observation items to meet the two-thirds threshold in order for the indicator to be met. In other words, the indicator failed to be met because site staff and observers at most of the sites did not agree about the inclusion of activities that promote leadership.

Table 19

Descriptive Statistics for Indicator 6 of the Activities that Support Youth Development Benchmark

Item	*N*	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Site Staff					
Promote leadership abilities	15	97.47	5.26	85.70	100.00
Leadership role during activities	15	74.31	19.30	42.90	100.00
Peer mentoring	15	69.26	18.11	50.00	100.00
Observation					
Leadership role during activities	15	48.33	24.03	0.00	100.00
Promote leadership abilities	15	33.33	26.16	0.00	100.00
Peer mentoring	15	20.00	27.06	0.00	75.00
Child's initiative	15	20.00	21.55	0.00	50.00
Encourage leadership roles	15	28.33	24.76	0.00	75.00

Setting up the System for Instructional Features. As with the previous two components of afterschool effectiveness, the weighting system was used and means were calculated for each benchmark. These means represented the aggregated results across the 15 afterschool sites in this study. Benchmarks that received a score of 7 or higher were established as core components, whereas those with a score below 7 were categorized as exemplary components. Table 20 shows the means and categorizations of the instructional features benchmarks.

Table 20

Instructional Features – Mean Scores, Core and High Quality Benchmarks

Benchmarks	Mean score	Core benchmarks	High quality benchmarks
12. Quality of implementation	9.90	℘	
13. Variety of activities	8.60	℘	
14. Activities support youth development	5.86		℘

As shown in the table, two of the three benchmarks concerning instructional features were established as core components. The most prevalent benchmarks (as indicated by the mean scores) were quality of implementation ($M = 9.90$) and variety of activities ($M = 8.60$). The only benchmark that could not be established as core involved the inclusion of activities that support youth development ($M = 5.86$).

In summary, utilizing the results of the weighting system, most of the benchmarks extracted from the synthesis of literature were able to be established as core benchmarks of quality afterschool programs. This finding was consistent across the three broad components of program organization, program environment, and instructional features. In general, over two-thirds of the benchmarks for each component were able to be established as core. In addition, this study also identified certain program features and practices that afterschool programs could employ to further enhance their program quality. For example, enhancements could be sought under the benchmarks of family and community involvement, student health and well-being, and the activities that support youth development. Although these features were not prevalent at most of the 15 sites, these high quality program features were identified by a number of current literature, and were considered important for over all youth development.

The Quality Benchmark Rating System

With the core benchmarks established, the next step was to lay out the format for application. The primary objective of this study was to design a preliminary tool[5] (Quality Benchmark Rating System) that could facilitate policymakers in making research-based decisions so that state funding could be applied toward programs that demonstrate promise and success. In addition, policymakers could also use the information gathered from the Quality Benchmark Rating System to develop and implement appropriate guidelines for afterschool policies. Meanwhile, managers of afterschool programs could use this tool to fine-tune their objectives and goals, demonstrate accountability for policymakers, and promote positive outcomes for students.

Designing the Quality Benchmark Rating System

In order to achieve these goals, a comprehensive synthesis of literature was conducted. Under the guidance of the literature reviewed, a theoretical model (Figure 1) was established to enhance the flexibility of the rating system, and to avoid certain pitfalls that constantly

[5] Based on the identification of the quality benchmarks, this study provides the initial design, sketch, or frame work of a tool that can be useful to policy makers, funding agencies, and after school program managers. Because this preliminary tool is still in infancy stage, further testing, validation, and refinements are needed before it can be put to use broadly.

threaten the applications of afterschool studies. The benchmarks and rating system designed by this study intended:

1. To be applicable to all programs serving students of different races, gender, and age groups.
2. To be applicable to programs with different program goals and approaches.
3. To be applicable to programs with different desired outcomes, such as academic achievement, enrichment, etc.
4. To be applicable to programs run by different organizations such as school districts, and community-based and religious based institutions, etc.

Under this framework, a flexible system was constructed that included planning strategies and implementation steps broad enough to encompass the variability of existing afterschool programs yet, specific enough to include key components of quality in afterschool programming.

Constructing the Quality Benchmark Rating System

The Quality Benchmark Rating System was designed under the framework of the theoretical model and the structures of the three major components of afterschool programs: Program organization, program environment, and instructional features. Each major program component has its own checklist for quality as indicated by the associated benchmarks.

For example, under the Program Organization component there were seven benchmarks (program management, program administration, staff support, staff experience and training, family involvement, community partnership, and evaluation). First, each individual benchmark was provided with a definition under the title to clearly define what the benchmark stood for. Next, the associated indicators, as established by the weighting system and the two-thirds rule, were listed to the right of each benchmark. Lastly, each indicator also had an associated rating score listed to its right.

The score for each indicator was established by revisiting the literature synthesis (see Appendix A). For example, under the benchmark of "management," a numeral checklist with subtitles under each indicator (staff input in decision-making, student input in decision making, clear mission statement, and day school and afterschool collaboration) was created for the CRESST research team. The researchers then reviewed all the literature/articles concerning management in afterschool programs. Each time an indicator was mentioned in the literature, a check was marked under the appropriate indicator. When all the literature under the benchmark were re-examined, a numerical score was calculated for each indicator.

The percentage of the frequency of each indicator mentioned was then rounded to the first decimal to form the preliminary score for that indicator. Weekly team discussions on the appropriateness of the assigned weight (points) to the rating score were conducted until consensus had been reached on all items.

Tables 21–23 present the organization of the benchmarks and indicators for the Quality Benchmark Rating System under each major program components.

Table 21

Program Organization Checklist

Benchmarks	Indicators	
Program Management: Program has a collaborative management system to meet specific goals outlined in mission statement.	1. Does the program consider staff input in decision-making?	❑ 2.0
	2. Does the program consider student input in decision-making?	❑ 1.0
	3. Is there a clear mission statement present for the program?	❑ 3.5
	4. Is there day school and afterschool collaboration?	❑ 3.5
Program Administration: Program has effective management and plan for long-term sustainability and growth.	1. Have program policies been developed for student participation and attendance?	❑ 3.0
	2. Is the budget maintained and adjusted to meet resource needs?	❑ 3.0
	3. Is a long-term financial plan in place for sustaining and fostering program growth?	❑ 4.0
Staff Support: Program staff are given adequate support.	1. Is the staff well-paid?	❑ 2.0
	2. Are staff provided performance feedback?	❑ 4.0
	3. Does staff receive an orientation before working with youth?	❑ 4.0
Staff Experience and Training: All staff members have adequate training and experience to ensure high quality instruction.	1. Is there an adequate staff–student ratio?	❑ 2.0
	2. Is the staff competent in core academic areas?	❑ 2.0
	3. Does the staff participate in professional development?	❑ 2.0
	4. Does the program director participate in professional development?	❑ 2.0
	5. Does the staff reflect the cultural diversity of the community?	❑ 2.0
Family Involvement: Program has a clear plan for family involvement.	1. Does the staff regularly communicate with parents/families?	❑ 5.0
	2. Is there a program plan in place for parent involvement?	❑ 3.0
	3. Are parents provided with opportunities to provide feedback about the program?	❑ 2.0
Community Partnerships: Program engages in community partnerships.	1. Are there established partnerships with local community organizations/groups?	❑ 4.0
	2. Are the youth encouraged to participate in service projects/ programs?	❑ 2.0
	3. Is there a plan in place for community involvement (e.g., volunteering, guest speakers)?	❑ 4.0
Evaluation: Program has a system in place for evaluation of students, staff, parents and program activities.	1. Is there a method of evaluation for staff performance?	❑ 2.0
	2. Is there a method of evaluation for program activities?	❑ 2.0
	3. Is there a method of evaluation for student engagement?	❑ 2.0
	4. Are students' academic/social skills improvement evaluated?	❑ 2.0
	5. Are evaluation findings used for program improvement?	❑ 2.0

