Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of

Spring 2008

Beliefs of Georgia Educators Regarding After-School Programs

Fran Ridgeway Oakley

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd

BELIEFS OF GEORGIA EDUCATORS REGARDING AFTER-SCHOOL

PROGRAMS

by

FRAN RIDGEWAY OAKLEY

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to determine middle school educators' beliefs

regarding strategies that are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-

school programs. The individuals most appropriate to provide the answers to the research

question included middle school after-school program directors and teachers. A

purposive sample of two middle schools in the Northeast Georgia (NEGA) Regional

Educational Service Agency (RESA) was identified on the RESA Website.

A descriptive qualitative methodology was used, with open-ended questions in order

to obtain detailed responses from the interview participants. Instrumentation for this

study was structured interviews of selected participants. The interview questions

consisted of eleven sub-questions that were organized into the following four categories:

goals, structure/organization, relationship to AYP, and support. The instrument was

reviewed by a team of educators that currently serve in after-school programs. The

instrument was pilot tested with one volunteer educator that supervises and teaches in an

after-school program.

Findings from this researcher's study showed that after-school programs are often

labeled effective when they are well organized, develop a good reputation within the

community, and become self-sustaining. After-school programs should also be designed

to achieve desired outcomes. Strategies, techniques, approaches, and activities should be

selected that are likely to produce results as well as engage and satisfy stakeholders.

Finally, in the era of accountability, evaluation and research that indicates program

success will be the ultimate factors that draw financial support and build program

credibility.

INDEX WORDS: After-School Programs, Extended School Day, Extended Learning
Time, Out-of-School Time,

BELIEFS OF GEORGIA EDUCATORS REGARDING AFTER-SCHOOL

PROGRAMS

by

FRAN RIDGEWAY OAKLEY

B. S., Brenau University, 1989

M. Ed., Brenau University, 1991

Ed. S., Clemson University, 1995

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2008

BELIEFS OF GEORGIA EDUCATORS REGARDING AFTER-SCHOOL

PROGRAMS

by

FRAN RIDGEWAY OAKLEY

Major Professor:	Linda M. Arthur
Committee:	Russ A. Marion, II
	Sonya S. Shepherd

Electronic Version Approved:
May 2008

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those that have encouraged me throughout my educational journey. First, I would like to thank God for the desire and perseverance that He instilled in me as I have pursued my goals and dreams in education. I especially thank Mrs. Jane Farmer and Mrs. Ann Gunter, former educators, for their constant encouragement, support, and praises.

To my parents, Darrell Ridgeway and Anne Riley, despite the challenges that we have faced, I will always be grateful for the many lessons that you have taught me about life and love. I am a more confident and independent individual today, and I thank you for your guidance.

To my children, Kyle, Katie, Kellie, and Kaycie, you have been my inspiration and motivation for reaching my dreams. I hope that I have shown you that you can achieve anything that you set your mind to. I also thank you for being patient with me as I was not always there to physically support you in your endeavors. I love you with all that I am and thank God for each of you.

To my best friend, Keith, whose unconditional love, support, patience, and encouragement carried me throughout this journey. The journey has been long and hard, but I will be forever grateful that you were always right by my side.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Linda Arthur, for your expertise in guiding me throughout this process. You were always enthusiastic and made Saturday classes exciting and interesting. I also thank you for your constant patience, encouragement, and pushing me to complete deadlines.

Thank you to, Dr. Sonya Shepherd, for your guidance, support, and quick responses to my questions. You were always helpful and provided me with valuable information to complete this process. I sincerely am grateful for your willingness to assist me.

Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. Russ Marion for serving as my methodologist. I thank you for taking the time to meet with me and probing me to think at higher levels. Your kindness and willingness to meet with me as I worked through this process is greatly appreciated.

Finally, I thank the members of my cohort who were always supportive and provided encouragement when needed. The process was made easier as we all genuinely understood what each other was facing. Thank you for your friendship, and good luck as you continue to reach your goals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has reshaped public education by exposing failing schools. Under the law's most visible stipulation, states must test public school students in Reading and Math every year from third through eighth grade and test students in high school. State accountability requires schools to publish the results of state testing or face a loss of federal funds. Just as critical, schools must disaggregate test results by subgroups as follows: All students, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, American Indian/Alaskans, Whites, Multi-racial, Students with Disabilities, Language English Proficiency, and Economically disadvantaged students. The law requires sanctions for schools that do not make annual progress toward closing the gap between the sub-groups, as the intent of the law is to bring all students to grade-level proficiency in Math and Reading by 2014 (Willis & Steptoe, 2007).

For many years, students have been at-risk of not achieving in school or in other areas, such as health or positive self-concepts. Successful after-school programs were established by educators who recognized at-risk conditions, had a commitment to help these students meet their potential, and had the ability to design appropriate programs (Manning & Baruth, 1995). In an attempt to close the achievement gap, states provide supplementary education, and these supplementary services usually occur outside the regular school day. Thus, there is a growing interest among educators in the effectiveness of after-school programs for improving student achievement (Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow & Glenn, 2004).

Over the last decade, the after-school field has grown rampantly due to high stakes testing, accountability expectations, and child care. School systems across the nation are challenged with the task of providing additional learning time outside the regular school day. Some of the greatest challenges regarding implementation are creating and sustaining effective programs that ensure high quality. The intent of this study is to determine useful strategies for effective implementation of middle schools after-school programs.

<div align="center">Need for After-School Programs</div>

After-school programs have evolved in response to a set of broader social and economic developments since 1980; proponents of new programs for youth focused on the risky behaviors of youth such as sexual activity at young ages and drug and alcohol abuse (Hollister, 2003). According to Hollister (2003), the forces behind increased funding and the activity in after-school programs could be characterized in two phrases: "time on task" and "home alone." According to O'Donnel, Michael, and Ames (1997), children growing up in poverty in low-income neighborhoods are at greater risk of exhibiting behavior problems. Programs that reduce these risks promote successful experiences, enhance bonding, and, as a result, reduce problem behaviors.

