

5-2015

# An Analysis of Afterschool Programs in the United States

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3-2015

# An Analysis of Afterschool Programs in the United States

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An Analysis of Afterschool Programs in the United States:

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements of the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts

In

Humanities

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

By

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April 2015

## Signature Page

This Senior Project Thesis has been presented to and approved by the Chair of the Humanities Department in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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# ABSTRACT

This study shows the effectiveness of afterschool programs in the United States. The beginning of this paper shows why afterschool programs have not been effective in academic improvement. It then leads to the conclusion that now we know what our goals are to achieve better results in academics. This is proven through multiple specific examples of improving academic achievement, establishing positive relationships, and exploring individual goals. My project describes specific afterschool programs and how they may achieve these goals in an effective way. In addition, my research cites statistics and quotes from teachers and students who have been a part of these programs. Concluding this paper, I show the benefits of having these effective programs and how they will help the student in the classroom.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

Afterschool programs are a great way for children to gain the academic skills they need to improve their progress in the classroom. From my own personal experience as an employee and as student, I have seen how afterschool programs can make a difference in a child's academic development. The program (Kumon) in which I work teaches children from kindergarten to twelfth grade with reading and math worksheets that help children master skills in these areas. I participated in the afterschool program as a student from first grade through tenth grade level. I was a student who struggled in school because of a learning disability I had when I was growing up. I had a bad memory recall which made it hard for me to retain information on my own. My parents thought that participating in this afterschool program, Kumon, would help me improve in school and learn how to succeed with this learning disability. By doing this program, I learned to improve in standard academics concepts that were being taught to me in the classroom. This helped me improve as a student in this afterschool program. Years later, I found myself working as a primary instruction teacher and an academic grader in the same afterschool program. I learned the process of working in an academic afterschool program as a teacher, and I found this institution to be a very successful endeavor that helps students achieve success in their academic studies. I would work with students closely by going through the different concepts or tasks of finishing a worksheet in mathematics or reading. I would use guided teaching questions to help them learn things by themselves. The guided teaching questions would be open-ended

questions that helped children think about the answers themselves and come up with the solution with little or no help from the teacher. By working with these students individually, they learn different methods of how to improve in a weak area. This one-on-one teaching was what got me really interested in the quality and the effectiveness of afterschool programs. I found that working with students individually could offer more results than teaching to a class of students. For instance, I can go through the steps of a math problem one by one in great detail with additional practice problems with a struggling student. If the student does not understand a particular method, then I can go through several methods that will give him/her a better understanding of how to solve the problem. This would not be possible with a huge group of students because I would have to go at a faster pace so we did not fall behind in our daily school schedule. The teachers in the afterschool program would have more time in this program and would have availability to find different methods that would help the students in a difficult content area. Therefore, by going through a strategy or the process of doing a particular skill/problem, students can fully understand the material they are being given.

### **Statement of The Problem**

Afterschool programs have always been incorporated in out-of-school hours to support child development skills in the United States. However, they have not always been for the purpose of academic improvement. The authors Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, and Parente report how these afterschool programs got started in the first place. "The need and desire for ASPs continued to grow in the twentieth century fueled by the rise in maternal employment. Simultaneously, the child development study movement was

growing and concerns over the safety and development of unsupervised children increased.” These programs have often been referred to as “Out of School Time.” These programs were held at community centers, schools, churches, and ethnic clubs. They provide a variety of offerings, which may be grouped into broad categories, including performance and self-expression, recreation, self-enhancement, educational enrichment and career exploration, citizenship, and comprehensive services (Merry 27). This is credited to Sara Hill and Glynda A. Hull, authors of *Afterschool Matters: Creative Programs That Connect Youth Development and Student Achievement*. Out of School Time programs have, over the years, emphasized understanding of the needs of youth during the Out of School Time as well as knowledge of what engages and draws youth to programs (Heath & McLaughlin; Merry 3). This is credited to Sara Hill and Glynada A. Hull, authors of *Afterschool Matters: Creative Programs That Connect Youth Development and Student Achievement*. However, there have been occurrences wherein Out of School Time programs participated in activities to help academic achievement. These produced results which consisted of significant changes in their levels of academic achievement, attachment to school, problem behaviors, physical health, and various aspects of their social and emotional development. In addition to that, students have gotten improved reading and math achievement scores, better grades, greater liking for school, higher rates of homework completion, lower levels of behavioral problems and drug use, decreased levels of body mass index and obesity, increased self-confidence, and gains in social competency, leadership skills, and civic engagement (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, and Parente 287). This is due to the fact that there are many variables that go into academic afterschool programs. While one program has shown a

number of positive outcomes, there have been other programs wherein the positive results have been lacking, and the reason for the inconsistency isn't always clear (Durlak, Mahoney, Buhnert, and Partente 287). However, while researchers are still trying to find what makes an academic afterschool program successful, there are few apparent reasons at the present time. In addition to that, one of the major problems with Out of School programs is the divide between school administration and afterschool programs. There has been a lot of confusion as to what the school administration would like the afterschool programs to focus on in terms of academic achievement. This confusion in afterschool programs has made it easy for these programs to not get the expected results the students need in order to improve in school. However, "due to changed fund[ing] streams and an increased recognition that institutions must jointly serve children and families in order to solve the complex challenges of education, there has been considerable progress in overcoming this school-versus-community-program-divide" (Noam, Biancarosa, and Dechausay 2). The changes in funding helped bring forth new information on how to facilitate this new learning environment. However, this new progress in these academic programs has created some unforeseen consequences. Providing more time to work on academics in afterschool programs could lead to an extended school day. If this happens, then it could make the school cut out arts, sports, and projects during regular school hours. This would then move these activities to the regular afterschool program hours, which would affect the number of students who participate in afterschool. Overall, the main problem with afterschool programs is finding effective afterschool programs that can bring academic success to struggling students in the United States.

## **Significance of The Study**

This study discusses the effectiveness of methods of improving academic success with children. In my research, there is background information to show the results of the different examples of the successful academic afterschool programs creating a huge improvement in a student's academic performance in the classroom. This process begins with multiple factors, but often starts with full participation in these programs, as well as keeping up with attendance (Hirsch, Mekinda, Stawicki 448).

Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient condition of participation.

Participation is a multifaceted concept that connotes active involvement in a program. This definition goes beyond attendance to include youth engagement in program activities. Further, these studies found that youth engagement is strongly related to program design and youth outcomes, and suggest that engagement could indicate the quality of youth experience in these settings. Programs that were rated as having high quality staff and observed to have positive affective environments also had high levels of youth engagement. Therefore, engagement is not only a component of program participation, but also an important feature to be considered when assessing program quality. (Hirsch, Mekinda, and Stawicki 448)

These facts are of a positive nature and follow on the same path of the learning standards that are being taught in the classroom. Authors Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, and Parente discuss the importance of afterschool program to the community and the child:

First, ASPs have become a part of community life for many children and families. There are as many as 8.4 million school-age youth in the United States participate in ASPs to some degree. Second, a significant function of ASPs is the provision of a safe and adult-supervised environment for children whose parents are working during the afternoon. Third, the federal government offers nearly \$1 billion in annual funding to ASPs through the US Department of Education and ASPs are also financially supported by local and state governments and by private foundations. Fourth, ASPs can be an excellent opportunity to foster the growth and development of young people. (285-286)

In addition to this research, I show examples of academic afterschool programs improving children's academic success in school. These examples show the effectiveness of creating a consistent schedule which can guarantee success, and demonstrate that afterschool programs should be included in a child's daily academic schedule.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of afterschool programs in the United States. In addition, this study proves that afterschool programs are very effective in terms of academic success in the education system. Overall, this study proves that afterschool programs are something that can be a great influence on a child's life and offer a helpful contribution to the education system in United States

### **Background Information**

The general purpose of afterschool programs falls into three learning categories. The first category is Extended Learning. This has to do with extra help with homework skills that students are learning in the regular school day. The next category is Enrichment Learning. This has to do with participating in projects that are not tied to the school day but can still help students learn something in a different way. For example, the teacher could assign an education project or take a group of kids to a museum. The last category is Non-academic Learning. This has to do with focusing on developing social skills through recreation activities. These activities could include sports, crafts, and play. Programs may be based on school grounds or with various community agencies that serve fewer than ten or several hundred youth, may focus on youth of all ages or those in elementary, middle or high school, and receive a combination of funding from the federal government and local resources. A typical program is open several weekdays during the normal school year for several hours after school ends. Most programs offer several activities that may begin with some type of academic assistance, coupled with different types of personal, social, and cultural activities consistent with each program's specific goals. For example, some programs focus on academic/cognitive development and personal and social development, or the latter coupled with broadening young people's cultural or artistic pursuits (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, and Parente 287). This will help encourage the learning process in a fun way that is not so strict as when the students are in a classroom working on a project. Lastly, they will help children create their own individual goals in terms of education.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do the teachers make the afterschool programs more effective?
2. Why do some techniques work, and why do others not work?

## **Definition of Terms**

Out of School Time Programs -- these are programs that work with child developmental skills not based on academic success.

Afterschool Programs -- programs that work on academic improvement and social skills with children.

California Based Test -- testing schools on how well they teach their students in California.

Guided Teaching Questions – open-ended questions that children have to answer which could have more than one answer focusing on their personal learning process

# Chapter Two: Case Studies

This study shows specific academic afterschool programs and their effectiveness toward the goal of improving academic success. I examine these programs in terms of regular attendance, development of positive relationships, academic preparation, and student goal exploration.

## **Regular Attendance in Afterschool Programs**

Regular attendance in afterschool programs helps achieve the successful results wanted in order for students to improve in the school classroom.

Denise Huang (Senior Researcher at National Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testings) said, “Unlike regular school, where students who show up in the morning are usually at school for the entire day, after-school students may attend a program for 30 minutes a day or as much as four hours” (Dietel 2).

For instance, in the All Stars Program, if students completed the correct number of hours working on academics and came for 50-100 days, then their results greatly improved. The statistics of this program show 72.2% of students participating for the full extent of 50 days and working 1.5 hours a week with teacher assistance. This program focused on increasing school bonding, social competence, prosocial attitudes/beliefs, indirectly influencing academic performance, and conduct problems (Gottfredson, Cross, Wilson, Rorie, and Connell 298).

Another afterschool program, Beyond the Bells Partner Agencies Afterschool, found that students who come to the program regularly are often getting extra tutoring with mathematics and English. Results were notable for those with 100-day total attendance for elementary students and 50-day total attendance for middle school students. These students would consistently participate for a lengthy period of time. This helped achieve a higher result in academic excellence in daily school and the California Standards Test (Dietel 63).

In addition to this research, I have my own experience in the workplace of an afterschool program, Kumon, to add about the importance of attendance. I noticed that attendance was a big important part of what makes academic afterschool programs successful. The students at the program who came to the center on schedule and did their homework daily did very well in grasping the knowledge of math and reading in the program.

For instance, one student who came to the center every day the center was open finished homework every day, followed instructions on how to tackle the problems in the worksheets, and was successful in the tests that were given. This person does well in her studies and keeps rising to higher levels in mathematics and reading material. There are lots of good students like this seen in this program who succeed very well in the program that helps them succeed in school.

However, there are students who do not do very well in this afterschool program because they do not have a good rate of attendance. One student would not come to the center very often at all. She would have a very busy schedule at school/extracurricular activities and was not able to have a full attendance at our

program. As a result, she barely any homework at home. When it came to doing a test to see how she mastered the skills, she did not do very well on the test because she had not been coming to the center full time and not completing the homework. This made it impossible for her to learn the skills she needed to master reading and mathematics at her grade level. This would impact her ability to improve in school without doing the program properly.

### **Creating Positive Relationships**

Positive relationships between peers and with mentors can help students in the real world when they need to be team members in a particular job or in one that relies on good associations between two people.

Dawn Anderson Butcher writes her opinion about positive realtionships in this quote :

The top reason youth came to the programs was because of the realtionships they had with caring adults. These realtionships are important, as research suggests that youth are motivated to perform better for those with whom they have strong social bonds. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that there are positive interactions that transfer to the school and support broad school connectedness. For instance, 93% of youth reported that they learned to “get along with others” at the afterschool program. These realtionships are important, as school connectedness is enhanced through positive peer to peer relationship and norms. (Butcher 2)

In central Ohio's afterschool programs, it was essential to build upon this particular goal for children to gain in the completion of this afterschool program. One of the students from an afterschool program in New York expressed an opinion on its success in this area: "It gives students much needed personal attention and helps boost their confidence. They also provide great mentoring/role experiences which help to increase student social skills." (Magiera and Geraci 4)

As a result of these programs, 93% of these students learned to "get along with others" in school and daily life. This motivated them to perform better and have positive interactions in school that require them to stay focused on the task at hand. In addition to working well with others, this goal helped improve parent and teacher-student relationships. For parent relationships with their students, it helped get the parents to be more involved with their student's academic progress. To illustrate this viewpoint, this concept was seen in numerous academic afterschools programs in the community of Ohio (four operated in the City Parks and Recreation Department, three by settlement house/community centers, five by Communities In Schools, one by a faith based organization, and eight by youth organizations such as the YMCA and YWCA). It was reported from these programs that 50% of the parents got more involved with the learning activities, and 93% of the parents asked for more help from the staff on how to help their children improve their academic progress (Butcher 1,13).

In addition to this, teacher-student relationships were also highly improved by these afterschool programs in Ohio. This only improved the bond between student and teacher because the teachers were interested in their student's dedication to do better in school. As a result, 61% of these teachers would ask their students how they were

doing in the afterschool program and learned that one third of what they do in the afterschool program emphasized the work done in the classroom. Overall, the teachers felt that this helped students succeed, especially since the students attending this particular afterschool program had a higher homework completion rate compared to the students who didn't attend (Butcher 13).

In addition to this research, I have my own experience in the workplace of an afterschool program, Kumon, to show how positive relationships can be made due to successful afterschool programs. Kumon emphasized having one-on-one individual tutoring with each homework worksheet, which helped improve the teacher-student and parent-child relationship.

For instance, Primary Instruction teachers are able to give more intention to one student in particular in order to offer more help and guidance. They are able to find out how a student's process works in order to solve a problem they are tackling for reading or mathematics. This individual guidance makes the student have a better connection with the tutor, which could help impact his or her relationship with the classroom teacher. This result could happen because the student feels more supported in his or her learning by the tutor, so that the student feels more comfortable and confident in the classroom. Also, the parent-child relationship will improve because parents will be involved in the academic work students are doing in the after school program. Parents will learn which areas students are struggling the most with and will learn how to help teach them in order for them to do well in the program. This will help the parents to connect better with their child by being more involved in their child's academic progress in the particular struggling areas in math and reading. Kumon has seen this result

happen successfully for students to do better in the classroom because of all the great work they accomplish at this afterschool program.

Otherwise, the students will not get the motivation they need and they will get lost in the shuffle of the numbers of students the teachers have to pay attention to in the classroom. If this happens, the teacher won't be able to give the struggling students the help they need, which will cause students to suffer in their academic work and possibly even fail. Also, parents will be confused about what is going on with their children's progress and be unable to help them achieve success in their studies. Furthermore, academic programs help create positive relationships with teachers and their parents.

### **Academic Preparation**

There are afterschool programs that give lots of academic preparation to give extra help in academic subjects for school. These programs can make a huge improvement in a student's performance in school by teaching them in an individualized way. For instance, there are three specific afterschool programs that have worked on the academic subjects that include science, mathematics, literary skills, language arts, history, the arts, and social studies for underachieving students.

One of these academic programs is called The Science Mentoring Program. This program focused on science exploration for underachieving students. This was held in the New York public schools, where thirteen high school students were recruited to serve as mentors for fifth grade students. They used the curriculum based on National Science Education Standards every week in this program. Their activities focused on

building these skills: decision-making, problem-solving, and creative thinking. Each of these activities included a section improving reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Each of these activities discussed these scientific topics: water quality, oyster restoration, video microscopy, plankton ecology, fish ecology, and population (Hill and Hull 10).

In each of these activities, students would work in groups collecting data, writing their research in their notebooks, and graphing their results. Then, they would compare their results to each other's and make their own conclusions about what they had learned. Eventually, at the end of this program, they would put on a show about the certain activities or projects they had found very important in this afterschool program. Overall, this increased student engagement in this activity and compelled students to have a higher motivation towards school. Also, this brought about a renewed positive confidence in their abilities, along with learning new pieces of knowledge like awareness of scientific environment and new vocabulary words (Hill and Hull 11).

Another afterschool program, In Addition Afterschool Program, focused on mathematics skills for underachieving students. This program was held in two elementary schools in New York. It worked with students from third, fourth, and fifth grade. This was created to help students create their own investigation of mathematics on their own topics of interest in the community (Hill and Hull 30-31).

For instance, they would come across a bridge and wonder how it was made and what kinds of materials were used. This would involve the skill of quantitative reasoning and measurement involvement. This kind of program would show children how to think and reason in an abstract form by posing problems and finding their own solutions. As a

result, this program was seen to show very great success with students who had a lot of trouble with math, and it helped them to understand mathematical concepts in a different way (Hill and Hull 31).

A third afterschool program worked with improving literary skills with underachieving students. This afterschool program was called The Educational Alliance and was held in a small house in New York City. There were three hundred students who were in sixth through twelfth grade participating in this program. They used analyzing comic book structure to help students improve their literary skills. An example of an activity would be doing one-minute sketching of people posing. They would draw what they saw from this particular person showing their particular point of view from a different angle. This helps students understand the world's different perspectives in terms of the structure in literary works. Later on, they would also learn about the different parts of a story that put together the whole book, such as beginning, middle, end, characters, plot, climax, setting, etc. This kind of afterschool program provided a place where they could test their limits, exploring the whole while developing literary interests to support their academic learning process (Hill and Hull 61-64).

The fourth afterschool program, Urban Debate Leagues, is located in New York City, Baltimore, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Chicago. This program focuses on teaching children about practicing their debate skills that are attached to the learning standards of English Language Arts and History. There are 260 public high schools and middle schools with over 12,000 young people participating since 1997. The teams meet every afternoon after school, two-three days a week. When students arrive to practice debating, they work on writing blocks (arguments), note taking, vocabulary, researching,

and speed vocal drills. They will go on to compete with other schools to perfect their skills. All of the activities and skills that the youth gain as they participate in Urban Debate Leagues connect directly to learning standards (Hull and Hill 47-50). These standards include the learning standards covered in English language arts and social studies.

For instance, the language arts and history standards clearly support the urban debate leagues.

The English language arts standard states, “Students will listen, speak, read, and write for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to present, from a variety of perspectives their opinions and judgements on experiences, ideas, information, and issues” (Hill and Hull 49-50).

The Social Studies standard states, “Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation” (Hill and Hull 50).

The final afterschool program, Fabulous Fashions, is located in Castle Hill in the northeast section of Bronx, New York. This program’s main focus was getting girls involved in organizing a fashion show and learning about design fashion. However, this

program also has a written curriculum designed to enhance academic skills. It consists of fifteen lessons that address such topics as the history of fashion in the Twentieth Century, street fashion as observed in the *New York Times*, how fashion changes show the evolution of women's merchandising, and fashion careers (Hill and Hull 91-92). This curriculum fulfills the learning standards of Language Arts and Social Studies, and the arts.

The language arts standard supports this program with this quote: "Participants will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts" (Hill and Hull 92).

The social studies standard supports this program in this quote: "Participants will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York" (Hill and Hull 93).

The arts standard supports this program in this quote: "Participants will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Participants will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principals, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Participants will use a variety of art materials, processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works" (Hill and Hull 94).

In addition to this research, I have my own experience from being a Primary Instruction Teacher at an academic afterschool program, Kumon, to show the

importance of successful academic afterschool programs. This afterschool program was the main reason why I have felt that academic programs can be successful because I have seen the big results in a huge number of students who came to the center to be more successful as students.