Table 22

Program Environment Checklist

Benchmarks	Indicators	
Safe Environment: Program space is safe, clean, and secure.	1. Is the program space safe, clean & secure?	❑ 4.00
	2. Is a system in place to keep unauthorized people from taking children from program?	❑ 3.00
	3. Are the youth carefully supervised?	❑ 3.00
Student Health and Well-being: Program environment should enhance students' health.	1. Does the program environment enhance students' health?	❑ 3.00
	2. Are healthy and nutritious snacks provided?	❑ 3.00
	3. Does the staff work hard to minimize health risks?	❑ 3.00
	4. Is the equipment safe for activity play?	❑ 1.00
Well-equipped/ Suitable Physical Space: Program provides physical space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for afterschool.	1. Does the program's indoor and outdoor space meet the needs of all program activities?	❑ 3.33
	2. Is the space arranged well for a range of activities?	❑ 3.33
	3. Is the space arranged well for simultaneous activities?	❑ 3.33
Positive Relationships: Program develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships.	**Staff–Child Relationship**	
	1. Is there a small child–staff ratio?	❑ 1.25
	2. Does the program have guidelines about staff–student expectations?	❑ 1.25
	3. Does the staff relate to children and youth in positive ways?	❑ 1.25
	4. Does the staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of children and youth?	❑ 1.00
	5. Does the staff encourage children to become more responsible?	❑ 1.00
	6. Does the staff interact with children to help them learn?	❑ 1.00
	Child–Child Relationship	
	7. Do children interact with one another in positive ways?	❑ 1.00
	Staff–Staff Relationship	
	8. Does the staff work well together to meet the needs of children?	❑ 0.75
	9. Does the staff communicate with each other while the program is in session?	❑ 0.75
	10. Does the staff provide role models of positive adult relationships?	❑ 0.75

Table 23

Instructional Features Checklist

Benchmarks	Indicators	
Quality of Implementation: Program provides a variety of age-appropriate activities that reflect the goals and philosophy of the program.	1. Are the activities appropriate (i.e., ages, learning styles, and abilities) for the children in the program?	❑ 2.5
	2. Are the activities in line with the interests of the children in the program?	❑ 2.0
	3. Do the activities reflect the languages and cultures of the families served?	❑ 1.5
	4. Do the activities meet the physical, social and emotional needs of the students?	❑ 1.0
	5. Does the program use a variety of instructional methods and strategies that reflect current research and policies on teaching and learning?	❑ 2.0
	6. Are children offered multiple opportunities for developing and practicing new skills?	❑ 1.0
Variety of Activities: Program provides a balance between academics and enrichment.	**Core Academics**	
	1. Is high quality academic support offered, such as tutoring and homework help?	❑ 1.0
	2. Is instruction offered in a variety of core academic areas?	❑ 3.0
	Enrichment	
	3. Are there enrichment opportunities in a variety of areas?	❑ 3.0
	4. When provided, do athletic programs include both competitive and noncompetitive team sports?	❑ 1.0
	Socialization	
	5. Are children provided regular opportunities for socializing?	❑ 2.0
Activities Support Youth Development: Activities provide opportunities for *development of personal responsibility*, self-direction, and leadership.	1. Does the program promote youth development?	❑ 1.5
	2. Does the program enable participants to develop life skills, resiliency, and self-esteem via activities?	❑ 1.5
	3. Does the program let participants take ownership of program selection and development?	❑ 2.0
	4. Are participants Provided opportunities to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions?	❑ 1.0
	5. Does the program allow for student choice and self-direction?	❑ 2.0
	6. Is the development of leadership abilities promoted?	❑ 2.0

As shown in Table 23, under each of the major program components, the benchmarks and associate indicators were applied as “core” indexes for afterschool program quality, or

the necessary conditions for quality afterschool programs. For ease of use, indicators were adapted to the form of questions, and appropriate weight or point was assigned. If the indicator could be checked off—meaning that particular index of the program quality was prevalent at the site—points (as shown in the farthest right-hand column) could be allocated. In order for a program to a meet a benchmark, it required a minimum score of 7 out of 10 points. For example, for the benchmark of "management" on program organization (see Table 21), if a site/program was determined to have met indicators 2 through 4, it received a score of 8 points (1.0 + 3.5 + 3.5) indicating that it had met the program management benchmark. If only the first two indicators were determined as having been met, then the site received a score of 3 points (2.0 + 1.0) indicating that it had not met the benchmark. For programs that desired further improvement, they could examine the indicators that they did not check off and make plans on improving program functions in those particular weak areas.

In order to reduce subjectivity, it was best to have at least 3 raters completing the same instrument. On benchmark ratings that did not reach consensus among the raters, discussions on those particular benchmarks and indicators would reveal insights and pinpoint areas of strength and weakness for program improvements.

Appendix F presents a Quality Benchmark Rating System Score Sheet where program evaluators and policymakers could keep track of the benchmarks and indicators that were established through the use of the rating system.

Features of the Quality Benchmarks Rating System

As mentioned previously, this rating system could provide policymakers, program evaluators, and program managers with an efficient tool for "quality at a glance." The strength and weakness of the afterschool programs could be viewed comprehensively or under each of the major program components (program organization, program environment, and instructional features), as well as under each benchmark or indicator. This rating system was designed as a "quick and efficient solution" to gauge afterschool program quality, while at the same time providing "flexibility" for program varieties.

It should be mentioned that the features of this tool allow the rating system to be applicable to a variety of afterschool settings, regardless of whether the focus is on academics, health education, physical education, or any other arena. For example, programs that do not emphasize core academics could assess whether they offer a variety of activities by increasing the points they allocate for enrichment and socialization (while keeping in mind the weighting system and two-thirds rule established in this study). Future studies or individual programs could also add supplemental scales to this rating system. For example, a

science program might want to add another rating scale on key features of high quality science curriculum in order to gauge their progress. A health and nutrition program might want to add a different scale concentrating on effective practices that induce healthy habits. This flexible feature, and the dual function of serving both as "evaluation at a glance" for stakeholders and self-evaluative improvement tool for program managers, differentiates this tool from any other assessment instruments for program quality.

