

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Assessing After-School Programs as Contexts for Youth Development

Kahne, J., Nagaoka, J., Brown, A., O'Brien, J., Quinn, T., & Thiede, K. (2001). Assessing after-school programs as contexts for youth development. *Youth and Society*, 32(4), 421-446. doi:10.1177/0044118X01032004002

SUMMARY: After-school programs are often promoted as providing youth with opportunities and resources for development; however, the merit of these programs is not always assessed. This study compared school-based and community-based after-school programs and school opportunities. Results suggest some after-school programs provide more opportunities and resources for youth development than students receive during the school day, particularly for male youth.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Students reported preferring the affective context of after-school programs to the affective context experienced during the school day.
- Students reported experiencing more resources for development in after-school programs than during the school day.
- Participants who attended school-based after-school programs rated the affective context of their school-day settings higher than those who attended community-based after-school programs.
- Males rated the affective context of the school day and the support for youth development and opportunities for responsibility of both the school day and after-school programs lower than females.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with after-school programs to gather feedback from military youth regarding their experiences of and preferences for these programs
- Help develop after-school programs for military youth tailored to their particular needs (e.g., support during parent deployment or adjustment to a new location)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military youth and families about available evidence-based after-school programs
- Expand the range of youth development programs or activities offered for military youth after school

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue supporting both community-based and school-based after-school programs for military youth
- Collaborate with public schools to develop after-school programs that are relevant to and well-accepted by military youth

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- Youth in 6th-10th grades were recruited from a Chicago school, as well as from three after-school programs.
- Youth completed surveys about opportunities, affective context, and resources available both in school classrooms and during after-school programs.
- Opportunities and resources available for youth development were compared between after-school programs and school day activities.

PARTICIPANTS

- The school sample included 125 students who were 55% male in 6th (19%), 8th (42%), 9th (21%), and 10th (15%) grade.
- The after-school program sample included 13 boys in an entrepreneurship and responsibility program, 25 youth in an arts program, and 18 youth in a community service program.
- Although several participant demographics were not collected, the neighborhood composition was primarily Black (96%) and many families lived below the poverty line (48%).

LIMITATIONS

- There was incomplete demographic data about the sample.
- The measures used for assessment were not validated, and the specific items and administration were not described.
- The sample consisted almost entirely of Black Chicago students; it is unknown how these findings may generalize to other youth samples.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Attempt to replicate this research study with a more heterogeneous sample of youth
- Assess what factors contributed to the differences in student ratings between school and after-school contexts
- Investigate the relationship between youth ratings of after-school programs and later youth development outcomes (e.g., responsibility, engagement, relationships)

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