



Providing Youth with Opportunities in the Out of School Hours as Alternatives to High Risk Behaviors



The out-of-school hours can play a critical role in the lives of Maryland's young people. In fact, there are approximately 20 to 25 hours per week that children are out of school while most parents are at work. ⁱ Research tells us that these hours hold great danger for youth - on school days, the hours from 3 to 6 pm are the peak hours for youth to commit crime; to become crime victims; to smoke, drink, or use drugs; or to engage in sexual activity. ⁱⁱ For many young people around our state, this is an unsupervised time. In

Maryland, 28% (270,873) of K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. ⁱⁱⁱ Unfortunately, we know that self-care and boredom can increase the likelihood that a young person will experiment with drugs and alcohol by as much as 50 percent. ^{iv}

Out-of-school time programming can be a powerful alternative. Adolescents who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school, three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity than teens in afterschool programs. ^v We also have local evidence of the crime preventive power of afterschool programs, just one year after the Baltimore police department opened an afterschool program in a high-risk area, illegal acts dropped 44 percent. In another city, juvenile arrests in a public housing project declined by 75 percent after the establishment of an afterschool program while they increased by 67 percent in a comparable housing project that offered no such activities. ^{vi} Beyond crime reduction, research has also shown the benefits of a quality OST program are expansive including the "fostering of positive physical, social, and civic development and the prevention or reduction in problem behaviors." ^{vii}

So what program design and philosophy produces these important outcomes? According to the 2007 National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) Issue Brief, "Making the Case: Quality Afterschool Programs Matter," quality afterschool programs are those that incorporate a youth development approach. The Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) defines youth development as "the natural process through which all young people seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs and to build knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in adolescence and young adulthood." A 2005 study by the RAND Corporation entitled, *Making Out-of-School-Time Matter* identified some of the programmatic indicators of a youth development approach including: 1) a clear mission, 2) high expectations, 3) a safe environment, 4) supportive emotional climate, 5) small total enrollment, 6) stable, trained personnel, 7) appropriate content and pedagogy, and 8) frequent program assessment.

The question is: if programs are designed to reduce an undesirable youth behavior do they require different or specific design elements?



In the case of programs designed to reduce teenage pregnancy, research suggests intensive and multi-faceted out-of-school time programs focused on youth development may have the greatest effects on teen pregnancy risk, at least in some populations. Specifically, evaluations of the *CAS–Carrera* program (which offers not just traditional sex education, but also tutoring, SAT preparation, job skills, medical and dental care, sports and creative arts) demonstrated reductions in teen pregnancy and birth rate for African American and Hispanic females for the 3 years of program participation. Conversely, some less concentrated, curriculum-based sex education programs offered shorter term effects.^{viii}

Similar findings have also been found in other challenging areas. For youth within the juvenile justice system, there is evidence that combining risk reduction programming and positive youth development has a strong impact on decreasing or preventing juvenile crime and its reoccurrence.^{ix} Specifically, OST programs that focus on pro-social competencies for young people and include other elements of positive youth development like educational, employment, civic and cultural opportunities and supports. In the case of programs encouraging foster care youth to achieve economic success, they were deemed more likely to be effective if they incorporate elements of youth development.^x The report, *Disconnected Young People in New York City: Crisis and Opportunity* by Public and Private Ventures summarizes results relating to drop out prevention stating “effective dropout prevention programs take a comprehensive approach, not only addressing academic support, job training and school credits, but also addressing other social and personal factors that often prevent students from succeeding.”^{xi}

There is now growing recognition that participation in high quality OST programs is associated with better grades, work habits, task persistence, and social skills; and that benefits appear to intensify as youth and adolescents continue their involvement over a succession of years.^{xii} Luckily for OST providers interested in decreasing problematic youth behaviors, research also points to a clear program design – one with youth development at its core.



Model Programs

LA's Best

The LA's BEST model uses a multi-pronged approach to foster a love of learning and inquiry among at-risk youth in Los Angeles to maximize not only their academic achievement, but also their social, emotional, and physical development. The core activities at LA's BEST have been divided into three and a half beats: help with homework, a learning activity that boosts core academic skills such as reading or math, something that's new and just plain fun, and a nutritious snack. These components provide structure for a program that is otherwise highly customized based on students' needs and the site staff's interests and experience. www.lasbest.org

After School Matters

In creating a network of out-of-school opportunities, After School Matters offers three main program models: clubs, apprenticeships, and internships. Collectively, this structure is known as the "Ladder of Opportunity." Teens can start on any "rung" as long as they have the requisite skills, commitment, and maturity. www.afterschoolmatters.org

The Children's Aid Society (CAS) - Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program

Helps young people (ages 10 to 18) avoid pregnancy and risky sexual behavior. Guided by a philosophy that sees youth as "at promise" instead of "at risk," the program uses a holistic approach that empowers youth and helps them develop a desire for a productive, risk-free future. This approach centers on the belief that success in school, meaningful employment, access to quality medical and health services, and interactions with high-caliber adult role models have a potent contraceptive effect on teens. The CAS-Carrera program follows youth beginning in fifth grade until high school graduation and beyond, providing opportunities for them to discover interests and develop talents, as well as emphasizing education and employment. <http://www.stopteenpregnancy.com/>