It is important to note here that although the use of this instrument could be valuable to a variety of stakeholders, there are limitations as it currently exists. Further research is needed to validate this tool with a large sample size. As noted previously, additional instructional features could be added to further expand its usefulness. With this study, the preliminary Quality Benchmark Rating System provides promise and initiated steps in taking research towards the goal of assessing quality for a wide-range of afterschool programs.

Discussion

With current policies and laws that point to the accountability of Extra Learning Opportunities (ELO), this study set out to establish standardized expectations (in the form of benchmarks) for afterschool programs to run efficiently and effectively. In addition, this study designed a preliminary tool (the Quality Benchmark Rating System) to assist afterschool programs in consistently evaluating and improving upon the structure and implementation of their programs, and examining what works and what needs to be changed in terms of organization, environment, and instruction of students.

The research questions for this study were:

- What are the basic *core benchmarks* for quality afterschool programs serving low-income, elementary students?
- What are the *key indicators* that help define the *core benchmarks* in the three main components of afterschool programs (i.e., program organization, program environment, and instructional features)?
- How can afterschool programs use a data-based system to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and strive for continuous improvement?

Under these guidelines, a comprehensive synthesis of literature was conducted and a theoretical model was established. Thirteen benchmarks and 63 indicators were extracted from the literature; the prevalence of these benchmarks and indicators were further examined in 15 high functioning program sites. Based on these benchmarks and indicators, a Quality Benchmark Rating System was designed to assist afterschool programs in continuous self-improvement. The flexibility of the rating system includes planning strategies and

implementation steps broad enough to encompass the variability of existing afterschool programs, yet specific enough to include key components of quality in afterschool programming. This system provides program managers, administrators, and staff the capacity to gauge whether their program meets basic quality guidelines. Policymakers can also depend on the rating system to provide evidences to support their efforts in acquiring increased financial support for afterschool programming. As designed, this system can provide evidences to generate financial program support, or be used to demonstrate specific program needs, such as increased funding for staff training, program resources and supplies, or curriculum development. Furthermore, the rating system could also be further expanded to meet the needs of programs with specific focuses. For example, for afterschool programs with a science focus, benchmarks and indicators for high quality science instructional features could be added as a sub-list to assess quality in these specific science elements.

With current policies and laws that point to the accountability of ELO, data and evidence-based programming is essential in assessing program outcomes and improving program quality. When programs are consistently evaluated and improved, they can yield the most benefits for their student populations and garner more support from local, state, and federal constituencies.

Implications

The study findings showed that all 15 sites under study had a clear mission statement, and staff inputs were considered strongly in program decision-making. In addition, and as expected, these 15 sites also demonstrated strong standings on most of the benchmarks under the three major components of program organization, program environment, and instructional features. As important as what these sites affirmed, it is also necessary to draw implications based on what the researchers learned. The experiences of visiting these high functioning program sites accentuated the need for certain benchmarks to be further examined.

In the area of program organization, the benchmarks of family involvement, as well as community partnerships, both documented lower prevalence at the sites. Parent involvement, defined as families being welcomed to visit and parents being able to provide feedback, was reported to be moderate and weak, respectively. Program directors also stated that there was not a clear plan for parent involvement at the sites. Additionally, although parents' comments were welcomed, parents were not given an instrumental role in making important decisions within the programs. Similarly, community involvement was also confirmed to be low, especially with regard to having community members facilitated as guest speakers, thus

decreasing the chances of building stronger partnerships between the program and the larger, surrounding community.

Similar findings were also concluded in a nationwide study (Herman, Huang, & Goldschmidt, 2005), especially on parent involvement. Even though literature has consistently revealed the importance of parent involvement in their children's academic outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), a clear relationship between program outcomes and parent involvement in afterschool settings has not been established. In fact, very few successful afterschool programs could demonstrate that they had high degrees of parent involvement, though nearly all demonstrated that they had a high degree of parent satisfaction. Further investigation on which elements of parent involvement were the contributing factors to student outcomes, or a clearer definition of what one considers parent involvement in afterschool settings, are much needed.

For program environment, the benchmark of student health and well-being also needs to be further examined. Many afterschool studies drew on a school effectiveness model to set benchmarks for afterschool programs. Because afterschool programs were faced with limitations in terms of space (a sick room) and resources (school nurse, nutrition counselor), further examination on what should be considered as appropriate or not appropriate in afterschool settings ought to be conducted, and appropriate guidelines should be established. In this study, the weakness in this benchmark could be partially accounted for, due to the handing out of both healthy and unhealthy snacks during nutrition time. There was also a lack of providing appropriate guidelines to staff in minimizing healthy risks. For example, only about a third of the sites had staff members actively making sure that students were washing their hands and separating students when they were ill.

Lastly, in the component of instruction features, the benchmarks on activities that support youth development could be further enhanced. Although general forms of support for youth development were strongly prevalent across the sites, other, more specific forms of youth development were often lacking. For example, most of the programs failed to emphasize student ownership of program selection and development. Furthermore, students were often not included in setting personal goals, providing suggestions, providing comments, or reflecting on the settings and activities of the program. Although the physical settings of afterschool programs presented some hindrances in enhancing these goals; at times, staff also demonstrated a lot of willingness and desire to promote youth development. However, because it is a recently advancing field, many lacked the knowledge and skills to promote such concepts. Because positive youth development is the foundation for building

good citizenship, this could be a program element that enables policymakers to direct more funding toward staff development.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Current literature recognizes the need to identify good practices in quality-based afterschool programs (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; Beckett et al., 2001; Bodily & Beckett, 2005; C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005). Consequently, numerous studies have examined indicators and benchmarks that could define program quality (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; Huang, 2001; Goldsmith, Arbreton, & Bradshaw, 2004). However, even though quality-based indicators have been identified, afterschool programs still lack a concrete, easily accessible tool that they can use for self-evaluation. At the same time, in order for policymakers to set realistic expectations for afterschool programs and use evaluations appropriately, they need the evaluative information from tested indicators of quality and meaningful recommendations for programs that need improvement.

This study addressed this research gap. Employing a multi-method approach, including synthesis of literature, field studies, and data analysis, this study designed a Quality Benchmark Rating System to assist policymakers in decision-making, and to provide afterschool programs with a tool to enhance their sustainability.

With access to the Quality Benchmark Rating System, policymakers can make research-based decisions so that state funding can be applied toward programs that demonstrate promise and success. Furthermore, policymakers can also use the information to develop and implement appropriate guidelines for policy involving afterschool programs. Additionally, this system can assist afterschool programs in the self-monitoring of their progress and apply their effectiveness on their students. Managers of afterschool programs can use this system to fine-tune their objectives and goals, and demonstrate accountability for policymakers, as well as promote positive outcomes for students.

Study Limitations

In this study, the strategy of synthesizing literature was chosen because few studies with qualifying quantitative data or empirical evidences emerged from the literature search. In acknowledging the limitations of this process, it is cautioned here that the synthesis results are limited in the ability to draw formal inferences about the larger population.

Secondly, the newly designed Quality Benchmark Rating System is considered to be at an infancy stage. Although the exploratory nature contributes to broad education and policy

implications, much more field-testing on this tool is needed. With further testing, refinement, and validation conducted with larger sample sizes, this system could prove to be a very efficient and effective tool for afterschool practitioners, policymakers, and a variety of stakeholders.

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Appendix A:
Literature Summary

Figure A1 provides a detailed list of the 54 studies that met the criteria for inclusion in the synthesis of literature. Each citation within the figure is marked by an "x" to signify the quality indicator and broad category (i.e., program organization, program environment, instructional features) it addresses.

As can be seen in the figure, despite observed differences, there are substantial overlapping consistencies in opinions across articles. Each benchmark received support from at least one-quarter of the sources. Benchmarks that received the strongest levels of support (at least 75% or 40 sources) all focused on issues of program organization: Staffing /Professional Development, Programming/Activities, and Management/Administration. In contrast, those that received moderate support (less than 50% or 27 sources) were distributed across the broad categories.

Citation	Program Organization					Program Environment				Instructional Features			
	Programming/ Activities	Family/ Community Involvement	Staffing/ Professional Development	Management/ Administration	Evaluation	Safety	Health	Physical Space/ Resources	Human Relationships	Academic Support	Social Development	Enrichment	Positive youth development
Alexander, 1986	x		x							x			
American Youth Policy Forum, 2006	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	
Beckett et al., 2001	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Birmingham et al., 2005 (TASC)			x	x					x			x	
Bodilly & Becket, 2005	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			
C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x
Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994	x	x				x					x		
Chung, 1997	x	x	x						x			x	
Chung, 2000		x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	
Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2004		x	x	x	x					x		x	
de Kanter, 2001		x	x	x	x	x	x			x			
Diedrich et al., 2005	x	x	x	x				x		x			
Dryfoos, 1999			x	x						x		x	
ERIC Development Team, 1998	x	x	x		x					x		x	
Fashola, 1998			x							x			
Halpern, 2004	x		x	x	x				x		x	x	x

Figure A1. Literature summary of afterschool program quality benchmarks (*continues on next page*).

Citation	Program Organization					Program Environment				Instructional Features			
	Programming/ Activities	Family/ Community Involvement	Staffing/ Professional Development	Management/ Administration	Evaluation	Safety	Health	Physical Space/ Resources	Human Relationships	Academic Support	Social Development	Enrichment	Positive youth development
Harms et al., 1995	x		x	x		x	x	x	x				
Harvard Family Research Project, 2004	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x
Harvard Family Research Project, 2005	x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	
Harvard Family Research Project, 2006	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005 (Youth PQA)	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		x
Huang, 2001	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Kahne et al., 2001				x					x		x		x
Kugler, 2001		x	x							x		x	
Little, 2006	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
McElvain & Caplan, 2001	x	x	x	x	x					x			
Miller & Surr, n.d. (APAS)	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		
National Afterschool Association, n.d.	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1999	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	

Figure A1. Literature summary of afterschool program quality benchmarks (*continues on next page*).

Citation	Program Organization					Program Environment				Instructional Features			
	Programming/ Activities	Family/ Community Involvement	Staffing/ Professional Development	Management/ Administration	Evaluation	Safety	Health	Physical Space/ Resources	Human Relationships	Academic Support	Social Development	Enrichment	Positive youth development
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs, n.d.	x	x	x			x	x		x	x		x	
National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2002	x			x		x	x		x	x	x	x	
New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, 2002	x		x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x
New York State Afterschool Network, 2005	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Owens & Vallercamp, 2003		x	x	x	x								
Pechman & Marzke, 2003	x			x		x		x	x	x		x	x
Philadelphia Youth Network, 2003	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Reisner et al., 2004 (TASC)	x		x										
Safe and Sound, 1999	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	
Schwartz, 1996		x	x		x					x	x	x	
Schwendiman & Fager, 1999	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Seppanen, et al., 1993	x	x	x	x				x					
St Clair, 2004	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	
Tolman et al., 2002	x	x	x	x		x	x						x

Figure A1. Literature summary of afterschool program quality benchmarks (*continues on next page*).

Citation	Program Organization					Program Environment				Instructional Features			
	Programming/ Activities	Family/ Community Involvement	Staffing/ Professional Development	Management/ Administration	Evaluation	Safety	Health	Physical Space/ Resources	Human Relationships	Academic Support	Social Development	Enrichment	Positive youth development
Vandell & Shumow, 1999	x		x										
Weisberg & Mclaughlin, 2004	x		x	x		x	x	x		x		x	x
Westmoreland & Little, 2006	x												x
Wright, 2005	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	
Wright et al., 2006	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				
Yohalem et al., 2004	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x			
Yohalem et al., 2005	x	x	x	x		x	x				x		x
Yohalem et al., 2007	x	x	x	x	x				x	x			
Zhao & Gillingham, 2002	x		x						x				
Frequency	***44***	***39***	***49***	***40***	***19***	***30***	***27***	***21***	***30***	***36***	***18***	***32***	***15***

Figure A1. Literature summary of afterschool program quality benchmarks

Appendix B:

Observation Protocol

General Background Information

1. Date:_____
2. Site:_____
3. Location:_____
4. Observer(s):_____

Activity Observation Information

5. Time Begin:_____ Time End:_____
6. Grade level(s):_____
7. Location(s) of activity:_____
8. Instructional program used (if applicable):_____
9. Participants involved in this observation:

		Start of Observation	Mid Observation	End of Observation
a.	Total # program staff			
b.	Total # students			
c.	Total # volunteers			
d.	Total # day school staff			
e.	Total # parents			
f.	Total # other: _____			

Academics and Enrichment

10. Did you observe any of the following academic activities?

		Start of Observation	Mid Observation	End of Observation
a.	Homework/Study Hall			
b.	Reading			
c.	Language Arts/Writing			
d.	Math			
e.	Science			
f.	History-Social Science			

11. Did you observe any of the following enrichment activities?

		Start of Observation	Mid Observation	End of Observation
a.	Visual arts (e.g., drawing, arts and crafts)			
b.	Performing arts (e.g., music, dance, drama)			
c.	Technology			
d.	Competitive sports			
e.	Noncompetitive sports			
f.	Physical fitness			
g.	Nutrition			
h.	Study skills			

12. Were students given any free time to socialize? ____No ____Yes

Instructional Methods and Strategies

13. Did you observe any of the following instructional practices?
For items a–d, f, and i below, instead of putting a check in the appropriate column, please note the content area in which an instructional practice took place (e.g., "language arts" instead of "✓").

		Start of Observation	Mid-Observation	End of Observation
a.	**Project-based learning**			
b.	**Experiential learning**			
c.	**Real world contexts**			
d.	**Learning games**			
e.	Math projects			
f.	**Technology to teach a content area**			
g.	Hands-on science investigations			
h.	Scientific inquiry			
i.	**Students working in teams/small groups**			

14. Evaluate whether instruction was differentiated based on the following:

a. Age of the students. ____No ____Somewhat ____Yes

b. Skill levels of the students. ____No ____Somewhat ____Yes

Please elaborate.

15. Did staff use a variety of strategies to promote student engagement?

____No ____Yes

Please elaborate.