In addition, general and special educators are frustrated with children and youth who enter school without the prerequisite skills for academic success (O'Donnel, Michael, & Ames, 1997. The lack of educational resources in urban communities further aggravate the situation, and the fact that a large number of children and youth are from multicultural and diverse linguistic groups compound the problem (Gardner, Cartledge, Seidl, Woolsey, Schley & Utley, 2001).

In an attempt to remedy the problem, the Department of Education (1995) states that extended learning time for Title I students is a priority because the extra instruction provided by Title I during the regular school day averages only about 30 minutes. The actual instructional time is probably less, because time is lost during transitions between locations or activities. Also, nearly three quarters of classroom teachers report that students miss regular instruction while participating in Title I. According to the Department of Education, the average Title I program may only modestly increase the total amount of time that students receive instruction in reading and mathematics, contributing as little as ten additional minutes of academic instruction each day.

Types of After-School Programs

The after-school field is very diverse; programs exist in a wide variety of settings and serve a wide variety of programmatic characteristics. Measurable aspects of programs include program characteristics, staff characteristics, and program quality. Program characteristics include structural aspects such as location, size, schedule, years in operation, program goals, and ages of children served. Staff characteristics include experience, educational background, salaries, and training of those working in the programs. Program quality is a result of how program and staff characteristics respond to the ongoing interactions between staff and youth, and youth and their peers (National Institute on Out-of-School-Time, 2001).

According to Miller (2003), after-school program models emerged from the child care movement designed to meet the needs of working families. Positive youth development evolved from adolescent preventive programs; extended day programs were designed to increase students' academic success; and extracurricular activities

encompassed a wide range of lessons, team sports, and clubs that brought young people together with adult teachers and coaches.

In regard to the types of after-school programs, it is reported that students learn in a variety of ways, and research indicates that providing additional time to some students is the critical factor to higher achievement (Okey, 1998). Strategic tutoring is one example that has been found to be effective in increasing the academic performance of some at-risk students and students with learning disabilities on quizzes and tests in general education classes (Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2001). A second type of tutoring, After-School Peer Tutoring (ASPT), is reported as effective in increasing performance among its attendees but indicates that the tutorial program is least successful for Mathematics. The study also reports the impact of at-risk characteristics, namely, students' suspension history, is a deterrent toward elevating their achievement across the tutored area (Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

Another type of after-school program is the after-school counseling program. A study conducted by Kruczek, Alexander, and Harris (2005) reports that there are a number of middle school students who experience difficulty making the transition from childhood to early adolescence and may be described as high-risk. As a result, the After-School Counseling Program was implemented at Wilson Middle School. It provided a much-needed service, but was frustrating because the changes noted in the middle school students seemed small, slow, and hard-won.

Benefits and Negative Aspects of After-School Programs

According to Shumow (2001), children from high-risk backgrounds have both the most to gain from after-school programs in terms of educational opportunity and the least

access to the programs. Research findings also indicate that if educational benefits are the goal of after-school programs, then attention needs to be focused on the quality of programs and the activities that are offered (Shumow, 2001). For example, Saint Paul Public Schools sought and received a three-year, federally funded grant to establish community learning centers, known as Pathways to Progress. These centers provide coordinated expanded day and expanded year learning opportunities for students, families, and community members in Saint Paul from June 2000 through May 2003. Pathways was an integrated program and provided a seamless connection between after-school programming and the regular school day. It was not viewed by the school staff as a separate, isolated program, but rather was incorporated into the school environment. English and Math teachers employed by eight schools chosen by the St. Paul Public School district completed surveys on over 1,100 Pathways' students and reported that four of every five Pathways students showed improved habits and skills. Individual interviews of Pathways' parents and school principals indicated high levels of satisfaction with the Pathways program. In contrast, there were no measurable differences between participants and non-participants with regards to discipline (Wahlstrom, Sheldon, & Murphy, 2004).

Another type of after-school program is The After-School Corporation (TASC). The program began its sixth year of operation in New York City, working with public and private partners to develop and support school-based services for public-school students in the elementary and secondary grades. TASC has worked to increase the availability of after-school opportunities and enhance the quality by incorporating research-based components that are associated with student success and program

sustainability (Reisner, White, Russell & Birmingham, 2004). According to the TASC evaluation, school principals reported significant benefits for students who participated in TASC projects and an analyses of data on academic performance and school attendance showed that participation in TASC activities was linked to improvements in both areas, especially for students who participated regularly in TASC programming over two consecutive years. Interviews with after-school staff and site coordinators revealed many unexpected benefits as well as negative consequences of hiring teachers from the regular school day. The most beneficial was that regular-day teachers brought experiences regarding academic and developmental needs and were more likely to have access to school resources. In contrast, programs desiring to offer an alternative experience had difficulty shaping the tone of students-staff interaction; staff behaviors often were synonymous to regular-school day interactions and activities. Teacher exhaustion and salary issues were also barriers that interfered with the success of the TASC program. In addition, The Harvard University Family Research Project (2004) reported that low attendance was the norm for middle and high school youth due to busy schedules and family lives, claims of boredom, or the desire for freedom.

Results of a study conducted by Meehan, Cowley, Chadwick, Schumaker, and Hauser (2004) indicates that the Extended School Services (ESS) program appears to have increased academic achievement at 18 schools (six elementary, six middle, and six high schools) in the Kentucky Public School District. The ESS program extends the school day, week, or year for students at risk of academic failure and is designed to be an integral part of each school's regular academic program. Results indicate that the Extended School Services (ESS) program appears to have increased academic

achievement. Teachers report that students are performing better in school and that study skills and increased motivation to learn is a result of participation in ESS. In contrast, student transportation, funding, staffing, parental communication, and student motivation have been identified as barriers to maximum success (Cowley, Meehan, Finch, & Blake, 2002).

Based on studies aimed at identifying strategies for closing the achievement gaps, Miller and Snow (2004), indicate that Out-of-School-Time (OST) strategies can be effective at preventing academic loss among low-achieving students, especially during the summer months. To help students attain proficiency in reading, many educators are looking for effective programs to mitigate summer learning loss, remediate skill deficiencies, accelerate learning, and address the emotional and social needs of students. In contrast, Hausner (2000) found that students do not sustain learning gains over time. The experimental group participated in the Project Accelerated Literacy (PAL) program, an extended day intervention; the control group participated only in the half-day kindergarten program. A statistically significant difference was found prior to the intervention between control and experimental groups. After 30 weeks of intervention, the difference between the two groups was no longer statistically significant except in Writing Vocabulary. Two years later, the students were tested for reading comprehension and cognitive ability based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Cognitive Ability Test. Findings suggest that at-risk students need more than one literacy intervention to retain the gains made in their kindergarten year (Hausner, 2000).

