

Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

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Dear Readers:

Although afterschool programs for children have been in operation for many years in some communities, the afterschool movement – the great national awakening to the opportunity afterschool offers – is just a few years old. As public demand for afterschool grows, so too has the demand for accountability. That's particularly true in afterschool programs that spend public dollars. After all, where tax dollars flow, so too, must accountability to the taxpayers.

By and large, afterschool advocates have welcomed and encouraged rigorous evaluations of afterschool programming, for at least two reasons: to document for policymakers, private partners, parents and other stakeholders the success of afterschool programming, and to gather valuable data that can point the way to even better afterschool programs.

Over the last few years, outcome evaluation efforts have begun in response, and over the next two years, major studies will be released that could transform the terms of the discussion about the future of afterschool programs.

These coming and already completed studies are the subjects of this special issue of *The Afterschool Advocate*. Of course, because the mission of this newsletter is to provide advocates with information and techniques for sharing the good news about afterschool programs with the press and the public, we have not attempted a scholarly summary of afterschool evaluations. Rather,

we have prepared this issue to accomplish three specific goals:

- 1) To acquaint readers with the basics of afterschool evaluations, complete with some resources that may help them do further research.
- 2) To distill the results of completed studies into useful, meaningful and faithful nuggets, so that readers can put the facts to work for them in advocating for afterschool programming.
- 3) To give readers a heads-up on forthcoming evaluations.

Throughout this issue, you'll find plenty of web links that you can use to get more information on the studies cited. Like afterschool programming, the afterschool evaluation business is on the grow. You and your program will be well served by a look at what's out there!

THE LANDSCAPE OF AFTERSCHOOL EVALUATIONS

Evaluations of afterschool programs come in all shapes and sizes. Say the word "evaluation" to a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grantee, and they'll likely think about the various accountability and reporting requirements that are a condition of 21st CCLC funding. To professional research companies and research universities, the term may suggest rigorous

studies complete with control and test groups of students, blind samples, regression analyses and more.

But you needn't have excelled or even taken a statistics course in college to know that evaluations of afterschool programs can demonstrate to policymakers, the media and the public what afterschool providers see on a daily basis. Providers see children's lives being changed for the better by afterschool programs that keep them safe, help them succeed in school and beyond, and help working parents solve the dilemma of caring for the kids after the last school bell rings. No afterschool program is perfect, of course, and some children don't get everything they can out of afterschool. But by and large, afterschool programs are getting the job done, and evaluations of afterschool programs are demonstrating as much.

A number of different types of evaluations have been undertaken over the last several years. They differ in a number of ways. One of the most important points of difference has to do with what is being measured and assessed. Some evaluations seek to gather data on whether programs have been structured as they were originally intended, how well they have done at meeting attendance and staffing goals, how they "fit" in the school environment and more. Others explore the effect afterschool programs have on the children who participate in them, their parents, and even the communities at large. This second type of evaluation, particularly those that explore student outcomes, usually take a few years to conduct, for the simple and logical reason that students' grades and attendance records are not transformed overnight by even the best afterschool program. Furthermore, results in improved student behavior and attendance occur much faster than improvement in academics. To really get a handle on how a program affects a child's academic performance, school attendance, or out-of-school behavior, evaluators must track the same children for an extended period of time.

For advocates, these "outcomes evaluations" are probably the most useful in making the case for increasing the resources made available to afterschool. After all, it is difficult for even the most entrenched political opponent to discount studies demonstrating that children's grades, behavior and school attendance are improved by afterschool programs.

Another way that evaluations differ has to do with who conducts them. Many programs self-evaluate, providing useful data

Evaluations of The After-School Corporation and the Beacons Initiative found that most students feel safe at the programs. Students said the programs help them to avoid drug use and fighting.

and satisfying the needs of their various stakeholders – parents, funders, partnering businesses, local public officials and so on. They also conduct self-evaluations in order to improve their programs. But for academics and large funders – the federal government, state governments, the Open Society Institute, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation or the Dewitt Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund, for example – more exacting, rigorous standards and greater independence through a third party evaluator is often required. After all, it is on the strength of the findings from such evaluations that national afterschool policy – both public and private – will turn. So it is common for large funders of afterschool programs to also fund full and thorough evaluations, using scientific standards and conducted by independent evaluators.

For the most part, it is these third party evaluations that are the subject of this newsletter.

Of perhaps the greatest interest to many readers of this newsletter is an ongoing evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, now being conducted by a private evaluation firm called Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., with

funding from the U.S. Department of Education and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. (The Mott Foundation founded and continues to support the Afterschool Alliance, as well as a host of afterschool providers and advocates.) As the first major study to look at both implementation and outcomes, the 21st CCLC evaluation is expected to provide definitive data that will shape programmatic and policy decisions for years to come. Its projected release date is sometime after the first quarter of 2002. The Mott Foundation is also embarking on a five-year best practice study that will examine high-quality programs and whether they are replicable in other towns and cities.

In the meantime, advocates will find no shortage of studies and reports from which to draw important findings.

AFTERSCHOOL EVALUATIONS ALREADY COMPLETED

A number of important afterschool evaluations have been conducted – more than enough for advocates to assert with confidence that afterschool programs have been shown to help children achieve, keep them safe and help their working parents solve the difficult puzzle of childcare. Here are summaries of several of the most extensive evaluations.

LA's BEST

Los Angeles's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST) is among the largest and best known afterschool programs in the nation. Launched in 1988 as a partnership between the Los Angeles Unified School District, the city of Los Angeles and the private sector, the program operates at 78 elementary schools, serving more than 14,000 students. Schools were chosen for participation because of the generally low academic achievement among their students, or because of the low economic status of the

community, or high gang or crime rates in the neighborhood. The program is free to parents, and students are expected to participate on a regular basis.

Since early in the life of the program, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation has conducted evaluation studies. The studies

Evaluations of the LA's BEST program found that LA's BEST participants, when compared to non-participating students, were absent less from school, "show positive achievement on standardized tests in mathematics, reading and language arts," and had "higher language redesignation rates to English proficiency."

have focused on a variety of topics, using a range of measures. The Center released its separate studies in March 1990, March 1991, July 1991, December 1993 and spring 1995. Then in June 2000, the Center released a comprehensive report summarizing each of the five previous studies and adding a rich set of findings based on its five-year tracking of the academic performance and school attendance of LA's BEST students who were in 2nd through 5th grades in the 1993-94 school year.

The study's description of its methodology: "To study LA's BEST schools, we obtained information about students including ethnicity, gender, language proficiency status, eligibility for free/reduced lunch (the proxy for low-income level) and disability status. In addition, we collected outcome data including achievement test scores (using either the *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills* [CTBS] or the more recently adopted *Stanford-9 Achievement Test* [SAT-9] in reading, mathematics, and language arts. The rate at which students were redesignated as fully proficient in English was also collected. We also obtained school absence rates, course-taking patterns and rates of

student mobility (moving between schools or out of the district).”

In addition, because of the size of the LA’s BEST program and of the LAUSD school system, researchers were able to track an extraordinarily large sample of students and a correspondingly large “control” group – more than 4,000 LA’s BEST students and more than 15,000 non-participating students. The sheer numbers of students tracked make the data produced highly reliable.

The findings, summarized at <http://www.lasbest.org/learn/eval.html> with a link to the complete study, are powerful evidence of the value of afterschool programming. In short form, the study found that LA’s BEST participants, defined as students who participated regularly and over a period of more than one year, when compared to non-participating students, were absent less from school, “show positive achievement on standardized tests in mathematics, reading and language arts,” and had “higher language redesignation rates to English proficiency.” Specific findings:

- **Better school attendance and academic achievement:** “[O]ur results show that higher levels of participation in LA’s BEST led to better subsequent school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts.” [*A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA’s BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance*, a longitudinal study report and a synthesis of research begun in 1990 by the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation with support from the Bandai Foundation and the City of Los Angeles. June 2000. Denise Huang, Barry Gribbons, Kyung Sung Kim, Charlotte Lee, Eva L. Baker. Page 7.]
- **Higher language redesignation rates:** “Language redesignation rates

avored LA’s BEST students when compared with non-LA’s BEST students for the cohort analyzed (fourth grade, 1994-1995). Significant differences in favor of LA’s BEST students were found for subsequent redesignation rates in Grades 6 and 8. No significant differences were found in comparing performance for Grades 5 and 7.” [*Decade of Results*, page 8.]