For instance, these students come to the afterschool program from 1-3 days a week to work on their mathematics/reading skills in these worksheets. These worksheets are made to help students (K-12) improve on the areas where they struggle with math or reading. They are supposed to do these worksheets every day and then come to the center at least once a week in order to get more worksheets and teacher assistance with the work. Once they complete a number of worksheets, the teacher will test the students on the level they completed in math/reading mathematics. If they get a lower percentage than 90%, then the student cannot move on to a higher level in reading or math. If they succeed on the test, then they can move on to a higher level and get new homework for this particular level. We also go over with parents on how to help their child with the new homework content and what they can expect to learn/master in this new level.

This program is successful because the worksheets go over the different skills they need to master in the classroom. If they follow through with this plan, they will be able to take what they learned in the program to current problems they must tackle in the school classroom. In addition to mastering the material they cover in school, they can also learn new advanced material the teachers have not even covered in class or in this particular grade level. Therefore, this is a good example of how successful academic programs can be if we allow more of them in our current communities.

## Individual Growth Exploration

Students have difficulty creating their own goal exploration because they do not yet know necessarily what they want to achieve in school. These afterschool programs can help them find out what their goals are by working with a mentor/teacher to make sense of their own goal exploration. This can also address the problem the staff members have been having in terms of not finding success in this academic-driven afterschool enrichment. This venture could be more effective if they emphasize active forms of learning so that youth can practice new skills, focus specific time and attention on skill training, and clearly define their goals, according to Arthur et al; Bond and Hauf; Durlak; Dusenbury and Falco; Gresham; Ladd and Mize; Salas and Cannon-Bowers. This is credited to Durlak, Weissburg, and Pachan in *A Meta-Analysis of Afterschool Program Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents*.

A teacher from an afterschool program in New York was quoted telling of its success: "I think it's a great little mini experience for them, and all of the things that you're talking about are things that you experience out in the real world as a teacher yourself. You have to work with other people; sometimes they're not people you care about, but, you know, you're there for the kids, and you have to do your part. I think anytime you have a student [teacher candidate] in school, the sooner you get them, the more the reality of it all hits. Just getting them in — that's a great, great idea, and it just opens the door to more chances to establish yourself" (Magieria and Geraci 4).

Furthermore, coming from the same afterschool program in New York, a student

reflected on how beneficial these afterschool programs can be toward individual growth in terms of interpersonal communication: "I have seen academic confidence raised, personalities mature, and language skills improved through the interactions. In return, you get one on one instruction with semi professionals, you know, and a student who could use extra help and just kind of an average student; I think its got to be beneficial" (Magiera and Geraci 4).

However, it has been seen that this kind of application to individual goal and skill improvement cannot be done right away. There has be a vigorous consistent approach to getting it in the students' system so that they can apply these skills or knowledge to bigger world ideas. Usually, this would occur through lesson plans or program manuals, particularly if programs use or adapt establish curricula. After youth receive some basic instruction, then they should have the opportunity to practice new behaviors and receive feedback on their performance in the classroom and in the real world (Durlak, Weissburg, and Pachan 4).

In addition to this research, I can show another instance that took place in my work experience at a successful academic afterschool program called Kumon. The goal of children learning how to make goals for themselves is very possible here.

Here in the center, students can make goals by trying to think about what they would like to achieve at the afterschool program. They have these goals which are first created by their parents who recognize early on that there is a huge struggle at school by the discussion they have with the teachers and the classwork that has been handed back to the student. Then the student can try to reach these goals by working with the

teachers on these worksheets at the center at least once a week. With this individual tutoring assistance, the teacher will use guided questions to help students figure out the answers for themselves on their own. However, the teachers will still be able to show them the correct way to do things with these guided questions with giving them some sort of a hint on what steps they need to follow to master a certain skill. This will give them the confidence they need to find the answers for themselves and be able to learn the required material in the classroom as well as the afterschool program.