Personal Responsibility, Self-Direction, and Leadership

16. Did you observe students doing any of the following?

		Start of Observation	Mid-Observation	End of Observation
a.	Providing feedback about the program setting			
b.	Providing feedback about the activities			
c.	Suggesting activities for the program			
d.	Playing a leadership role during activities			
e.	Participating in activities that promote leadership abilities			
f.	Selecting the activities in which they want to participate			
g.	Reflecting about their experience in the program			
h.	Acting as peer mentors			

17. Did staff utilize any of the 8 principles of youth development (focusing on building student strengths as a way to reduce weaknesses in the areas of physical/psychological safety; consistent structure & supervision; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy/mattering; opportunities for skill building; and integration of family, school & community)?

_____No ____Yes

Please elaborate. .....

.....

18. Did you witness any instances of staff highlighting student work (e.g., display work, have students present work to class)?

____No ____Yes

Please elaborate. .....

.....

Collaboration with Day School

19. Did you observe any communication or collaboration between day school and after school staff? ____No ____Yes

If yes, please elaborate. .....

.....

.....

For items 20–22, & 24, note "NA" in the Comments column if this indicator is not observable/applicable.

Safety, Health and Physical Space

20. Rate the following indicators based on these two questions:
- ❖ Does the program provide a safe and healthy environment for all ASP participants?
- ❖ Does the program provide physical space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for after school activities?

Comments	Safety, Health, Physical Space	Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Moderately Evident	Consistently Evident
	The program is operating in a site with sufficient security.				
	Program space is arranged well for a range of activities.				
	There are sufficient materials available to support program activities.				
	The program's *indoor* space meets the needs of students (adequate space for number of students and variety of activities offered).				
	The program's *outdoor* space meets the safety, wellness and security needs of students.				
	Staff know where the children are and what they are doing (i.e., an adult is nearby and maintaining visual observation of students).				
	The program provides an environment that protects the health and enhances the wellness of the students (i.e., *physical* safety).				
	Meals and snacks are nutritious and adequate in portion to meet students' needs.				
	Staff ensure that students take steps to minimize health risks (e.g. hand washing, separate sick children, tissues, etc).				

Code of Conduct (Behavior & Discipline)

21. Does the program maintain, establish, and communicate a code of conduct?

Comments	Code of Conduct	Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Moderately Evident	Consistently Evident
	Staff use positive techniques to guide the behavior of children and youth.				
	Staff give attention to children when they cooperate, share, care for materials or join in activities.				
	Staff set appropriate limits for children.				
	Staff use no harsh discipline methods.				
	Staff encourage children to resolve their own conflicts. Staff step in only if needed to discuss the issues and work out a solution.				
	Staff applies rewards and consequences for student behavior appropriately and consistently.				
	Staff is sensitive to students' respective cultures and languages.				

Relationships

22. Does the program develop, nurture, and maintain positive relationships among staff and students?

Comments	Relationships	Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Moderately Evident	Consistently Evident
	Staff interactions with students are characterized by warmth, respect, and appreciation for their efforts.				
	Staff use positive behavior management strategies (e.g., attend to children who are demonstrating positive behaviors, consistently reinforce expectations for student behavior, assist children in resolving disputes appropriately).				
	Students interact with each other positively (show respect, cooperate, and when problems occur use appropriate problem solving strategies).				
	Staff are actively engaged with students (helping them learn, participating in conversations and activities).				
	Staff interactions with each other are characterized by warmth, respect, and reflect appropriate modeling for students.				
	Staff encourage students to make choices.				

23. Specific things to look for (check general categories if observed, and underline/circle specific descriptions if applicable):

- ❑ **Staff relate to all children in positive ways:**
  - Respect and listen to what they say.
  - Make children feel welcome and comfortable.
  - Respond to children with acceptance and appreciation.
  - Are engaged with children.

- ❑ **Staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of children:**
  - Show awareness of the special interests and talents of each child.
  - Recognize the range of children's abilities.
  - Relate to a child's culture and home language.
  - Respond to the range of feelings and temperaments.

- ❑ **Staff encourage children to make choices and become more responsible:**
  - Support a child's initiative.
  - Encourage children to take leadership roles.
  - Provide children with chances to choose what they will do, how they will do it, and with whom.
  - Help children make informed and responsible choices.

- ❑ **Staff interact with children to help them learn:**
  - Ask questions that encourage children to think for themselves.
  - Share skills and resources to help children gain information and solve problems.
  - Vary the approaches used to help children learn.
  - Help children use language skills through frequent conversations.

- ❑ **Children generally interact with one another in positive ways:**
  - Appear relaxed and involved with each other.
  - Show respect for each other.
  - Usually cooperate and work well together.
  - Try to discuss their differences and work out solutions.

- ❑ **Staff work well together to meet the needs of children:**
  - Effectively communicate with each other.
  - Are cooperative with each other.
  - Are respectful of each other.
  - Provide role models of positive adult relationships.

Overall Climate

24. What is the program's overall climate?

Climate Indicators	Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Moderately Evident	Consistently Evident
Staff are engaged in conversations with students and are interested in their lives.				
Staff are relaxed and calm.				
Staff enjoy their work.				
Staff greet students each day.				
Students enjoy participating in the program.				
Activities and staff facilitate students' self confidence.				
Acceptance of alternative viewpoints is encouraged.				
Staff build respect for differences among students.				

Comments:

Appendix C:
Site Staff Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is especially important for us to understand your perceptions about your after school program's *environment, instructional features and organization*. Please be aware that your answers will be kept confidential and will not be associated with either your name or after school site in our report.

I. Background Questions

1. How many years have you worked as…

   a) A staff member in this after school program _____
   b) A Site Coordinator in this after school program _____

2. How many years have you worked at this particular site? _____

II. Program Environment

Healthy and Safe Environment

Think about the environment in which you work. Please check all that apply:

- ❑ Students are always under adult supervision.
- ❑ The program adequately shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.
- ❑ The program regularly performs safety drills.
- ❑ The program is operating in a site with sufficient security.
- ❑ The program has effective procedures for arrival and dismissal.
- ❑ Equipment is safe for activity play.
- ❑ An effective system is in place to keep unauthorized people from taking students from the program.

Think about the environment in which you work. Please check all that apply:

- ❑ Students' health records are adequately maintained in the program.
- ❑ Students' allergy and medication needs are adequately provided to the staff in charge.
- ❑ The program regularly provides nutritious snacks.
- ❑ The program has adequate supplies and facilities for hand washing.
- ❑ There are plenty of opportunities for students to exercise.

Program Space and Resources

Think about the after school program's indoor and outdoor space. Please check all that apply:

The program's indoor space . . .

- ❑ Adequately meets students' needs.
- ❑ Has enough room for all program activities.
- ❑ Is arranged well for a range of activities (e.g., sports, creative arts, enrichment offerings, eating, etc.).
- ❑ Has adequate storage space for equipment, materials, and personal possessions.
- ❑ Allows students to explore their interests.
- ❑ Allows children to get materials out and put them away by themselves with ease.

The program's outdoor space . . .

- ❑ Students regularly have a chance to play outdoors.
- ❑ Students can use a variety of outdoor equipment and games for both active and quiet play.

Program Code of Conduct

Please check all that apply

- ❑ Program has established clear participation and attendance expectations for students.
- ❑ Staff use positive techniques to guide students' behavior.
- ❑ Staff set appropriate limits for students.
- ❑ Staff use no harsh discipline methods.
- ❑ Staff encourage students to resolve their own conflicts.
- ❑ Staff appropriately and consistently apply rewards and consequences for student behavior.
- ❑ Staff are sensitive to students' respective culture(s) and language(s).
- ❑ Students understand the rules for behavior.

Relationships among Staff and Students

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Program has clear written guidelines about expectations for staff-student interactions.	1	2	3	4
2. Activities help build relationships between staff and students.	1	2	3	4
3. Staff relate to all students in positive ways.	1	2	3	4
4. Staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of students.	1	2	3	4
5. Staff encourage students to make choices and become more responsible.	1	2	3	4
6. Staff interact with students to help them learn.	1	2	3	4
7. Students generally interact with each other in positive ways.	1	2	3	4
8. Staff work well together to meet the needs of students.	1	2	3	4

Overall Program Climate

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Staff are engaged in conversations with students and are interested in their lives.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff enjoy their work.	1	2	3	4
3. Staff make an effort to greet students each day.	1	2	3	4
4. Students enjoy participating in the program.	1	2	3	4
5. The program facilitates students' self-confidence.	1	2	3	4
6. Acceptance of alternative viewpoints is encouraged.	1	2	3	4
7. Staff build respect for differences among students.	1	2	3	4

III. Instructional Features

Activities and Program Goals

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Activities are offered that reflect the different learning styles of the students (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic).	1	2	3	4
2. Activities reflect the abilities of the students in the program.	1	2	3	4
3. Activities reflect the interests of the students in the program.	1	2	3	4
4. Activities are well suited to the age range of students in the program.	1	2	3	4
5. Activities reflect the preferred language(s) of the students.	1	2	3	4
6. Activities reflect the different cultures of the families served.	1	2	3	4

Academics and Enrichment

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Students are given adequate assistance with their homework.	1	2	3	4
2. Students are given regular opportunities to socialize.	1	2	3	4
3. Students are given sufficient opportunities for cognitive development.	1	2	3	4
4. Students are provided opportunities to develop critical thinking skills.	1	2	3	4
5. The program addresses the physical needs of the students.	1	2	3	4
6. The program addresses the social needs of the students.	1	2	3	4
7. The program addresses the emotional needs of the students.	1	2	3	4

During the past year, which of the following types of activities were offered by your program? Please check all that apply.

- ❑ Reading
- ❑ Language arts/writing
- ❑ Math
- ❑ Science
- ❑ History-social science
- ❑ Visual arts (e.g., drawing, arts and crafts)
- ❑ Performing arts (e.g., music, dance, drama)
- ❑ Technology
- ❑ Competitive sports
- ❑ Noncompetitive sports
- ❑ Physical fitness
- ❑ Nutrition
- ❑ Study skills
- ❑ Tutoring

Instructional Methods and Strategies

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Activities are designed to take into account students' strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4
2. Instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of all students, including those who have special needs.	1	2	3	4
3. Activities are designed to meet specific developmental youth outcomes.	1	2	3	4
4. Staff take into account the language and culture of the students when designing activities.	1	2	3	4
5. Students are given multiple opportunities to develop new skills.	1	2	3	4

Which of the following instructional practices did you use during the past school year? Please check all that apply.

- ❑ Project-based learning practices (students work on projects spanning several days).
- ❑ Experiential learning (opportunities for hands-on experience, reflection, and action).
- ❑ Utilizing real world contexts.
- ❑ Teaching math using learning games.
- ❑ Providing students with opportunities to complete math projects.
- ❑ Using technology or computers as a tool to teach math.
- ❑ Having students complete hands-on science investigations.
- ❑ Having students practice scientific inquiry.
- ❑ Having students work in small groups.

Personal Responsibility, Self-Direction, and Leadership

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Staff highlights student work (e.g., displays work, has students present work to class).	1	2	3	4
2. Activities help students develop skills that will help them succeed in life.	1	2	3	4
3. Activities promote the development of resiliency in students.	1	2	3	4
4. Activities promote self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
5. Activities promote self-direction for the students.	1	2	3	4
6. Activities promote leadership abilities.	1	2	3	4

In which of the following ways have students participated in the after school program during the past school year? Please check all that apply.

- ❑ Providing feedback about the program setting.
- ❑ Providing feedback about the activities offered in the program.
- ❑ Setting personal goals concerning participation in the program.
- ❑ Suggesting activities for the program.
- ❑ Helping staff to plan activities.
- ❑ Playing a leadership role during activities.
- ❑ Selecting the activities in which they want to participate.
- ❑ Reflecting about their experience in the program.
- ❑ Acting as peer mentors.

Collaboration with Day School

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I regularly collaborate with day school staff.	1	2	3	4
2. A flow of information is maintained between the day school and after school program.	1	2	3	4
3. The day school and after school program share staff development opportunities.	1	2	3	4
4. Day school and after school staff are given opportunities to establish relationships.	1	2	3	4

In which ways have you collaborated with day school staff during the past school year? Please check all that apply.

- ❑ Sharing information about curriculum.
- ❑ Discussing student homework assignments.
- ❑ Discussing student assessment results.
- ❑ Sharing instructional strategies.
- ❑ Identifying complementary learning goals.
- ❑ Setting goals for individual students.
- ❑ Discussing successes and challenges.
- ❑ Discussing the academic progress of my students.
- ❑ Discussing student behavior.
- ❑ Monitoring student development.
- ❑ Developing interdisciplinary projects that span both the day school and after school program.
- ❑ Developing thematic group projects that span both the day school and after school program.
- ❑ Working to ensure that activities support state and local standards.
- ❑ Working to ensure that activities support state and local benchmarks.
- ❑ Participating in the school's curriculum planning committee.

IV. Program Organization

Staff Support

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. There is a clear salary structure in place for program staff.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff are paid well for the work they do in the program.	1	2	3	4
3. Full-time staff receive benefits (e.g., health insurance, pad leaves of absence).	1	2	3	4
4. A written job description outlining responsibilities is reviewed with each staff member.	1	2	3	4
5. Staff are given opportunities to share their concerns about the program.	1	2	3	4
6. Staff are given continuous feedback on their performance.	1	2	3	4
7. Staff are given paid preparation time.	1	2	3	4
8. Staff are treated as professionals.	1	2	3	4
9. Staff are provided with opportunities for advancement.	1	2	3	4
10. With the current staff-student ratio, staff are able to give sufficient attention to all students.	1	2	3	4
11. There is a plan to provide adequate staff coverage in case of emergencies or staff absences.	1	2	3	4

Staff Experience & Training

Which of the following professional development (i.e., instructor training) topics did you participate in this year through your after school program? Please check all that apply:

- ❑ Promoting the safety, health, and nutrition of youth.
- ❑ Promoting students' self-esteem.
- ❑ Working with families.
- ❑ Designing activities that support program goals.
- ❑ Planning activities that support students' developmental needs.
- ❑ Working with English language learners (students who do not speak English as their first language).
- ❑ Content-specific training (e.g., math, reading, science, art, etc.).
- ❑ Assessment.
- ❑ Classroom management and discipline.
- ❑ Other: _____
- ❑ No professional development was offered.

Thank you for participating!!!

Appendix D:
Program Director Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is especially important for us to understand your perceptions about your after school program's organizational structure. Please be aware that your answers will be kept confidential and will not be associated with either your name or after school site in our report.

I. Background Questions

1. How many years have you worked as…

   c) A staff member in this after school program _____

   d) Program Director in this after school program _____

2. How many years have you worked at this particular site? _____

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your after school program.

II. Program Management (planning & policy-making)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. We have a clear mission statement that explains our program's vision.	1	2	3	4
2. *Staff* input is considered in program planning.	1	2	3	4
3. *Student* input is considered in program planning.	1	2	3	4
4. Hours of operation are based on families' needs.	1	2	3	4
5. I work with the day school principal to promote positive change.	1	2	3	4
6. I work with the day school principal to promote the use of innovation.	1	2	3	4

III. Administration & Program Sustainability

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. There is a long-term financial plan in place for sustaining the program and maintaining program quality.	1	2	3	4
2. All possible resources (e.g., community resources, funding) are used to make the program affordable for all families.	1	2	3	4
3. The program budget is periodically adjusted based on resource needs.	1	2	3	4
4. There is a marketing plan in place to publicize the program.	1	2	3	4
5. Stakeholders are kept informed through regular progress reports.	1	2	3	4
6. All required staff documents are kept updated (e.g., insurance, staff security clearance, health certification).	1	2	3	4
7. All required student documents are kept on file (e.g., enrollment, registration).	1	2	3	4
8. There is a system in place for monitoring student attendance data.	1	2	3	4

IV. Staff Experience & Training

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	We have enough qualified instructors on staff to ensure high quality instruction.	1	2	3	4
2.	Our staff reflects the cultural diversity of our community.	1	2	3	4
3.	Our staff is highly motivated.	1	2	3	4
4.	Our staff is well-trained for work with school-age kids in the after school setting.	1	2	3	4
5.	Our staff is sensitive to the cultural and social influences that impact how students learn and relate to others.	1	2	3	4
6.	Staff is competent in core academic areas, as appropriate (e.g., math, reading, science, art, etc.)	1	2	3	4
7.	Program directors participate in professional development along with staff.	1	2	3	4
8.	Program directors receive training in program management.	1	2	3	4
9.	Qualified volunteers are recruited to work in the after school program.	1	2	3	4

V. Family Involvement

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	Our program has a clearly defined plan for parent involvement.	1	2	3	4
2.	Family members are welcome to visit any time throughout the day.	1	2	3	4
3.	We hold orientation sessions for new families.	1	2	3	4
4.	Staff encourages families to get involved in program events (e.g., volunteering, field trips, events, celebrations).	1	2	3	4
5.	Parent input is considered in decisions about after school programming.	1	2	3	4
6.	Staff regularly communicates with parents about how they can help their children learn.	1	2	3	4
7.	Staff members are required to communicate regularly with parents about students' well-being.	1	2	3	4
8.	Staff keeps families informed about what is going on in the program.	1	2	3	4
9.	Parents are aware of attendance policies.	1	2	3	4
10.	Learning opportunities are provided for parents through the after school program (e.g., ESL, computer, literacy workshops).	1	2	3	4

VI. Community Partnerships

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	We involve local community partners in program planning.	1	2	3	4
2.	We have established partnerships with local community organizations (e.g., libraries, businesses, colleges/ universities) to support afterschool programming.	1	2	3	4
3.	Our program encourages youth representation in local community organizations.	1	2	3	4
4.	We encourage our students to give back to the community through community service projects.	1	2	3	4
5.	We regularly bring in community members as guest speakers.	1	2	3	4
6.	We recruit volunteers from the community.	1	2	3	4

VII. Evaluation

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	We have an internal method for evaluating *program activities*.	1	2	3	4
2.	We have an internal method for evaluating *staff performance*.	1	2	3	4
3.	We have an internal method for evaluating *student engagement*.	1	2	3	4
4.	Students' academic improvement is evaluated.	1	2	3	4
5.	Students' social skills development is evaluated.	1	2	3	4
6.	Students are surveyed to measure their interest in the program.	1	2	3	4
7.	Parents are surveyed to measure their satisfaction with the program.	1	2	3	4
8.	Staff is surveyed to identify areas for program improvement.	1	2	3	4
9.	Evaluation findings are used to improve the program.	1	2	3	4
10.	Evaluation findings are available to the general public (e.g., parents, community).	1	2	3	4

Thank you for participating!

Appendix E:
Program Descriptions

The LA's BEST Program

LA's BEST was implemented in 1998 under the leadership of then Mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley, to address the need for adult supervision of young children during the hours of 3 to 6 p.m. LA's BEST is overseen by a cooperative team representing the Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), a board of directors, and an advisory board consisting of leaders from business, labor, government, education, and the community.

The program seeks to provide a safe place for children during afterschool hours with caring, responsible adults and engaging activities to enrich students' academic and developmental skills. This overall goal is guided by the following five *values* of LA's BEST:

1. Nothing we do is as important as the effect it has on a child.
2. Engaging activities develop values, skills, and relationships. Activities are not seen as ends in themselves, but as vehicles for creating values, building skills, and solidifying peer and adult relationships. An engaging activity is one that holds children's attention, awakens their imagination, and inspires them to want to learn more.
3. All children have equal rights to be accepted, respected, and valued by others. Children are viewed as individuals to be developed, not problems to be solved.
4. Children should be involved in decision-making and program design. If children get to choose how, when, in what, and with whom to be engaged, they are far more likely to enjoy themselves and behave cooperatively.
5. When we listen for understanding everyone learns—children and adults alike. We are constantly able to learn from our children as well as each other. Everyone is a learner (LA's BEST, 2008).

Student population. The LA's BEST afterschool program currently serves 26,000 students in 180 elementary schools in low-income areas, with some of the lowest educational resources in the state. Students participating in LA's BEST are similar to the overall student demographics of the greater LAUSD. The majority of students participating in the program are Latina/o, comprising 80% of the total enrolled students. African American students comprise 12% of the enrollment and the remaining 8% of students are Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, or White.

Program structure. LA's BEST is open to all students at the selected sites and free of cost for families. A school selected to be an LA's BEST program site must meet several

criteria, including low performance on academic standardized tests and be located in a low-income and/or high crime neighborhood. To become an LA's BEST site, the school principal must submit an official letter of request for the program to be implemented at the school. Parents enroll their children in LA's BEST on a first-come, first-serve basis. Teachers can also recommend students to participate in the program if they feel the students' academic and/or behavioral skills will especially improve as a result of their attendance.

In recent years, the LA's BEST curriculum has been modified to focus on the development of the whole child. Thus, a curriculum is in place that focuses on intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development. Cognitive skills are developed through encouraging responsibility and positive work habits, a love of learning, self-efficacy, and fostering future aspirations. Physical and social-emotional development are encouraged through a sense of safety and security, a healthy lifestyle, social competence, sense of community and a respect for diversity. The LA's BEST curriculum works towards developing these skills by building on the student's daily life experiences. Thus, each LA's BEST site structures their program to serve the needs of their specific student populations. Each site has distinct characteristics and program themes such as arts, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and technology. Subsequently, relationships with the day school and community support also tend to vary with each site.

The following list provides an overview of the different educational and enrichment activities offered in LA's BEST program sites:

Cognitive/Academic. This includes homework time, tutoring, academic incentive programs, math and science activities, reading and writing activities, computer activities, and psychological programs addressing conflict resolution skills.

Recreational. This includes arts and crafts, cooking, games, holiday activities, and sports such as aerobics, karate, and team sports.

Performing and Visual Arts. This includes choir and music, dance, drama/theater, flag/drill team, museum visits, art camps, etc.

Health and Nutrition. This includes study of nutrition, healthy habits, and exercises programs such as tennis, skating, and BEST Fit community health fair.

Community and Culture. This includes community programs, such as adopt-a-grandparent, and community days; and cultural programs, such as those dedicated to Black history, "Folklorico," and other cultural holiday celebrations.

Parental involvement activities. These fall under four categories:

- Celebrations, such as Halloween Kidfest, Community Jam, Awards Days
- Programs for children, including parent volunteers for daily activities, parent attendance of field trips
- Programs for parents, including parent workshops, guest speakers for parental education
- Communications/information, including open house events, assemblies, parent-teacher meetings

The Pasadena LEARNs Program

The Pasadena LEARNs afterschool program was established in 1999; jointly created by Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), Partnership for School-Age Children (PSAC), and the City of Pasadena. LEARNs is an extended day and year-round program that uses academic intervention and enrichment activities as tools for improving students' academic performance. The program is maintained through collaborative efforts of local community organizations, principals, teachers, school support staff, parents, students, and community activists. The LEARNs program is designed to draw upon the community's strengths and is structured to ensure community-wide responsibility, local control, and neighborhood ownership. The following three goals guide these program efforts:

1. Increase the number of students meeting or exceeding academic standards.
2. Strengthen student enrichment, leadership, and service opportunities to create neighborhood resilience.
3. Improve student health and safety, and reduce drug use and violence (Pasadena Unified School District, 2007).

Student population. There are 23 schools in PUSD that currently offer the LEARNs afterschool program. The majority of LEARNs sites are located at elementary schools. In addition, four sites serve middle school students and one site serves middle school and high school students. An average of 2,000 children attend the LEARNs program daily. The majority of students enrolled at PUSD are Latina/o, comprising 55% of the total enrolled students. African-American students comprise 23% of the enrollment at the district, White students comprise 15%, and the remaining 7% of the students are Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, or American Indian.

Program structure. There is an open enrollment policy for participation in the LEARNs program that functions on a first-come, first-serve basis. Family income verification determines if a student must pay a fee to participate in the program. For families

who do not qualify for their children to participate free of charge, there are minimal sliding scale fees, varying from $1 to $5 dollars per day. The program structure is based on the "holistic" approach to education that promotes learning and exploring in a safe environment in order to achieve greater personal and academic success. LEARNs structures their curriculum to be student-centered, building on the skills of the individual child. Each site uses PUSD teachers, youth leaders, and community members (program partners) to help provide classes for the children at their site. Each school site chooses their own programming based on their students' needs and interests, however, most of the sites share similar class offerings.

All LEARNs programs require students to attend three hours daily, from school dismissal to 6 p.m. Program sites must dedicate at least 3 hours per week to academic enrichment activities that compliment their day school curriculum. An additional requirement ensures programs provide reading intervention activities at least 2 hours per week. Reading intervention focuses on increasing reading fluency, developing creative writing, reading comprehension, and teamwork skills. Many sites offer classes in the following: art, computers, cooking, dance, drama, gardening, language arts, leadership, math, music, science, sports, and structured recreation. Aside from these activities, most programs provide supervised homework assistance and small group tutoring. Following the completion of the academic year, LEARNs students showcase their accomplishments for parents, families, and teachers. There is also a summer program offered at selected Pasadena LEARNs sites that operate a 5- to 6-week session during the summer months with a similar curriculum.

The Lawndale RAP Program

Lawndale RAP operates a year-round program. This includes A.M. and P.M. KinderCare, as well as before school, afterschool, and intersession programs (during the winter, spring and summer) for elementary and middle school children. The program is maintained by the Lawndale Elementary School District (LESD) and is overseen by the Director of Extended Day Programs for the district. In addition, following the completion of the study, Lawndale RAP formed an advisory committee including community partners, stakeholders, parents, students, district administrators, and staff. The program seeks to provide children with a safe place to spend their time before and afterschool hours. Specifically, the program outlines six goals the RAP program strives to meet:

1. Helping students reach their amazing potential;
3. Creating a safe place for students to be every day before and afterschool;
4. Educating students;

5. Enriching students by providing opportunities that they would not otherwise have.
6. Strengthening the community through families and youth (Lawndale Elementary School District, 2005).

Student population. Lawndale RAP is the smallest of the three programs included in this study. Currently, it includes all six elementary schools and both middle schools within the district. There are 1200 students participating in the afterschool component of the program each day. The majority of students enrolled at LESD are Latina/o, comprising 71% of the total enrolled students. African-American students comprise 13% of the enrollment at the district and the remaining 16% of students are Asian, White, Filipino, Pacific Islander, or American Indian.

Program structure. There is an open enrollment policy for participation in the Lawndale RAP program. Parents may pay for their children to attend or they may go on a waiting list for a funded spot. Children who have funded spots are required to attend daily from 3 to 6 p.m. and may be dropped from the program because of unexcused absences. Once a student loses their funded seat they must rejoin the waiting list or pay. The RAP afterschool program curriculum focuses on three main elements including a nutritional snack, homework, and project-based activities. Long-term activities focus on developing academic, social, and emotional skills such as team building. These activities are aligned with the student's day school curriculum. Other classes that are offered at RAP include, but are not limited to music, drama, arts and crafts, cultural activities, science, and cooking.

Appendix F:

Quality Benchmark Score Sheet

CBO/District: _____

Afterschool site: _____

Program director: _____

Assessment period: From _____ To _____

Benchmark	Score	Core Quality (Y/N)	High Quality (Y/N)
Program Organization			
1. Program management			
2. Program administration			
3. Staff support			
4. Staff experience and training			
5. Family involvement			
6. Community partnerships			
7. Evaluation			
Program Environment			
8. Safe environment			
9. Student health and well-being			
10. Well-equipped and suitable physical space			
11. Positive relationships			
Instructional Features			
12. Quality of implementation			
13. Variety of activities			
14. Activities support youth development			

This score sheet provides an overview of program quality at a glance. Each of the three major program components are listed with the score of each associated benchmark listed. The score sheet also provides a quick reference as to whether the benchmarks are considered as "core" or 'exemplary". In other words, core benchmarks are used to evaluate program quality and exemplary benchmarks are included as indicators for exemplary program practices.