Measures and Assessment Tool Resources

Measuring Violence Related Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors Among Youth: A Compendium of Assessment Tools

This compendium provides researchers and prevention specialists with a set of tools to assess violence-related beliefs, behaviors, and influences, as well as to evaluate programs to prevent youth violence. http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pdf/YV/YV_Compendium.pdf

Out-of-School Time Evaluation Snapshot Measurement Tools for Evaluating Out-of-School Time Programs: An Evaluation Resource

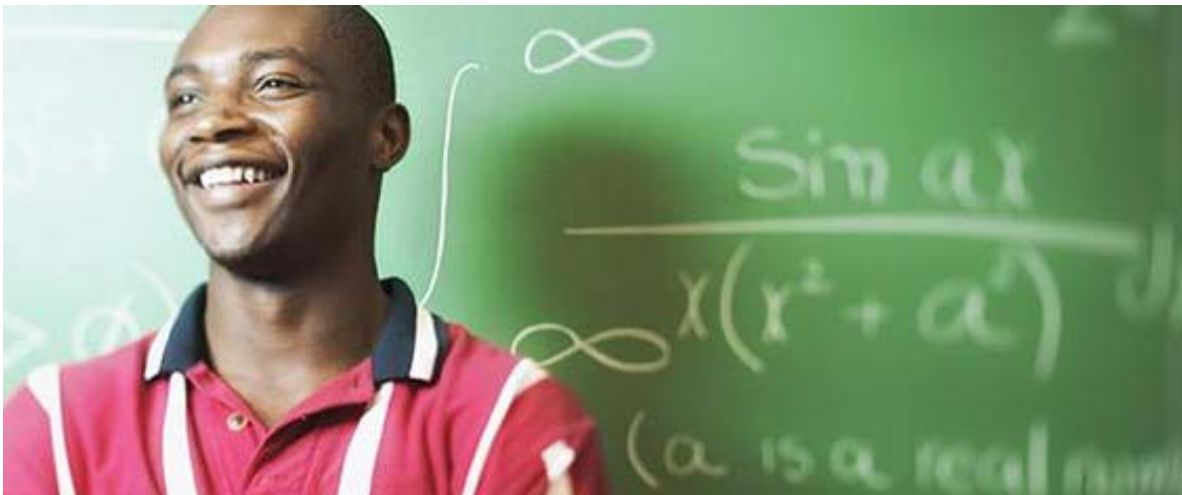
This resource describes instruments and tools that can be obtained and used for on-the-ground program evaluation. From first-time internal evaluations to large-scale national studies, these evaluation instruments provide valuable ways to assess the characteristics of programs, their staff, their

participants, and other key information. This includes tools that measure: Future Orientation/Future Plans, Life Events and Experiences, Mental Health and Behavior, Relationships, Identity Perceptions and Self-Esteem, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Prevention.

<http://www.afterschoolresources.org/kernel/images/OST-Snapshot6Updated-1.pdf>

Resiliency Assessments

- California Healthy Kids Survey Resilience Assessment Module (Constantine & Bernard, 2001)
- Communities That Care Youth Survey (Pollard et al., 1996)
- Individual Protective Factors Index (Springer & Philips, 1995)
- Search Institute Profile of Student Life Attitudes and Behaviors Assessment (Leffert et al., 1998).



ⁱ The After-School Corporation, 3:00 P.M.: Time for After School, New York, NY: Author, no date.

ⁱⁱ National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center; www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/after.asp.

ⁱⁱⁱ Afterschool Alliance, The State of Afterschool, Maryland page:

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state_abbrev=MD

^{iv} The Forum for Youth Investment, "Out of School Research Meets After-school Policy," October 2002, p. 1; www.forumfyi.org/Files//ostpc1.pdf

^v YMCA of the USA. (2001, March) *After school for America's teens*.

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

^{vii} The Forum for Youth Investment, "Out of School Research Meets After-school Policy," October 2002, p. 1; www.forumfyi.org/Files//ostpc1.pdf

^{viii} Franzetta, K., Manlove, J., McKinney, K., Romano Papillo, A., Terry-Humen, E., (January 2004). A Good Time: After-School Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy.

^{ix} Bernat DH. & Resnick MD. Healthy Youth Development: Science and Strategies, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*. 2006, November(Suppl), S10-16.

^x 7. Youth Transition Funders Group, Foster Care Work Group with The Finance Project. *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*. Retrieved from www.youthtransitions.org

^{xi} Wyckoff, L., Cooney, S.M., Djakovic, D.K., McClanahan, W.S. (September 2008). *Disconnected Young People in New York City: Crisis and Opportunity*. Public/Private Ventures. Philadelphia, PA.

^{xii} Vandell, D., Reisner, E., Pierce, K., Brown, B., Lee, D., Bolt, D., & Pechman, E. (2006). The study of promising after-school programs: Examination of longer term outcomes after two years of program experiences. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison.