

Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

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RESEACHERS DISPUTE STUDY FINDINGS

The validity of the recently released federal study of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., was challenged this month by a surprising source: Mathematica's own scientific advisory board for the study.

"We believe that the first year report...has serious methodological problems that call into question its findings and that violate basic principles governing how evaluation should be used to guide policy and affect program budgets." So wrote seven of the ten members of the study's Technical Working Group in an open letter released in mid-May.

Released on February 3, this first phase of a multi-year evaluation of 21st CCLC programs quickly became the subject of controversy for its methods, its findings, and for the Bush Administration's reliance upon it as the sole justification for a 40 percent cut in funding for the program. The ten-member Technical Working Group had advised Mathematica during the design and implementation of the study on a range of issues.

The open letter contains a lengthy list of criticisms. Many concerns about the study's methodology echoed recent critiques of it; other concerns drew on the Technical Working Group's intimate knowledge of the research and the previous drafts of Mathematica's analysis.

Among the criticisms:

- The "treatment" and "control" groups for the middle school section of the evaluation were insufficiently similar. The evaluation compared middle school students in 21st CCLC programs with middle school students not in the program. But the 21st CCLC students began the school year with significantly lower scores in mathematics and reading, casting doubt on Mathematica's subsequent conclusions based on end-of-year comparisons. Moreover, the Working Group said that Mathematica "selectively omitted" data from the report that would have demonstrated the differences between the two groups.

LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL! 2003

Be sure to join afterschool advocates across the country for the fourth annual *Lights On Afterschool!* on **October 9, 2003**. Be a part of this effort to save afterschool programs imperiled by funding cuts and underscore the need for quality afterschool programs for all children.

To learn more about how to participate, to register your event, or to request a *Lights On Afterschool!* Action Kit, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org. Help turn the lights on at afterschool programs!

- The elementary school section of the evaluation relied on a very small sample of 21st CCLC programs – just 18 centers out of 6,800 in all. “The sample size for the elementary schools is so small,” the Group wrote, “that it raises questions about the validity of the report conclusions.”
- Key data about elementary mathematics performance was omitted from the final report. Wrote the group: “As was the case with the report of the middle school evaluation, it appears that key data were not included about elementary programs. Baseline and follow-up standardized test scores in mathematics were reported in the Sept. 12 [draft] report, but omitted from the report that was released in February. These data suggest that the performance of the treatment group improved whereas the performance of the control group decreased across the school year.”

In addition, Technical Working Group members said that basing policy recommendations on a single year’s worth of data of a new program, as interpreted in a report that had not been appropriately peer-reviewed, violated accepted principles for scientific research in education. Citing a 2003 report from the National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Scientific Principles for Education Research, the group asserted, “It is inappropriate in this particular case and misleads policy makers into thinking that it is appropriate to judge the outcomes of social interventions after a single year.”

Mathematica’s lead researchers, Mark Dynarski and Mary Moore responded to the challenge with a posting on the firm’s website. Their statement defended the study and its methods, but not the Administration’s use of it to justify the budget cut: “The report’s two main policy recommendations are that the program consider ways to (1)

address low participation, and (2) improve its academic content. We believe the first-year results provide more than adequate support for these recommendations.... [T]he report made no recommendation to increase or decrease funding for the program.”

In addition, in defending their use of a small elementary sample, Dynarski and Moore reiterated a point from their original analysis: that the sample size problem demanded that the elementary findings be considered “preliminary.” The Bush Administration gave that caution little weight, using the study to justify a budget cut that could mean afterschool programs across the country will be forced to close their doors.



SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS SUPPORTS AFTERSCHOOL

A new survey released in late May by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) finds that school board presidents nationwide overwhelmingly support afterschool programs in their districts. They are deeply concerned about potential budget cuts that could force them to reduce or close existing programs.

As part of a two-year project focusing on school boards’ involvement in afterschool programs, NSBA released its research findings and launched an online resource center to help school boards support members who are working to build and sustain afterschool programs in their communities. In addition to the survey, NSBA’s web site (www.nsba.org) provides information on how school board members can be involved with afterschool programs, and possible funding sources specific to various states.

NSBA commissioned the survey, *Realizing the Vision, Leading the Way*, which was conducted by D.C.-based Belden, Russonello and Stewart Research and Communications. The survey was funded

through a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

“It is very important for the public to remember that school boards are committed to provide quality afterschool programs for all students and that they feel it is a valuable asset to the school day,” says Anne L. Bryant, executive director of the NSBA. “The survey shows that school board members believe that the goal of high-quality afterschool programs is to enhance academic performance and provide a safe, supervised place for students to be after school.”

Survey Findings

Of the 821 school board presidents surveyed, four out of five (81 percent) currently have afterschool programs in at least some of the schools their district. The survey did not define afterschool programs, so some respondents may have assumed clubs were considered afterschool programs. The major findings of the survey include:

- ★ Eighty-three percent say it is essential or very important that afterschool programs are to continue in their districts.
- ★ Board members believe the main goal of afterschool programs should be raising student performance, with 80 percent saying that doing so is essential or very important.
- ★ Board members with afterschool programs give them high marks in providing services that directly impact classroom achievement: 82 percent say their programs do a good or excellent job of assisting students who are struggling academically.
- ★ Seventy-five percent agree they should have a large role in establishing vision and policy for the district as it relates to afterschool programs. Only six percent say the school board should have a large

role in the daily operations of the programs.

- ★ Fifty-two percent foresee that their afterschool programs will have to be reduced somewhat or even cut entirely in the next few years due to proposed funding cuts.

The National School Boards Association is a national federation of state school boards associations that represent more than 95,000 school board members who govern the nation’s public schools. The organization’s mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education throughout the United States through local school board leadership. For more information, visit <http://www.nsba.org/site/index.asp>.



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!



EVALUATION EXCHANGE

Do afterschool activities make a difference? How can evaluations improve access and equity in out-of-school time programs? What are the evaluation implications for programs funded by the 21st

Century Community Learning Centers initiative since the responsibility for administering the programs has shifted to the states? These are among the topics addressed in the Spring 2003 issue of *Evaluation Exchange*. The entire issue of the Harvard Family Research Project is dedicated to evaluating out-of-school time programs.

“[This issue] comes at a point in time when the need for credible out-of-school research and evaluation information is at an all-time high, and when increased competition among nonprofits for scarce resources makes it more important than ever for out-of-school programs to have the capacity to collect and use data for program accountability and improvement,” writes Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D., Founder and Director of the Harvard Family Research Project.

The issue also includes:

- A discussion with Dr. Michelle Gambone, president of Youth Development Strategies, Inc., on her new study, *Finding Out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development*, and its implications for quality youth programming.
- A special report on the implications of the Mathematica Policy Research study on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers with commentary from former Congressman Steve Gunderson; Harvard Professor Kathleen McCartney; Tiffany Berry, External Evaluator for LA’s BEST in Los Angeles; and others.
- An overview of the new science-based research standard by Suzanne Bouffard, consultant for the Harvard Family Research Project.
- A discussion by Mark Ouellette and Audrey Hutchinson of the National League of Cities on the challenges and strategies of evaluating community-wide afterschool programs.

The Spring 2003 issue of *Evaluation Exchange* is available on the Internet at: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue21/index.html>



IN THE NEWS...

National – In honor of its 17th anniversary, Staples, Inc. launched its national campaign to raise up to \$500,000 for Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) by donating ten percent of all Staples brand 30 percent recycled copy paper sales to BGCA. As a national BGCA sponsor, Staples supports a wide range of educational and afterschool programs through the Staples Foundation for Learning. “As an alumnus of the Boys & Girls Clubs, I can attest to the importance of providing educational opportunities that make it possible for kids to realize their full potential,” said Ron Sargent, president and CEO of Staples, Inc.

California – In late March, Mayor James K. Hahn and other community leaders joined local teenagers to celebrate the grand opening of a new Century/LIFT -Winston & Strawn Teen Center that will give at-risk youths enhanced learning opportunities in their own communities. The event is one of a series of community-based initiatives that the law firm of Winston & Strawn will be introducing as part of its “Opportunities Through Education” 150th anniversary program. Century/LIFT (Learning Initiatives for Today) is a comprehensive afterschool tutoring program for children in first through twelfth grades who live in affordable housing developments.

Indiana – In late April, 30 students from the Safe Harbor afterschool program in Michigan City were honored for their dedication to reading by Notre Dame athletes, reports the *Michigan City News-Dispatch*. Students participating in the “Read Like a Champion” program were invited to a luncheon at the

university and had the opportunity to talk with several of Notre Dame's star athletes. Many of the students had read for more than 1,000 minutes since the beginning of the school year. The program was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

Iowa – Ninety percent of likely Iowa voters want whoever is the next President to make children's issues a high priority; 63 percent believe children's needs are regularly elbowed off the table in Congress; and 68 percent want the federal government to make more investments in the state and local programs that help children, youth and families, finds a Mason-Dixon public opinion survey of 625 likely Iowa voters. These findings were released at the launch of the Every Child Matters Education Fund's public education campaign in the Iowa Caucuses. The campaign will emphasize the needs of children in the areas of child abuse, health care, afterschool programs, early learning and pre-kindergarten opportunities throughout the presidential campaign season.

Massachusetts – To further their interest in science and technology, participants from the Girls Inc. afterschool programs at Fecteau-Leary and Marshall middle schools took a field trip to Biogen Community Lab in Cambridge, reports the *Boston Globe*. The sixth-grade girls conducted a gel electrophoresis lab and talked with researchers about their careers.

Michigan – On May 1, Governor Jennifer Granholm announced the launch of MICASE (Michigan Creative After-School Experience), an online catalog of afterschool programs for pre-kindergarten through high school students throughout the state, reports the *Detroit Free Press*. The Department of History, Arts and Libraries will maintain the web site, www.micase.org. Afterschool programs are encouraged to add their sites to the database.

Michigan – On April 10, the Michigan House of Representatives passed HR-26, the "Michigan After-School Initiative." It would create a task force to assess the status of afterschool programming in Michigan and develop a plan to ensure access to afterschool programs for every school-age child in the state. Both state houses also passed a resolution calling for: "the \$400 million cut be restored to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and be distributed to states to administer the grant to enhance learning opportunities in a safe place for children and youth."

Tennessee – Tennessee and Mississippi showed declines in the American College Testing scores during the past decade and Tennessee ranks near the bottom of the region and the country in college entrance exam scores, finds the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) report. "It's startling really when you look and see where we are in Tennessee. It's eye-opening," said House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh as he distributed the report to colleagues, reports the *Associated Press*. The SREB report suggested several recommendations to improve the scores, including pre-kindergarten programs, afterschool programs and more qualified teachers.

Texas – On April 28, the JCPenney Afterschool Fund held its annual gala in Dallas and raised \$2 million to support its national partners, YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National 4-H Council, Junior Achievement and the Afterschool Alliance. Event attendees included Bisou-Bisou designers, Michele and Mark Bohbot, Dallas Cowboys' owner Jerry Jones, and players Roy Williams and Joey Galloway.

Wisconsin – On May 28, U.S. Representative Dave Obey attended a spring celebration in his honor at Bryant Elementary in Superior, reports the *Duluth News-Tribune*. The school

district is recognizing Obey for his assistance in securing nearly \$500,000 in federal money to establish the afterschool program.



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.



TALKING ABOUT AFTERSCHOOL...

“President Bush is using the results of a Mathematica study to cut millions of dollars from afterschool programs for children, citing their lack of effectiveness due to drab recreational opportunities, poor participation, etc. This sounds like a logical thing to do until you analyze the way programs for children are funded. Imagine Congress saying to the military: ‘We will give you 60 percent of what it costs to build a good bomber. We expect you to come up with community volunteers and donors to build the rest. We will reduce your money each year, and after three years you will be required to find donations to maintain the aircraft at safe, high performance standards. Think bake sales. Ask local small businesses for help.’ Then later, when a study declares the bombers unsafe and ineffective, they are scrapped. This is how we fund programs for children and families. There is never adequate funding

for startup, and staff time is then spent scrounging for resources to survive rather than focusing on best practices for kids. Studies show that high quality programs show high results. High quality requires investment in real dollars.”

- Carolyn King, Letters-to-the-Editor,
Louisville Courier-Journal, May 22,
2003

“The cut in funding to the \$1 billion-a-year federal afterschool program was supposedly prompted by the results of a study that found little academic improvement among students in the program, although they did spend more time with teachers and their parents were more involved in school. Critics complain that the study examined the federal program when it was only two years old, and didn’t try to look at the most effective afterschool programs for success stories. (There are several in Philadelphia.) Still, if the administration decided to shift afterschool resources into mentoring, shouldn’t total funding be held constant? Nah. Instead, the White House proposes to cut \$400 million from the afterschool program for one year - nearly the amount it proposed to spend on mentoring over the course of three years.”

- Columnist Jane Eisner, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8, 2003

“A lot of communities will have afterschool programs for elementary school children because of the safety issue. And most high schools have afterschool extracurricular activities, not because of safety, but because of our interest in promoting athletics or the arts or drama or what have you. But in that period between elementary school and high school, whether it’s middle or junior high school, we tend to not provide sufficient structure for kids.”

- Psychologist Laurence Steinberg,
National Public Radio, May 21, 2003

“We know the city is facing tight financial times in this depressed economy. And we know that these kind of [afterschool] services are considered county responsibilities. But the city provided money for these programs in the past because officials recognized the value of the programs to the kids and to this city, and knew the programs needed city help. Withdrawing funding now could mean killing the programs, because prospects are minimal that replacement funds can be found elsewhere. Afterschool programs such as these have proved their worth in helping children stay out of trouble. They provide productive ways for children to spend their time. The city would be unwise to look at cutting them to save money. Those cuts could prove very expensive. We could pay for them for many years in juvenile delinquency and lost potential of our children.”

- Editorial, *Charlotte (NC) Observer*,
April 25, 2003

“There are many reasons to support the proposed Burlington school budget Tuesday... Our drug-abuse-prevention efforts will suffer a serious setback if we end up having to make cuts in afterschool programs and educational opportunities. We all know that drug-abuse prevention is not solely the responsibility of schools. But let us clearly understand that there’s a strong connection between adequately funding our schools and healthy kids. I challenge all those who are concerned with drug abuse to support this reasonable school budget.”

- Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle,
Burlington Free Press, May 17, 2003



MARK YOUR CALENDAR



June 12 - 13

The Research Network on Successful Pathways through Middle Childhood will host its national 2003 Middle Childhood

Conference in Washington, DC, on June 12 and 13. This national conference will bring together researchers, practitioners and policy makers from across the country to discuss factors that promote successful development during the middle childhood years. Topics include: Supports and opportunities for positive development; Contexts and diversity as resources for children’s pathways; Promising Practices to achieve successful pathways through middle childhood; and Children’s out-of-school time, implications for policies and programs. To find out more, visit the conference web site at www.middlechildhood.org/conference/index.html.



June 12 –15

Creative Communities will host its semi-annual Creative Communities Training Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from June 12 through 15. Community arts educators and community builders are encouraged to attend the training and learn more about the Creative Communities model of partnering community schools of the arts and public housing communities. The result of a partnership between the National Guild, the National Endowment of the Arts and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Creative Communities is an innovative arts education, youth development and community building strategy. For more information and to register, visit http://www.creativecommunitiesonline.org/vessel_h.html



June 21

The **VERB. It’s what you do** campaign will host the *Longest Day of Play!* on Saturday, June 21. **VERB** is an innovative, integrated marketing campaign coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **VERB** motivates tweens (nine to 13 year olds) to be active and have fun trying new

activities that get their bodies moving, developing new skills, and enjoying physical activity with their friends and peers. The *Longest Day of Play!* crams every possible minute of daylight with fun and play. It offers unlimited access to involve as many kids as possible with the help of the Internet, public relations, media, event marketing, advertising on Radio Disney and more. For more information, call (770) 488-6480 or visit www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/.



June 23 - 25

The National Peer Helpers Association (NPHA) will host its 17th Annual NPHA International Conference for Peer Helping Professionals in Atlanta, Georgia, from June 23 through 25. Prior to the conference, from June 20 to 22, NPHA trainers will offer a wide variety of state-of-the-art training opportunities for new and experienced peer helping professionals. The conference will offer workshops, keynote addresses, panels and networking opportunities. For more information, visit the NPHA web site, www.peerhelping.org.



July 22-25

The Girls and Boys Town National Resource Training Center will sponsor its Before and Afterschool Training of Trainers in Boys Town, Nebraska, from July 22 through 25. The training is for before- and afterschool program directors, supervisors, and staff. For more information, contact: NRTC Support Services, Box 145, Boys Town, NE 68010; (800) 545-5771, ext. 65; or visit the web site: www.girlsandboystown.org/pros/training/education/



October 9

Join afterschool programs and advocates across the country for *Lights On Afterschool!* and turn your lights on and host a rally in your community. *Lights On Afterschool!*

2003 is sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool. For information on the nationwide event, to find a local event or to host your own *Lights On Afterschool!* event, please visit http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/lights_2002/get_involved.cfm.



November 6 -8

The California School-Age Consortium will host its National Middle School Conference in San Diego, California from November 6 through 8. "The Ultimate Reality Show: Middle School from A New Perspective" conference is designed for professionals working with middle school youth in afterschool programs. For more information, contact pchase@calsac.org or visit www.calsac.org.



NEW RESEARCH

The Health of the Human Service Workforce

The Brookings Institute's Center for Public Service was established "to improve the odds that America's most talented citizens will choose careers in the public service. Toward that goal, the Center is committed to rigorous research and practical recommendations for making public service more attractive, be it in traditional government settings, nonprofit agencies, or in the growing number of private firms that provide services once delivered inside government."

The Center recently published *The Health of the Human Service Workforce*, a report examining the salaries, job turnover rates, available resources and support systems for human service workers serving low-income children, youth and families in five fields – childcare and afterschool, youth services, child welfare, juvenile justice, and employment and training. Full text of the

report is available at:
<http://www.brook.edu/gs/cps/light20032603.htm>

The Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum for Youth Investment has released the third issue in the Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary Series, *Reflections on System Building: Lessons from the After-School Movement*. The commentary addresses the potential for, and threats to, the development of a healthy, connected out-of-school time system. It looks specifically at the following questions:

- When and how are evaluations useful?
- What does the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation tell us?
- How do the findings square with other studies?
- What is the state of system building in out-of-school time?
- What challenges lie ahead?

Also available is: *Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development: Lessons and Voices from the Field*. The report examines the key challenges and lessons learned from a Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds sponsored initiative that provided nine library systems across the United States an unprecedented opportunity to work collaboratively with teens and community partners to strengthen their understanding of and commitment to youth development.

Both publications are available on the Forum for Youth Investment web site:
www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

The Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Communities Schools recently released its report, *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*. The report uses research

and evaluation data to demonstrate how community schools are an effective strategy to educate all children. Included are profiles of 15 community schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels that are making the difference. The report also describes an action agenda for individuals to create community schools. The full report is available at:

<http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage.html>



CALL FOR PAPERS

Afterschool Matters, a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship and consciousness in the field of afterschool education, is seeking material for all sections of the publication. Now published by The Robert Bowne Foundation, the journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and shaping youth development policy.

Afterschool Matters welcomes submissions from a variety of disciplines that explore practical ideas for working with young people during the out-of-school hours. In addition, the journal seeks scholarly work that can be applied to or is based upon the afterschool arena. Articles from a range of academic perspectives will be considered along with personal or inspirational narratives and essays, book reviews, artwork and photographs.

The Theme for the Spring 2004 issue is "Youth Programs in the Community Context." Some suggested article topics aligned with this theme include: the complex relationships between community-based afterschool youth organizations (CBOs) and public schools; relationships between CBOs and other community institutions and community members; and teaching and

learning in the community. **The deadline is June 15th.**

Submissions should be typed and double-spaced, include quotations and references, and submitted electronically or on a disk in Microsoft Word format. Submissions should be typed in 12-point font, and should not exceed 5,000 words. Include a cover sheet with the manuscript title, authors' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. The names of the authors should not appear on the text as submissions are reviewed anonymously by peers. Follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition, for reference style guidelines. Present important information in the text and do not use footnotes or extensive endnotes.

For questions or to submit materials: Sara Hill, The Robert Bowne Foundation, 345 Hudson Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10014; tel. (212) 931-1895; Sara.hill@bowne.com.

Reminder

As mentioned in Vol. 4, Issue 4 of the *Afterschool Advocate*, the Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research in

Washington, DC, is pleased to announce a national call for promising practices in afterschool. The Center is looking for promising practices in any one of seven component areas:

- Community & Family Involvement
- Programming
- Management & Administration
- Staffing & Training
- Financing
- Research, Evaluation, & Knowledge Base
- Policy & Advocacy

The Center is collecting practices as part of the Promising Practices in Afterschool System funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. For more information, please visit www.afterschool.org and click on "Submitting Practices." You may also send an email to PPAS@aed.org with any questions or call the Center at 202-884-8267. Practice submissions received after July 7, 2003 will not be reviewed until the next call for practices.



The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. The Alliance is proud to count among its founding partners the Mott Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Open Society Institute/The After-School Corporation, the Entertainment Industry Foundation and the Creative Artists Agency Foundation.

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