Furthermore, this process helps them find the confidence in their skills toward learning math and reading skills in order to be better students. They will learn where their true struggles lie in figuring out how to understand math and reading. Then, they will learn different strategies to help improve these struggles, so that they no longer have these academic difficulties in the classroom. This will lead to a major improvement in their academic work, which will please themselves, the parent, and the teacher.

Overall, there is extensive evidence from a wide range of promotion, prevention, and treatment interventions that youth can learn personal and social skills, according to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], Commission on Positive Youth Development and Losel and Beelman. Programs that enhance children's social and emotional learning (SEL) skills cover such areas as self-awareness and self-management (e.g., self-control, self-efficacy), social awareness and social relationships (e.g., problem solving, conflict resolution, and leadership skills) and responsible decision making (Durlak, Weissburg and Pachan 295). These kinds of programs can help students really understand what they would like to do after school and where their strengths/weaknesses may lie in their academic schoolwork. This is something that will

help them grow as individuals and make them more confident in the work they continue throughout school.

### III. Conclusion

In all my research, I have demonstrated how afterschool programs can be very effective in a student's life. However, I do understand why it can be difficult to bring academics to afterschool programs due to the divide between afterschool and classroom curriculum. Nonetheless, I still think that if this is approached in the right way, our community can benefit from these effective programs. I will now show the advantages of having these programs to improve education and why it so important to have them in our community.

The first one of these advantages is the multiple opportunities for project-based learning. The focus built on project-based learning is fulfilled by the following goals: (1) learning should be experiential, focused on relevant/exploratory/hands-on experience; (2) learning should center upon engaging/fascinating topics that capture children's imaginations; (3) learning should be multimodal, offering multiple "points of entry" and means of reinforcement; (4) learning should be holistic, acknowledging each child's developmental needs along several axes: cognitive, physical, moral, spiritual, emotional, and social; and (5) learning should be concerned with basic skill development, especially literacy and numeracy skills that reinforce school learning, and teaching "soft" skills related to school and job readiness (Noam, Biancarosa, and Dechausay 56). All of these goals are meant to embody the mission of learning in terms of academic self-exploration through hands-on experience. This hands-on experience can be offered through museum trips, community service, apprenticeship, nature walks, etc. These projects will just make students more prepared in the subject of learning and more motivated towards school. This will help improve students' performance at school,

which will let them gain the skills they need to learn to do well following school in their particular career choices.

The second advantage is allowing more experimentation with the process of education in afterschool programs than in the classroom at school. Schools are often restricted by their curriculum to meet State Standards for education, but afterschool programs have more freedom to explore different needed areas. This is something, which will only benefit the students and give them more time in the day to devote themselves to an education activity or project. For instance, they could start an activity or project that doesn't have to end in a restricted time limit. They could finish this project in a couple of hours on a particular day or extend to it a couple of months before completion. In addition to this, they also have more freedom in what kind of projects the students would like to be part of in this afterschool program. They can decide what kind of subjects they would like to focus on to learn more in order to help them in their academic careers. Therefore, this will help students get the additional help with understanding certain subjects that they struggle to understand in school and in life.

The last advantage of afterschool programs in society is the multiple beneficial aspects they bring to better a child's improvement in education. These aspects include strong relationships, spontaneity, creativity, expressiveness, engagement with music, learning new ways to have fun, and idealism. These programs are places where students can learn in a different way that motivates their urge to learn. A reflection of their progress in these programs can be seen in this quote: "Programs see it as part of their mission to help young people cope with these stressors and develop the

knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable them to grow toward positive adulthoods” (Hirsch 4).

Therefore, after evaluating the effectiveness of these afterschool programs, it is recognized that students have been seen to be more motivated in school and spend more time doing their homework as well as turning it in. They also have achieved connections with mentors who taught them the skills they needed to know in academics and in social emotional development. Teachers and parents have become very impressed with all the improvement students have made in these afterschool programs. They have even felt an improvement in their relationship with the particular student and could see the value in these multiple afterschool programs. They advocate for their effectiveness and see how all these developments made in their academic progress will only lead to great things following school. Overall, afterschool programs are a much-needed addition for education improvement in our societies and can only help improve the education system in the future.

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