According to Gardner, Cartledge, Seidl, Woolsey, Schley, and Utley (2001), after-school programs offer such advantages as the opportunity for concerned and talented

individuals who may be unavailable to make contributions during traditional school hours to benefit students at-risk for failure. For example, professional and employed African-American adult males are highly sought mentors for African-American at-risk students. In addition, after-school programs have been identified as a deterrent away from television and dangers of urban streets and have been found to have a positive impact regarding school success. The Mt. Olivet After-School Program, peer-mediated interventions for at-risk students was established by the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, a large predominately African-American church in an urban setting. The primary focus of the after-school program was to serve as a catalyst in the development of young urban at-risk students. Fifteen African-American males were identified during the course of the year to participate in the program. Results concluded that the peer-mediated interventions improve reading and math skills of students participating in the after-school program (Gardner, et al., 2001).

Statement of the Problem

American schools are often in the forefront of discussion for parents, teachers, business people, and students. While many school conditions are often discussed, the public, along with legislators, is demanding improvement in children's academic achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, commonly known as NCLB, aims to improve the performance of U.S. primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools. By the 2013-2014 school year, NCLB requires that all children will be at the proficient level on state testing.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act has played a powerful role regarding academic achievement and accountability. NCLB requires Title I schools to provide supplemental services if schools fail to reach their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goal for three years in a row. Educators have implied that when children fall behind in one or more content areas, there may not be sufficient time in the school day to offer the necessary remedial instruction. A wealth of research on after-school programs has been conducted over the years. These studies are as varied as the programs themselves. Most of the studies have focused on a specific program or program type, but all have shared the goal of determining effective strategies of particular after-school programs. Due to the current NCLB Act and high-stakes testing, raising student academic achievement has put pressure on educators to closely examine the effects of after-school programs. Therefore, the purpose for this study is to determine strategies used for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs.

<div align="center">Research Question</div>

The research question for this study is as follows: What strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs?

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

1. There were other variables associated with strategies used for effective implementation of after-school programs that this study did not measure such as funding availability.

2. The study was impacted by the limited number of after-school programs that participated in the study.

3. The study was impacted by the number of years that participants served in the after-school program.

<div align="center">Delimitations</div>

1. The study included teachers and directors of after-school programs in the Northeast Georgia counties only.

2. The research was limited to middle schools.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

This study is significant in several dimensions. First, the study should be of interest to public school systems throughout the nation. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 mandates that by 2013-14 all students will at minimum, attain proficiency in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). While districts are faced with increasing pressure for students to achieve, constraints within the school day make it difficult to provide some students the time to become proficient learners. Districts are faced with increasing pressure for schools to improve and students to achieve. The number of schools identified by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act as "in need of improvement" and the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have caused decision makers to seek solutions that will improve academic achievement, and one of the places they are looking is outside the regular school day.

As new federal and state standards and school accountability issues increase, the focus of effective extended learning time is becoming more crucial. In addition, approximately 40 percent of Title I schools use some portion of Title I funds to extend academic support.

At the state level, the Georgia Department of Education benefited from a comprehensive investigation regarding strategies used for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. In the past, states have been required to identify schools in need of improvement. Due to NCLB legislation, the focus shifted from looking at aggregate student scores to looking at student performance in specific content areas (Reading and Mathematics) and by sub-groups. These new requirements make it impossible for states to overlook the performance of some students by averaging the scores of all students.

This study was significant to local school board members and superintendents that must approve budgets regarding after-school programs. The study provided statewide insight into the effectiveness of after-school programs.

The researcher's findings provided principals and teachers with suggested information regarding after-school programs and student academic achievement. In addition, information about specific learning and teaching strategies promote significant changes in after-school programs in the state of Georgia.

This study was significant to the researcher because it explained organization and structure as they relate to academic achievement in after-school programs. It was beneficial to know how respective middle schools in Georgia utilized extended learning time and its impact on student achievement. Finally, conducting this survey allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain valuable insight by networking with other middle schools that are integrating effective after-school programs.

Procedures

Research Design

In order to answer the research question incorporated in this study, the researcher used a qualitative research design. The qualitative method of study allowed participants to give more-in-depth discussion than could be obtained by use of a quantitative research instrument. The purpose of the structured interviews was to identify strategies used for effective implementation of middle school's after-school programs. The structured interviews allowed the researcher to obtain richer qualitative data as opposed to random information.

Population

The population for this research study included educators from middle schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Agency (RESA) area. The participants were a purposive sample consisting of a total of two after-school directors, two additional individuals that were directly linked to the after-school program and two focus groups. The focus groups consisted of three to five individuals in each group that were also directly involved in the after-school programs. No more than one middle school was selected from the same system to avoid repetition of responses. Directors and focus groups were not selected from the same system.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted the study by utilizing structured interviews of selected participants by the researcher. The structured interviews consisted of eleven open-ended sub-questions or statements that were organized into the following four categories: goal(s), structure and organization, relationship to AYP, and administrative support. The

sub-questions, developed by the researcher, required selected after-school directors and teachers to respond according to their beliefs and experiences regarding effective strategies for implementation of after-school programs. A system curriculum director, two after-school teachers, a reading coach, and a middle school assistant principal were asked to review and provide suggestions regarding interview questions and statements.

Data Collection

The procedures for this study began with gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Next, the researcher used information collected from the Northeast Georgia (NEGA) Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) to determine preliminary information designed to help draw a purposive sample. The researcher sent a letter of intent to all Northeast Georgia RESA middle school principals requesting their school's participation and explained how this research may be used to impact student achievement. The researcher made telephone contact with the selected schools that met the requirements of the purposeful sample and began to logistically determine a timetable for the in-depth interviewing of each participant.