- **Fewer absences:** “Absence follow-up data for the fifth-grade cohort (1994-1995) showed that students who participated in LA’s BEST had significantly fewer absences in Grades 6 and 7, although no differences were detected in Grades 8 and 9.” [*Decade of Results*, page 9.]
- **Improved mathematics achievement scores:** “Although in the initial year LA’s BEST students began with statistically significant mathematics achievement scores lower than those of non-participants, in 1997-1998 those differences no longer existed.” [*Decade of Results*, page 10.]

Researchers conclude: “From our perspective, it looks as if LA’s BEST is a program that, when followed as a regular part of students’ broad educational experience, results in statistically important differences in student outcomes. The fact that we can detect *any* change on standardized achievement measures in itself is notable, for most educational interventions are unable to show impact on measures not tightly tied to the curriculum, or on follow-up achievement after a particular program is over. On a practical level, LA’s BEST needs to focus its attention on increasing the attendance of enrolled students. It may be that high-level attenders do so because they and their parents are more highly motivated, and this interest transfers to achievement. But it is equally likely that coming to school and to the LA’s BEST

program regularly is the reason for good performance and persisting impact subsequent to leaving LA's BEST." [*Decade of Results*, page 9.]

Findings from the Center's five previous evaluations of LA's BEST offer further insights into the program's benefits. Many of these findings are summarized in the *Decade of Results* report. Among them:

- **Increased adult supervision:** "[T]he 1993 evaluation reported that without LA's BEST, children would most likely suffer from lack of adult supervision after school: a higher percentage of children and parents reported that in the absence of this year's LA's BEST program, children would be placed in a care situation that did not have adequate/reliable adult supervision. Twenty-three percent of parents and 34 percent of children marked categories that did not include adequate adult supervision. One might hypothesize that current economic problems may have contributed to this rise in the percentage of children who would not have had adequate adult supervision if the LA's BEST program were not available. Because it is almost self-incriminating for parents and children to give this type of answer, it is highly probable that these are underestimates for the percentage of children who would have no adequate adult supervision in the absence of LA's BEST." [*Decade of Results*, page 13.]
- **Safety concerns:** "As early as the March 1, 1990 [study], three-quarters of the parents [surveyed] indicated that they worried significantly less about their children's safety and that they had more energy in the evening since enrolling their children in the program. A clear majority also indicated that the program resulted in sizeable savings in their time.... Parents in the comparison sample reported a significantly higher savings in money, time, and stress/worry concerning their child's safety than did the LA's BEST parents. (Evaluation Report, July 31, 1991)" [*Decade of Results*, page 14.]
- "Across the board, parents and children alike found the safety of the afterschool program far superior to the safety within the neighborhood. Children and parents judged the after school program to be significantly safer ... than the neighborhood. (December 17, 1993)" [*Decade of Results*, page 14.]
- **Improved social skills:** "Similarly, parents report that their child(ren)'s participation has resulted in 'Somewhat Positive' to 'Very Positive' changes in... ability to get along with others, grades on homework and tests, attitudes toward school, communication skills, and knowledge about specific subjects. (July 31, 1991)" [*Decade of Results*, page 14.]
- **Increased appreciation of school:** "Four-fifths of children (83 percent) also reported an increased liking of *regular* school since participating in the LA's BEST program, with over half indicating that they like school 'a lot more.' (July 31, 1991, page 49)" [*Decade of Results*, page 15.]
- "The overall staff perception that the children are learning and growing in the daily program supports children's own ratings of changes in their liking of *regular* school. Additionally, the children's feelings about the homework component as well as their comments about learning new things and reading more suggest that children may be getting more out of their regular school experience. (July 31, 1991, page 50)." [*Decade of Result*, page 15.]
- "Children also reported that they liked school more since they had been in the after school program: 77 percent of

children marked that they ‘like school more’ (27 percent) or ‘like school a lot more’ (50 percent) since being in the after school program.” [*Decade of Results*, page 15.]

- **Appreciation of afterschool staff:** In the 1991 report, “virtually all children (98 percent) felt that LA’s BEST grown-ups cared about them and had high hopes for their success.... This not only showed up in closed-ended questions, but was affirmed when children talked more openly and generally about LA’s BEST: In their responses to open-ended questions, children commonly spoke highly of their relationships with specific staff – that a specific staff member often talked to them, helped them with something, gave them a chance to help someone else or do something for the school or program.” [*Decade of Results*, page 16.]
- **Higher aspirations:** “Children in LA’s BEST reported higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college.” (December 17, 1993, p. 51) [*Decade of Results*, page 16.]

The New York City Beacons Initiative

Launched in 1991, the Beacons Initiative seeks to link community-based organizations and schools in service of children. Programs offer activities for children and families, and seek to function as community resources for parents and seniors, as well. The model has been duplicated in many cities around the nation.

The New York program is the subject of a two-phase evaluation by the Academy for Educational Development, the Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health, and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. The first phase examined program operations in 1997-98; the second, not yet published, will

deal with 1998-2000, exploring similar issues in greater depth. The evaluation is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Open Society Institute and the Ford Foundation. Evaluators stress that the study is not specifically aimed at documenting student outcomes, although some material of that sort may be useful to advocates, particularly from the second phase research. The evaluators’ summary report is available online at <http://www.aed.org/news/beacons.html>.

Phase One findings include:

- **Safety concerns:** “The Beacons have clearly created a safe place for youth: the vast majority of youth (85 percent) reported that it was ‘always true’ or ‘mostly true’ that they felt safe at the Beacons.” [*Evaluation of the New York City Beacons, Summary of Phase I Findings*, <http://www.aed.org/news/beacons.html>]
- **Community service:** “Close to three-fifths of Beacons (57 percent) involve young people in a diverse array of community service activities, at least once monthly.” [*Evaluation*]
- **Avoiding drug use:** “Four-fifths of youth (80 percent) who took part in intercept interviews described the Beacon as either ‘very helpful’ or ‘pretty helpful’ in helping them avoid drug use.” [*Evaluation*]
- **Avoiding fighting:** “Three-quarters (74 percent) of youth interviewed said that the Beacon was either very helpful or pretty helpful in helping them avoid fighting.” [*Evaluation*]

Phase Two findings will likely be released in the first quarter of 2002.

The After-School Corporation

The After-School Corporation (TASC) is a New York City-based nonprofit, established by the Open Society Institute in 1998, representing a \$25 million five-year commitment by the foundation. TASC provides grants to nonprofit organizations to establish partnerships with individual public schools, and the resulting afterschool programs follow a core set of program components. In all, 143 public schools in New York City, 73 schools in other parts of New York State participate. Funding is based on enrollment and is \$1,000 per student, excluding start-up, facilities and staff training.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation have provided funding to the Washington-based Policy Studies Associates to conduct a five-year evaluation, including annual summary reports.

The first year's evaluation, covering the 1998-99 school year, focused largely on issues related to program design and participation. Among its findings:

- **Safety and educational concerns:** "Parents enrolled their children in TASC afterschool projects so they would have a safe place to go after school where they can also get extra help in homework. Meanwhile, principals' and teachers' goals centered on extending the learning day for academics and homework, keeping children safe, building students' social skills, providing opportunities for academic enrichment and for students to express themselves in constructive ways, and broadening students' experience in the arts." [Policy Studies Associates web site at <http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/tasc-year1.html>]
- **Challenges:** "Site coordinators considered their hardest challenges to be: hiring qualified staff with the given resources, recruiting and enrolling

students in ways consistent with an open enrollment policy, encouraging high afterschool attendance particularly among middle and high school students and boosting attendance to five days per week, developing curricula, building relationships with the school and school staff, building staff cohesiveness, establishing policies for project operations, and reaching out to families and communities." [Policy Studies Associates web site.]

