

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Quality at the Point of Service: Profiles of Practice in After-School Settings

Smith, C., Peck, S. C., Denault, A., Blazeovski, J., & Akiva, T. (2010). Quality at the point of service: Profiles of practice in after-school settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(4-Mar), 358-369. doi:10.1007/s10464-010-9315-z

**SUMMARY:** Observational data were used to explore common staff practices (pedagogies) at an after-school youth program to explore profiles of staff behavior in youth programs, and to determine how practices are bundled together as coherent pedagogies. In addition, the association between variables such as youth-staff ratio, program content, or age of youth and specific pedagogies were examined. Findings revealed three broad classes of pedagogy, and youth age and program content influenced staff membership within these profiles.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Six clusters of program staff pedagogies were found that could be collapsed into three types: positive youth development (characterized by positivity, engagement, and youth choice), staff-centered (supportive staff but low youth choice, planning, and reflection), and low quality (low positivity, engagement, and youth choice).
- Staff in programs serving high school youth were more likely to use positive youth development pedagogies, while staff in programs serving elementary students were more likely to use staff-centered pedagogies.
- Staff in enrichment programs (e.g., theater) were more likely to use positive youth development or low quality, while staff in academic programs and sports programs were more likely to use staff-centered.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with other youth program professionals to determine which pedagogies are most beneficial for military youth
- Examine ways to create supportive and positive relationships with military youth involved in after-school programs

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support to military youth that allows for youth engagement and youth choice
- Create youth programming that is developmentally (age) appropriate

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend professional development to youth program staff about the three pedagogies to improve staff behaviors, program quality, and youth outcomes
- Program evaluations could include measures of staff pedagogy to allow for more informed funding decisions.

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## METHODS

- Researchers observed 599 after school program staff in 165 organizations across six states; these programs primarily offered arts/enrichment and academics, although homework, life skills, sports, informal time, and technology were also present.
- Data were used from nine studies conducted between 2005 and 2007 for the Youth PQA Validation Study.
- This article focused on civilian after-school program staff.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Nearly all programs involved youth grades four through 12; 58% of youth were female.
- A total of 3,362 youth were surveyed.
- No other demographic (e.g., race/ethnicity) information was provided.

## LIMITATIONS

- Staff members selected for observation may differ from those not selected which could bias the results.
- Levels of youth engagement and participation were not examined and could have a potential impact on the results.
- The after-school programs assessed may not be representative of all after-school youth programs; therefore, results may not be generalizable.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore ways to improve programs with low quality pedagogies
- Examine pedagogies of staff in programs that serve military youth
- Investigate ways to encourage military youth to engage in effective after-school youth programs

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>