The next phase of the study began with the in-depth individual interviews and focus groups conducted by the researcher. Data was electronically recorded on a cassette recorder. A back-up recorder was available in case of equipment failure. The interviewer also took notes during the interviews. Interview questions were mailed three days prior to interviews for participants to review the eleven open-ended sub-questions that would constitute the actual tape recorded portion. During the interviews, participants were probed to allow each one an opportunity to explain their answers. Participants were informed that all data gathered would remain confidential and securely stored under lock

and key by the researcher. All tapes and transcribed scripts were destroyed upon

completion of the research project. A letter of appreciation was sent to the participants

following the interviews. Results of the research were made available by request to

participating individuals.

Data Analysis

A qualitative research design was used to analyze data gathered from the in-depth

interviews. The interview tapes were transcribed and reviewed by a professional court

legal transcriptionist. Once all information was gathered, the researcher analyzed the

data and developed a system to find patterns, themes, and categories within the data.

The researcher currently serves as the after-school director and to eliminate biases,

the researcher was careful to avoid verbal or non-verbal communication that would

possibly influence the responses of the participants

Summary

Within the last decade, after-school programs have moved from the periphery to the

center of the national education policy debate. The demand for after-school care and a

new focus on test-based accountability are the two primary reasons. Even though

researchers have data showing systems are handling after-school programs in different

ways, it is apparent that additional learning time outside the regular school day is

necessary. While the procedures may be different, the goal of any after-school program

is still the same: to improve schools and increase academic achievement for all students.

With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, Georgia educators

are pressured to provide additional academic support outside the school day.

After-school programs continue to evolve with changing curriculum, teacher improvement initiatives, standards, accountability models and more. The role of the after-school program takes on greater urgency as accountability becomes more prevalent and a potential shortage of financial resources and teachers are projected through data. There is a need for additional research to show what strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs.

The researcher used a purposive sample consisting of after-school coordinators from two middle schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) and two focus groups, one from each middle school. From the purposive sample, a snowball sample was obtained; a number of individuals who have the characteristics in which the researcher was interested was identified. These individuals were used as informants to put the researcher in touch with others who qualified to be interviewed. The researcher conducted structured interviews to identify strategies that were useful for effective implementation of middle schools after-school programs. The open-ended questions provided information that offered the researcher a deeper understanding regarding strategies that are useful in the effective implementation of middle schools after-school programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine what strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. There is limited research on how after-school programs improve the test scores of students who are not meeting state standards as defined by the Georgia Criteria Referenced Test (CRCT). Therefore, current research provides no clear indication of the strategies that are useful in implementing effective after-school programs that enhance student achievement in order to attain acceptable standardized test scores. Data was collected through in-depth structured individual interviews and focus groups.

As schools focus on preparing students with the academic skills necessary for academic success, attention is increasingly turning to the experiences of children and youth in their out of school time. After-school, week-end, and summer programs offer opportunities to complement and enhance the academic learning that takes place in school. In addition to academics, these programs also engage children and youth in a variety of social and recreational activities. Unfortunately, too many at-risk youth do not have access to youth-serving organizations. In contrast, all school age children have access to schools and, for the most part, parents are comfortable sending their children to them. After-school programs are increasingly becoming the solution policymakers suggest for youth problems such as poor academic achievement, gang participation, violence and drug use. After-school programs provide many strengths as well as unique challenges that should be taken into consideration as programs are planned and funded.

This chapter describes program realities and discusses issues that educators and policymakers need to consider when shaping their after-school initiatives.

The History of After-School Programs

Research has found that the after-school hours from 3:00p.m. to 6:00p.m. are the peak period for experimentation with illegal substances, sex, and juvenile crime. Other research has found that adult-supervised after-school programs can dramatically cut those risks and also benefit children in need of academic enrichment and extracurricular opportunities (Gayl, 2004). The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which holds schools accountable for ensuring that students meet high standards, makes providing additional learning time significant. Struggling students often need additional support to meet the minimum state expectations, and educators continue to develop after-school programs that can help them. Despite the growing need of after-school programs, funding and support remain obstacles that continue to complicate after-school initiatives.

Structured activities and services for children outside of school have been around for more than a century, but until the mid-1990s, the federal government had little formal involvement in after-school programs (Gayl, 2004). A confluence of factors changed all of this in the mid-nineties such as more parents entering the workforce which created a greater need for adult-supervised activities. In addition, an emerging field of research on the benefits to deter youth crime and increase social and academic skills led to greater public interest in after-school programs. Finally, the growing educational standards and accountability movement in many states favored the development of after-school supports to help children achieve. For example, legislators in California established the first statewide after-school program in 1998, the After-School Learning and Safe

Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, to provide literacy, academic enrichment support, and safe, constructive alternatives for students in kindergarten through ninth grade. Georgia created a statewide after-school initiative for middle school students in 1994 called the 3:00 Project. The program was designed to provide safety for children, encourage collaboration of community resources, and improve the academic success of participating students. In Delaware in 1996, then-Governor Tom Carper invested $20 million in extra instructional time for low-performing students to improve their academic performance. In 1994, the federal government introduced the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Act (21st CCLC) to provide grants to rural and inner-city public schools for "projects that benefit the educational, health, social service, cultural, and recreational needs of a rural or inner city community". The idea was to open up schools for broader use by the community. Increased attention to after-school issues in the private sector helped to generate greater support. The Mott Foundation partnered with the U.S. Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to 21st CCLC program grant recipients. In addition, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund launched their own initiative to support creation of sixty after-school programs in twenty communities around the country. The momentum grew to expand child care and development services outside of school and officials in the Clinton administration seized upon the 21st CCLC program as a vehicle to promote their after-school agenda. The emphasis on student achievement in NCLB changed the focus of the 21st CCLC program to expanding "academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low-performing schools (Gayl, 2004).

School Attitudes, Behaviors, and Academic Achievement

Tannenbaum and Brown-Welty (2006) found that students participating in the service-learning component of the after-school program had greater improvement in their grade point averages and conduct grades and were less likely to be suspended than students who did not participate in the service-learning component. According to Tannenbaum and Brown-Welty (2006), educators continually seek effective strategies to address the educational needs of students. Two popular strategies are service-learning and after-school programs. Service-learning is defined as a form of experiential education that helps all students at all levels integrate academic curriculum with participation in worthwhile activities such as organized community service. After-school programs have also grown in popularity and a number of studies have investigated after-school programs and found evidence of academic and social improvement.

Tannenbaum and Brown-Welty (2006) found that service-learning and after-school programs can be effective strategies for improving academic and social behavior, the question that is not as well understood is whether these benefits are effective when the two strategies are combined. The intent of the study was to compare the students at the four schools who participated in the service-learning component with the students in the after-school program who did not. The study utilized a historical database and compared two groups of students participating in an after-school program at four elementary schools. Six hundred students participated in the after-school programs at these four elementary schools. The database contained demographic information on each student as well as academic performance and social behavior information. Academic performance was measured based on SAT9 math and reading scores, promotion rates,

and overall GPAs. As measures of social behavior, this study used the number of absences, suspensions, and conduct grades. Tannenbaum and Brown-Welty (2006) suggests that embedding a service-learning component into an after-school program may be a way to leverage the benefits of the two pedagogies. At the same time, given the limitations of the study (in particular the process used to select students for the service-learning group and the small sample size) additional studies are needed.

According to Munoz (2002), accountability is one of the most important approaches to help the right use of collective funds in public education. Through increased surveillance, it is essential to insist that the scarce tax dollars are held accountable for the products they produce through some valid form of student growth measurement. This study examined an approach to accountability that incorporated input and output variables. The purpose was to examine after-school programs and their impact on non-cognitive and cognitive measures such as attendance, suspensions, and grade point average associated with school performance among poor, inner city students in Louisville, Kentucky. Community leaning center programs were established in the intervention schools. The programs offered enrichment and support activities, community involvement, services to parents and other community members, extended school hours, and core educational services. The participants included 636 participating elementary and secondary school students that were divided into two groups: 241 regular program attendees and 395 non-regular attendees. Results of the study conducted by Munoz (2002) indicate a positive relationship between the total number of visits and improvement in attendance at school. A positive correlation trend was observed for those students with higher participation in the area of suspensions and academic performance.

According to Munoz (2002), after-school programs are considered a necessity in our society for academic, social, emotional, physical, and safety reasons. They no longer just serve the privileged few who have physical or fine art talents, or who come from well-to-do families. The after-school programs can serve thousands of families in the communities by encouraging improved economic life and community safety. The Community Learning Center (CLC) program has become a powerful model of after-school programs that demonstrates how school can provide expanded support for children and their families in the community.

Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdmy, Rosenberg, et al., (2003) present the first-year findings from an evaluation of the National Evaluation of the 21st-Century Learning Centers Program. In an era when most parents work, many Americans want their children to have access to safe and supervised after-school activities that can help develop academic, personal, and social skills.

In 1994, Congress authorized the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers (21st-Century) program to open up schools for broader use by their communities. In 1998, the program was refocused on supporting schools to provide school-based academic and recreational activities after-school and during other times when schools were not in regular session. Programs operate in public school buildings and offer academic, recreational, and cultural activities during after-school hours. A distinguishing characteristic of 21st-Century programs is the inclusion of academic activities.

This study is one of the few that is consistent with the principles of scientifically based research set out in the No Child Left Behind Act. The evaluation's design includes a middle school study and an elementary school study. The middle school study is based

on a nationally representative sample of after-school programs and participants and a matched comparison group of students which is similar to the program participant group. Similar students were identified in host schools or in other schools in the participating districts. Thirty-four school districts and 62 centers in the districts are included in the study (Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdmy, Rosenberg, et al., 2003).

The elementary school study uses random assignment of students to treatment and control groups. The study involved 14 school districts and 34 centers. Results are from seven school districts selected in the first year of study; another seven school districts were added in the second year of the study. The findings are based on one year of data collected in school year 2000-2001 from students, parents, teachers, principals, program staff members, and school records. Evaluators collected baseline and follow-up data for 4, 400 middle school students and 1,000 elementary school students, and conducted site visits, lasting between two and four days, to all grantees at least once.

Middle school programs in the study usually offered the following activities:

- Academic help primarily supervised daily homework sessions. In spite of the focus on homework, fewer than 38 percent of the students said that the centers were a good place to get homework done. Site visitors observed that homework sessions usually were organized with students in large groups proctored by teachers or other staff members, with students talking to each other and staff members not checking the homework for quality or completeness.

- Recreation activities, such as using the gym, playing board games, or using computers were often part of the daily schedule.

- Cultural and interpersonal enrichment, including crafts, drama, music, mentoring,

   role modeling and conflict resolution were offered most days of the week.

Officials from the host school or district oversaw most middle school programs. Program

directors usually had supervisory and administrative roles, while program coordinators

handled day-to-day details of the centers. Nearly all other staff members were directly

involved in student activities or instruction and spent most of their time working with

students. Middle school students in the study attended for 32 days, about one day week,

during the 2000-2001 school year. Low attendance was attributed to the lack of

interesting or appealing activities and to competition from other extra-curricular

activities.

A typical elementary school center is open five days a week for two and a half hours

per day. About 80 students participate everyday, with most participating three or four

times a week. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students participate in a homework session;

kindergarten, first, and second grade students have "story time." To participate in other

recreational and enrichment activities, students must attend the homework session or

story time. Recreational and enrichment activities include arts and crafts, games,

computers, and team sports. Enrichment activities include music, drama, and dance.

Homework assistance and access to computers are provided throughout the year

(Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdumy, Rosenberg, et al., 2003).

The first-year findings revealed limited academic impact at the elementary and the

middle school levels. At the elementary level, reading test scores and grades in most

subject areas were not higher for program participants than for similar students not

attending the program. For middle school students, grades in most subject areas were not

different than for similar students not attending the 21st-Century program. Math grades were higher for 21st-Century participants, but the overall difference was small. In addition, on average, programs had no impact on whether students in the program to do or complete the homework assigned. Additional analyses found that participants that attended more frequently at the elementary and middle school levels did not have higher academic outcomes compared with student that attended less frequently. Other analyses did not find statistically significant relationships between program characteristics, including program maturity, and academic impacts (Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdumy, Rosenberg, et al., 2003).