The second year evaluation, covering the 1999-2000 year found:

- **Student contentment:** "Students reported feeling safe, relaxed, happy, and connected to their afterschool program. When asked what they especially liked, they mentioned being with their friends, completing their homework before going home, and participating in activities that differed from those of the regular school day." [Policy Studies Associates web site at <http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/tasc-year2.html>]
- **Improved social skills:** "Staff, students, and parents noted a number of improvements in students' social skills, including the ability to maintain self-control, make constructive choices about their behavior, and avoid fights." [Policy Studies Associates web site.]
- "Parents and teachers said that students who participated in the TASC program had become more positive about school and more confident, especially about their academic ability, and had improved their school attendance." [Policy Studies Associates web site.]
- **Program objectives:** "The clear priority of site coordinators and principals was to use afterschool time and resources

to extend high-quality academic enrichment. The second most popular objective among principals was to offer students sports and recreation and, for site coordinators, to enhance students' social or civic development. According to site coordinators, however, parents' main objective in enrolling children in afterschool programs was to help students complete their homework." [Policy Studies Associates web site.]

- **Homework assistance:** "Among the afterschool activities offered, homework help was offered most often and at the highest intensity. According to the evaluation, however, some sites suffered from inadequate homework help because of the limited skills and knowledge of young afterschool staff. In Year 2, some coordinators addressed this problem by replacing high school students with more qualified staff, such as additional teachers, adult employees, and volunteers." [Policy Studies Associates web site.]
- **Parent's satisfaction:** "Forty-five percent of principals in Year 2 reported that the TASC project has increased parents' attendance at school events and 36 percent said that the project had increased parents' attendance at parent-teacher conferences." Ninety-seven percent of parents surveyed indicated that "their child liked to come to the program"; 86 percent agreed "that the project was helping their child academically." Parents also said that the program helped them balance work and family life: 94 percent said the program was convenient; 60 percent said they missed less work than before because of the program; 59 percent said it supported them in keeping their job; and 54 percent said it was supportive to them in allowing them to work more hours. [*Building quality and supporting expansion of afterschool projects, Summary of Findings: Evaluation Results*

from the TASC After-School Program's Second Year, Policy Studies Associates, Inc., February 2001, http://tascorp.org/pages/promising_es2.pdf]

Two other recent evaluations offer important insights into the barriers afterschool programs face.

The MOST Initiative: Making the Most of Out-of-School Time

The MOST Initiative is a multi-year project of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley Centers for Women, funded by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. The project is aimed at improving the quality and availability of out-of-school-time programming for children, particularly low-income children, in three major American cities – Boston, Chicago and Seattle. In addition to funding the project, Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds also funded a comprehensive evaluation of the project, conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. A summary of the findings of the two-phase evaluation is available at <http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/most.html>. Its findings address, among other things, the need for adequate funding for afterschool programs:

- **Program providers:** The first phase of the evaluation, completed in 1997, found that MOST contributed to the supply of school-age care in the cities, making "moderate to substantial progress toward the goal of increasing the supply of slots."
- **Shortage of public financing:** In the final evaluation, completed and released in 2000, researchers noted the wide range of afterschool providers in the three cities, and observed that private nonprofits are the largest providers. They observed further that just a small share of the cities' low-income children were in afterschool

programs, and concluded that inadequate public financing of afterschool programs led to an insufficiency of slots and depressed parental demand. The study also cited as barriers transportation difficulties, a lack of parental awareness of afterschool programming, and the lack of parental wherewithal to seek out and enroll children in programs. Finally, the shortage of public financing also was found to create staffing and programmatic problems that hurt the overall quality of afterschool programming.

Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas Menino, Boston has since launched a large-scale public-private partnership to significantly increase its afterschool funding.

The Extended Services Schools Adaptation Initiative

The Extended Services Schools Adaptation Initiative (ESS) funds organizations in 17 cities to partner with schools in low-income areas to provide youth-development activities in programs located in school buildings during non-school hours. Funded as a five-year program by The Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, the first set of 17 grants was awarded in 1998. Public/Private Ventures and subcontractor Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation are conducting a four-year companion evaluation. The first of two phases of the evaluation covers the period from 1998 to 2000. A second phase of the study will be released after 2002. A summary is available online at <http://www.ppv.org/content/reports/ess.html>.

Three formidable challenges for afterschool programs were identified by the first phase research:

- **Available space in schools:** Issues related to physical space in the school building can have a profound impact on the success of the program. Afterschool

programs must sometimes compete for facilities with other activities and events. Relationships with school personnel, including administrators and janitorial staff can be critical. Principals sometimes deny access to already overused and underfunded facilities.

- **Difficulty reaching disadvantage children:** The most disadvantaged children are very difficult to reach. ESS programs reach thousands of disadvantaged children, but within poor neighborhoods, the poorest children are the most difficult to reach and involve in afterschool. The programs have worked to develop creative strategies for overcoming this barrier.
- **Transportation:** Transportation is the most difficult challenge facing the programs. Limited availability of buses, unsafe neighborhoods, and distances between schools and homes all combine to make transportation a difficult problem.

The second phase of the evaluation will explore the experiences of participating youth, and how ESS afterschool programs affected their performance in school and out.

FORTHCOMING 21ST CENTURY AFTERSCHOOL EVALUATION

The first of three parts of the most eagerly anticipated afterschool evaluation of them all appears to be just a few months away from release. Conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, a comprehensive evaluation of the 21st CCLC program is well under way, with the first of three yearly studies expected sometime after the first quarter of 2002.

The report is expected to explore the full range of afterschool issues. In March 2001,

Mathematica published a report on the design of the study – available on their web site, www.mathematica-mpr.com.

The goal of the study, according to the design report, is to “provide an understanding of how centers supported by 21st CCLC funds operate, how they affect participants, and how they can improve their services and activities to be more effective.” The outcomes portion of the study will focus on such elements as students’ in-school performance and out-of-school experiences and behaviors.

The evaluation involves the tracking of afterschool students and a control-group comparison with students not in programs. Other elements of the evaluation include surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations of afterschool programs, document reviews and more. By the end of the process, evaluators hope both to wed data on programmatic operations and student outcomes, leading to conclusions about how program structure affects student outcomes.

Specific questions researchers are focusing on include:

- ✓ Do centers improve such in-school outcomes for students as academic achievement, on-time promotion, attendance and classroom behavior?
- ✓ Do they improve out-of-school behaviors with respect to violence, drugs, smoking, fears about safety, contact with gangs?
- ✓ How do impacts differ for students of different ages, backgrounds, levels of academic and English proficiency?
- ✓ What factors lead to strong community partnerships in afterschool programs?
- ✓ What links between programs and regular school programs make a difference?
- ✓ What models and practices are linked to impacts on student outcomes?

PUTTING THE DATA TO WORK

From an advocacy perspective, evaluations offer invaluable tools for demonstrating the worth and demand for afterschool support and funding. Indeed, the data and conclusions from the studies already amply support advocates’ main arguments on behalf of afterschool.

Afterschool programs help kids achieve in school.

- Evaluations of LA’s BEST show that program students’ attendance improved once they began participating in the program. That improved attendance led to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of math, reading and language arts. In addition, language redesignation rates favored LA’s BEST students when compared with non-LA’s BEST students.
- The LA’s BEST evaluation also demonstrated that children in the program developed higher aspirations for their future education.

Afterschool programs keep kids safe.

