

Expand Opportunities and Investments in After School Programs

Whether school is out for the day, or for the summer, the time children spend in out-of-school activities has an enormous impact on their health and well being. The programs children engage in can play a key role in their ongoing learning by providing opportunities for exploring interests, and gain important lifelong skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution, teamwork and leadership as well as positively connecting with adults.

From education experts to law enforcement to parents, there is universal agreement that after-school programs reinforce student learning and provide safe havens and enrichment opportunities during non-school hours. Yet many Wisconsin children and youth, in both urban and rural areas of our state, are missing out. The most often listed challenge to expanding or growing new after-school programs is funding. Seventy-one percent of principals who reported not having after-school programs in their school listed funding as the reason.ⁱ

To make after-school programs accessible for all Wisconsin children, state investments are needed to make quality after school a reality for all Wisconsin children and youth.

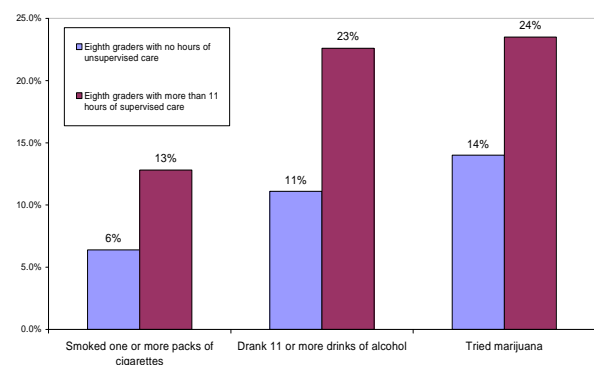
Academic Success - A growing body of research suggests that after-school programs can also have positive effects on outcomes such as, motivation, engagement in learning, expectations of success, and social competencies. Children who gain these “intermediary” skills do better in school and are more successful as adults.ⁱⁱ For children from low income families and children of color, after school programs may actually help narrow the opportunity and achievement gap.

Keeping Kids Safe - The hours after school are the peak time for children to become victims of a violent crime. According to Office of Justice Programs (OJP), children are 140 percent more likely to be victimized between 3 and 4 pm on school days than in the same time period on non-school days.

According to a 2006 report from OJP, these times are also peak hours for juvenile crime. This is the time when children and youth are most likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sexual activity. For 16 and 17 year olds, the time after school is when they are most likely to be in a car accident—the leading cause of death for teens.ⁱⁱⁱ

After-school programs keep kids out of trouble by providing safe and structured time during these critical afternoon hours.

Risk-Taking While Unsupervised



J. L. Richardson, et al. Pediatrics magazine

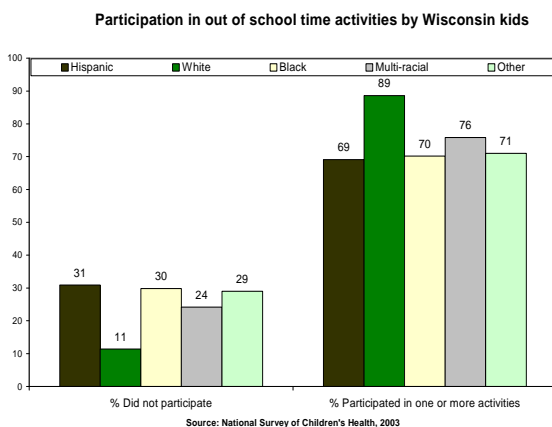
Support for Working Parents - After school programming provides an important ingredient to parent’s employment stability by giving parents peace of mind about what their children are doing after-school, helping them to balance work and family responsibilities^{iv}.

In Wisconsin, 74 percent of children live in families in which all parents in the household are working. Further, the percent of elementary school age children (ages 6 to 12) with all available parents in the far exceeds the national average.^v

Today's disparity between the school week and the parent's work week can be as many as 25 hours, which presents working parents with the challenge of finding someone to care for their children while they are at work. Those parents able to have their children participate in formal after-school programs said they missed less work, which is especially important for low-income parents as their jobs may not offer the flexibility to leave early in order to supervise their children.^{vi}

Who participates in after-school programs?

Research shows that family income level and specific targeting of programs affect participation in out-of-school time programs and in which programs children and youth choose to participate. The Harvard Family Research Foundation's study of out-of-school time programs found nationally that children and youth from low-income families are more likely to participate in tutoring programs. These findings may result from the limited access to resources low-income families have to augment their child's education. In contrast, children and youth from middle class families, who have access to more resources, are more likely to participate in enrichment programs.



Wisconsin data from the National Survey of Children's Health suggests that family income is a determinant for participation in all out-of-school-time activities. Children and youth in families with incomes that are 200 percent and greater than the federal poverty level (FPL) are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities than their peers who live in families with incomes 199 percent of the FPL or less.

A Good Investment – Research clearly demonstrates that after-school programs are a wise public investment. From a cost-benefit perspective, every \$1 invested in youth development opportunities and supports results in a return on investment of \$10.51.^{vii}

The need for out-of-school-time programs in Wisconsin is larger than the programs available. Programs to help keep kids safe and engage them in a variety of positive enrichment, recreational and academic activities are simply not available in many communities across Wisconsin. In rural communities, establishing or sustaining after-school programs is a challenge due to a lack of private partners, a limited tax base, high transportation costs and difficulty recruiting and retaining staff.

State Budget – The Department of Public Instruction had proposed a \$5 million grant program to promote the expansion and creation of quality after school opportunities in Wisconsin. The Governor did not include this provision in his budget.

ⁱ National Association of Elementary School Principals, September 2001.

ⁱⁱ Intercultural Center for Research in Education (INCRE)Arlington, MA, National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), Wellesley Centers for Women

ⁱⁱⁱ Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (2000) America's After-School Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, or Youth Enrichment and Achievement. www.fightcrime.org

^{iv} Policy Studies Associates, Inc (2001). www.policystudies.org

^v Kids Count State Level Data Online, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/>