Results also indicate that programs reduced the proportion of students being cared for by parents and by older siblings, and increased the proportion of students being cared for by non-parent adults. The net effect was to increase the proportion of students being cared for by an adult (either a parent or a non-parent adult), by reducing the proportion being cared for by an older sibling. Programs did not reduce the percentage of students in self-care who are commonly referred to as "latchkey" children. Programs did not increase students' feeling of safety after school. At the middle school level, participants were more likely to report drug activity or more likely to have their property damaged. At the middle school level, programs were associated with increased parent involvement at their child's school. Parents of elementary school level program participants were more likely to help their child with homework or ask about things they were doing in class. Programs had no impacts on developmental outcomes, such as whether students felt they were better able to plan, set goals, or work with a team (Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdumy, Rosenberg, et al., 2003). Overall, the 21st-Century

program has shown small differences nationally among various subgroups participating in the program.

According to Belden Russonello and Stewart (2001), the number of children with two working parents or in single-parent households has increased, so has the need for safe and nurturing environments during the hours between the close of the school day and parents' return from work. Along with concerns about juvenile violence an low student achievement, the changing dynamics of the American family have increased the pressure on public schools to provide after-school programs (ASPs). These programs can help children learn positive social skills and receive help with academic subjects in safe, caring, and enjoyable environments.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has undertaken a landmark project to extend awareness and the use of standards for quality school-age childcare, and to determine ways to assist in the expansion of high quality after-school programs. Belden Russonello and Stewart (BRS) conducted a national study in which 800 principals of public schools were surveyed in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The survey was developed with the following research objectives:

- To document the prevalence and characteristics of after-school programs in elementary and middle schools;
- To identify what principals consider the successes and challenges facing their after-school programs; and
- To help the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) identify ways it can help its members and non-members strengthen, maintain, or establish after-school programs.

Half of the telephone interviews were conducted with principals who are members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) the other half were non-members. A team of professional, fully trained telephone interviewers administered the survey after two pre-tests were conducted on the survey.

The research found that after-school programs are now prevalent around the country. The principals see their programs as very successful and an important aspect of their school. Most report that their after-school care success rests on their providing academic support to students and a safe place for children during the after-school hours. Unfortunately, many of these programs are potentially fragile. A majority of the after-school programs have only recently been established and the elementary and middle-school principals report funding and staff challenges to keeping them functioning. Looking to the future, principals express a desire to expand their programs to serve more students and to provide more activities. The main barriers standing in their way are finding enough funding and adequate staff (Belden Russonello & Stewart, 2001).

Results of a study conducted by Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke (2005), identified shared characteristics regarding after-school programs. The study examined high-performing after-school projects funded by The After-School Corporation (TASC), to determine what characteristics, if any, these projects shared. Evaluators reanalyzed student performance data to identify projects where the TASC after-school program was likely to have contributed to improvements in students' academic achievement. Once the ten projects were identified, evaluators visited each project to learn more about program structures and practices and whether the ten projects shared common features (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005).

Across the ten projects, evaluators found shared characteristics around programming, staffing, and support systems. For many participants, the after-school project provided their first exposure to enrichment activities such as dance, music, art, and organized sports. The after-school project created opportunities to build participants' literacy skills and integrated a focus on mastery into arts-based activities. In addition, the process of intentional relationship-building began with each project fostering positive relationships with the host school, followed by steps to set a positive tone with staff through orientation, training, and establishment of participant norms. Regarding leadership, the site coordinators at these high performing projects brought with them experience in youth development and a strong connection to the community, the children, and the families they served. Last, the relationships between after-school projects and their sponsors built the foundation for the projects' success and sustainability (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005).

According to Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke (2005), even though high performing after-school projects were identified through their participants' gains on Math and English and Language Arts state and citywide tests; the projects did not share a targeted focus on academics. Projects contributed their participants' learning gains by providing a base of opportunities and supports.

<div align="center">Social Skills and Self-Confidence</div>

Evidence is mounting that where and how youth spend their time outside of normal school hours has important implications for their development. As a result, there has been increasing interest in after-school programs (ASPs) that can provide youth with a safe and supportive adult-supervised environment and offer them activities and

experiences that promote academic, personal, social and recreational development. Previous reviews have concentrated on the academic benefits; however, the personal and social benefits have been somewhat overlooked. According to Durlack and Weissberg, (2007) no review has been conducted to evaluate systematically the impact of after-school programs that attempt to enhance youths' personal and social skills, identify the nature and magnitude of the outcomes of such programs, and describe the features that characterize effective programs.

Durlack and Weissberg (2007) defined after-school programs as one or more activities that: (1) operated during at least part of the school year; (2) occurred outside of normal school hours; and (3) were supervised or in some way monitored by adults. In addition, the after-school program was required to include as one of its goals the development of one or more personal or social skills such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-control, leadership, responsible decision-making, and enhancement of self-esteem. Reports also had to have a control group and present sufficient information so that effect sizes could be calculated. The study sample included results from seventy-three after-school programs. A coding system was developed and three primary methodological features were coded: use of a randomized design, problems with attrition and the reliability of the outcome measure. Data for outcomes were grouped into eight categories. Two of these assessed feelings and attitudes (child self-perceptions and bonding to school); three were indicators of behavioral adjustment (positive social behaviors, problem behaviors and drug use); and three assessed aspects of school performance (performance on achievement tests, grades and school attendance). Two criteria were established related to the training process and two criteria related to program

content. The training process was coded to whether or not a program was sequenced to achieve a sequenced set of objectives and if the program used active forms of learning to help youth learn. Evidence from many educational and psychosocial interventions indicates that the most effective and efficient teaching strategies for many youth emphasize active forms of learning. Young people learn best by doing (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Results of this study indicate that after-school programs have an overall positive and statistically significant impact on participating youth, but also suggest the need to search for variables that explain the variability in program impact. The second major finding is that youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. School attendance is the only outcome that failed to reach statistical significance. The third major finding is that programs that used evidence-based skill training procedures were the only types of programs associated with positive outcomes. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) conclude that after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills have an overall positive and statistically significant impact on participating youth. The finding that improvements occur in multiple domains of young people's lives offer strong support for the value of after-school programs.