- The LA’s BEST evaluation found that parents and children alike found the safety of the afterschool program far superior to the safety within the neighborhood.
- The evaluation of the New York City Beacons program concluded that “the vast majority of youth (85 percent) reported that it was ‘always true’ or ‘mostly true’ that they felt safe at the Beacons.”
- Eighty percent of New York Beacons students who took part in intercept interviews described the Beacon as either “very helpful” or “pretty helpful” in helping them avoid drug use.

- Seventy-four percent of New York Beacons students interviewed said that the Beacon was either “very helpful” or “pretty helpful” in helping them avoid fighting.
- The TASC evaluation concluded that “staff, students, and parents noted a number of improvements in students’ social skills, including the ability to maintain self-control, make constructive choices about their behavior, and avoid fights.”
- “Parents and teachers said that students who participated in the TASC program had become more positive about school and more confident, especially about their academic ability, and had improved their school attendance.”

Afterschool programs help working parents.

- The LA’s BEST evaluation finds that “three-quarters of the parents [surveyed] indicated that they worried significantly less about their children’s safety and that they had more energy in the evening since enrolling their children in the program. A clear majority also indicated that the program resulted in sizeable savings in their time.... Parents in the comparison sample reported a significantly higher savings in money, time, and stress/worry concerning their child’s safety than did the LA’s BEST parents.”
- Parents in the TASC study said that the program helped them balance work and family life: 94 percent said the program was convenient; 60 percent said they missed less work than before because of the program; 59 percent said it supported them in keeping their job; and 54 percent said it allowed them to work more hours.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Is there an interesting program in your area? Has a corporation or business in your community become involved in funding or establishing an afterschool program? Please share with us, and other readers, your success stories, comments and suggestions. Contact *Afterschool Advocate* editor Ridgely Benjamin with story ideas or information via email: afterschooladvocate@prsolutionsdc.com; phone: 202/371-1999; or fax: 202/371-9142.

WHERE TO GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EVALUATIONS

Afterschool advocates, and for that matter program designers, can find a wealth of information on evaluations, much of it readily available on the Internet. You’ll find a number of important links to web sites throughout this issue of the advocate. Another valuable web site is that of the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP). It was of great use in preparing this special edition of the *Afterschool Advocate*, and can be of use to those who would like to take a closer look at evaluation issues or specific evaluations.

With a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, HFRP has compiled a number of valuable resources, available on the Internet. A few stand out for this purpose. Two issues of the organization’s newsletter, *Evaluation Exchange* Vol. VI, No. 1 (fall 2000) and Vol. VII, No 2 (spring 2001) explore different issues related to afterschool evaluations. Another vital resource is HFRP’s growing database of evaluations. It includes summaries of a number of major evaluations, and promises to be expanded in the future. According to HFRP, “each profile contains an overview of the out-of-school time program or initiative that was evaluated, as well as detailed information about each evaluation report produced about that

program. Electronic links to actual evaluation reports, where available, are also provided, as are contacts for program directors and evaluators. The profiles are searchable on several key criteria in each of these broad categories. The search mechanism allows users to refine their scan of the profiles to specific program and evaluation characteristics and findings information. New profiles are added and existing profiles are updated quarterly.” If you know of an evaluation that should be listed but is not, contact HFRP’s Flora Traub at Flora_Traub@harvard.edu or at 617-495-9108.

HFRP’s web site materials on afterschool are sometimes difficult to access directly by the correct URL: <http://gse.harvard.edu/~hfrp/projects/afterschool.html>. So if that address fails, go to Harvard University’s site at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/>, then follow hypertext links to “research,” then to the Harvard Family Research Project. From

there, you can access the *Evaluation Exchange*. Or you can follow the “Research Areas” link, to another link for the Evaluation Profiles Database.



Receiving the *Afterschool Advocate* via email

We would prefer to send you the *Afterschool Advocate* via email so that you can receive it in a more timely manner. If you would like to receive the newsletter by email, please contact editor Ridgely Benjamin via email (afterschooladvocate@prsolutionsdc.com) or fax (202/371-9142). She will need your name, organization, phone and fax number, and email address. Thank you!

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