<center>Effective Curriculum Related Strategies</center>

In 2003 Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted a research synthesis of available rigorous research from 1984 onward that considered whether after-school strategies improved the mathematics and reading achievement of low-achieving and at-risk students. These studies specifically examined the effectiveness

of a program, practice, or strategy and the results of the study served as the foundation for

the development of the mathematics practices. Development was also informed by

additional research related to mathematics instruction and after-school programming,

multiple site visit observations, and the professional knowledge and expertise of the

developers. In order to define best practices, McREL first reviewed what research says

about best practices in after-school and in mathematics instruction. Pulling from these

two areas, MCREL discovered three prominent ideas that add rigor to the intentional

integration of mathematics learning and youth development. These key ideas include:

encouraging problem solving, developing and supporting math talk, and emphasizing

working together. According to Briggs-Hale, Judd, Martindill, and Parsley (2006) after-

school programs were originally designed to meet non-academic needs of students. Due

to accountability expectations, many after-school programs are expanding their focus to

include support for students' academic growth. Recognizing the needs in the field

resulting from this shift, the U.S. Department of Education specifically funded the

National Partnership to provide models, tools, and assistance to help grantees design,

implement, and sustain effective academically-oriented programs. One of the tools the

National Partnership developed is an online After-school Training Toolkit designed to

provide after-school practitioners with a wealth of guidance for integrating academically

enriching activities. Based on studies aimed at identifying best practices in mathematics

after-school initiatives, Briggs-Hale, Judd, Martindill and Parley (2006) indicate that the

following seven best practices in mathematics after-school programs have been identified

to date: (1) Finding Math, (2) Math Centers, (3) Math Games, (4) Math Tools, (5) Math

Tutoring, (6) Family Connections, and (7) Math Projects. In the mathematics portion of

the toolkit, a brief description of each practice, a summary of the literature that supports it and examples of the practice in action are included. The Toolkit also provides implementation considerations and related resources to support each practice.

There continues to be considerable debate on the best approach to transforming the learning opportunities in the after-school setting. Seidel, Aryeh, and Steinberg (2002), explore the potential role of project-based and experiential learning. Some of the key elements identified to this approach to curriculum and instruction are most-often characterized by:

- A series of activities with a sustained focus over time and linked to an outcome of significance,

- A group effort that often moves beyond the walls of the classroom or after-school, into the community for research, presentations, etc.,

- Clear learning goals that often embrace academic, social, and meta-cognitive dimensions simultaneously,

- Assessment that is on-going with frequent opportunities for students to receive and provide feed-back as the work is developing.

Project-based learning is not characterized by students sitting at desks, passively receiving information from teachers who are at the front of the room talking. Project-based and experiential learning build on the notion that children are capable intellectually and socially of learning, but must have the opportunity to take an active role in their own learning. Seidel, Aryeh, and Steinberg (2002) identified effective project-based and experiential learning experiences from across the nation. Among the programs identified which offer effective project-based or experiential learning experiences were: Tony

Streit's Street-Level Youth Medial in Chicago, which seeks to address the "very hard-to-measure social and emotional needs of kids who are dismissed by the schools as academically challenged"; Baltimore Clayworks, which offers quality educational arts experienced in after-school settings to elementary, middle school, and older teen youth from underserved area of the city who might otherwise be unsupervised. In New York there is a strong initiative for systemic implementation of project-based learning, which can be seen in the Metro Center's pilot programs. These pilot programs can be a significant resource as they underscore the potential for systematizing project-based or experiential learning experiences in Boston's after-schools. Seidel, Aryeh, and Steinberg (20002) researched programs based both in Boston, across the nation, and worldwide. The Intel Computer Clubhouse is an after-school learning environment designed to give underserved youth the opportunity to explore their own interests and become confident learners through the use of technology. Another program reaching youth both locally and nationally is "Design It! Engineering in After-School Programs," as an effort, funded by the National Science Foundation, to introduce design engineering to young people.

The investigation led the researchers to several local after-school programs in Boston that offer learning experiences which can be described as project-based or experiential. Among those examined in depth were: Boston's Food Project is a program that hires young people to work on farms and tow grow, cook, serve, and package and sell or distribute for free the food that they harvest. The Boys and Girls Clubs was also referenced as a local program that highlights some of the essential attributes of successful systemic efforts to support and nurture project-based learning in after-schools. The only truly systemic initiative supporting project-like work in Boston's after-schools that was

found by the researchers is the Children's Museum's initiative, beginning this year to distribute CATS (Culture, Arts, Technology, and Science) Kits to every after-school program in Boston.

Through interviews and focus groups, Seidel, Aryeh, and Steinberg (2002) identified several critical resources for assisting efforts to implement project-based and experiential learning in the after-schools. The resource named by the respondents as most urgently needed was additional financial support. Most importantly, funding is necessary to provide training for staff members who have not been formally trained. A consistent need for centralized resources was heard. For example, program coordinators wanted to know who and which organizations had resources that were available to after-school programs. Nearly all of the leaders expressed a desire for a more concrete understanding and definition of project-based and experiential learning; as well as access to information about curriculum that is being implemented at other project-based after schools across the country.

Despite a growing consensus that Boston children need educational opportunities in the after-school setting, there remains great uncertainty regarding best practices. Further undermining the development of strong project-based learning programs in after-schools is the general confusion many after-school staff have about just what is or is not a project. Clear articulations of the qualities of project-based learning experiences can, hopefully, help after-school staff see ways in which their work is project-like and, at the same time, suggest ways in which they can continually evolve and deepen their project work (Seidel, Aryeh & Steinberg, 2002).

According to Bhanpuri (1998), The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act, provides U.S. Department Education funding for after-school programs. This funding administered to grantees is geared toward assisting after-school programs provide academic enrichment, tutoring, technology education, youth development activities, character education, drug and violence prevention, counseling, art and music, and recreation for children and youth in low-performing schools (Bhanpuri, 2005). One goal of after-school programs is to provide a safe and productive environment for students during the out-of-school hours, especially through academic enrichment opportunities and youth development activities. In order to reach this goal, issues of equity, access, and quality should be important considerations for after-school programs. Although many after-school programs have strengthened their academic focus and are having a positive impact on student achievement, there are still student populations that need to be reached and programs that need equitable resources and reinforcements. The NCLB Act requires states to give absolute priority for 21st CCLC grants to programs that will serve primarily students who attend schools with high concentrations of poor students, and competitive priority to programs that serve students in low-performing schools.

Based on a review conducted by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) – (Hall & Israel, 2004) indicate that there is sufficient evidence in the research literature that appropriate use of technology-based learning strategies can enhance the learning experience and lead to measurable academic improvements. Research on the use of technology in after-school programs is thin. Most of the literature on after-school programs and technology explores strategies for using technology to support learning and

offers approaches for integrating technology into teen programs. It would seem that one of the most critical roles technology can play in supporting academic achievement is to offer an attractive entry into after-school activities. For example, the Intel Computer Clubhouse is an after-school learning environment designed to give underserved youth the opportunity to explore their own interests and become confident learners through the use of technology (Seidel, Aryeh, & Steinberg, 2002).

According to Hall and Israel (2004), there is a great need for research about after-school programs that use technology-based activities as a central program component. Since learning technologies change so rapidly, it is difficult for research studies to keep pace. While technology-based strategies have been studied in the traditional classroom, there is little information to suggest how applicable these findings are to after-school programs. After-school programs can function in ways very different from traditional classroom activities and learning, such as mixed-age groups, small-group learning, flexible schedules, and real-world connections. Future research should continue consider the unique components and characteristics of after-school programs and how these programs relate to the implementation of technology-based learning strategies.

Results of a study conducted by Duffett, Johnson, Farkas, Kung, and Amber (2004), indicates that there is compelling evidence that organized, structured activities during the after-school hours play a valuable and a highly valued role in the nation's young people, but low-income and minority families are far more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality, affordability, and availability of options in their community.

The findings are based on telephone interviews with 609 students in grades 6 through 12; interviews averaged 15 minutes in length. Similarly, telephone interviews with 1,003

parents or guardians of students in grades K through 12 were conducted; interviews averaged 19 minutes in length. Respondents were selected through a standard, random-digit-dialing technology. As in all surveys, question order and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including pre-testing the survey instruments and randomizing the order in which some questions and answer categories were read. In addition, ten focus groups were conducted with parents and students.

According to Duffett, Johnson, Farkas, Kung, and Amber (2004), the vast majority of young people believe that kids are better off when their plates are full. Youngsters who participate in after-school programs give them high ratings for being fun and educational and being good places to make friends. Still, nearly 3 in 10 say they are home alone after-school at least three days a week, while about 1 in 5 complain their schedules are too hectic. Finding 2 reveals that the vast majority of students draw an explicit connection between kids being bored and kids getting into trouble. While most young people believe their own town could provide more options, they are more likely to point to lack of motivation as the main reason more kids don't participate in organized activities. Regarding option satisfaction, most families are content with how their child spends after-school time; minority and low-income families are significantly less likely to be satisfied with their options. Both groups, the haves and the have-nots, indicate their communities could do much more for kids and that keeping youngsters busy in the summer months is difficult. In addition, despite increased pressures on students to reach high academic standards, relatively small numbers of parents are looking for greater emphasis on academic success. Again, low-income and minority families are exceptions,

both groups are considerably more likely to want activities that emphasize academic learning. The final finding indicates that both youngsters and parents see after-school activities in an overall positive light, but the study did reveal several areas where the contrast between what parents think and what young people actually say is more troubling. For example, most parents say their own kids don't do much hanging out at the mall; yet more than half of kids say they do. Parents also indicated that they count on cell phones to know where there kids are, in contrast, high numbers of youngsters admit they have told their parents they were in one place when they were really in another.

According to Duffet, Johnson, Farkas, Kung, and Ott (2004), experts will debate what is best for kids in after-school hours, but ultimately it is the parents and kids themselves who make choices about that time will be spent. After-school programs are voluntary activities and the parents and kids are the "selective consumers" of these activities.

<div align="center">After-School Program Evaluations</div>

According to Bhanpuri (2005), after-school programs are operated by an established school, with teachers, after-school staff, parents, and community volunteers administering the curriculum and watching over students. Current research on after-school programs is based primarily on program evaluations. Educators and policymakers must keep in mind issues of access and equity by addressing which students are being served and how equitable is the quality of the programs across centers. After-school programs that provide high-quality programming are more likely to show increased student achievement than centers providing poorer quality programming.

Many after-school programs show mixed results in terms of their overall effectiveness (Bhanpuri, 2005). After-school staff often does not receive proper training

in how to link after-school time with in-class learning, effective classroom management, and student behavioral issues. To improve this situation, technical assistance could be better used in after-school programming and management through program evaluations, site visits to schools, and assistance with curriculum alignment. Technical assistance is being offered to after-school programs in diverse ways throughout the country. For example, in 2001, the national After-school Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC) was formed as a coalition with many other departments and emphasized the importance of state after-school networks in providing the following technical assistance:

- Coordinating multiple, currently funded, after-school efforts.

- Providing, brokering, and coordinating training and technical assistance for programs within each state.

- Providing a support network for peer learning and best practice.

- Building public support and action in every community to provide after-school programs in each state.

- Developing and maintaining partnerships, including those that will help more comprehensive after-school policies.

The issues of access, equity, and quality in after-school programming continue to emerge as important factors in creating systems that will promote academic achievement opportunities. Technical assistance at the state and local levels will play an important role in sustaining and developing effective after-school programs (Bhanpuri, 2005).

A study conducted by Fashola (1998), identifies and reviews thirty-four programs that have been used as after-school programs by schools and/or communities. Five categories of programs are reviewed:

- Language arts after-school programs,

- study skills programs,

- academic programs in other curricular areas,

- tutoring programs for reading, and

- community-based programs.

According to Fashola (1998), a lot of emphasis has been placed on after-school programs for three primary reasons. First, attendance in after-school programs can provide children with supervision during a time when many might be exposed to and engage in more anti-social and destructive behaviors. Second, after-school program can provide enriching experiences tht broaden children's perspectives and improve their socialization. Third, and a more recent emphasis, after-school programs can perhaps help to improve the academic achievement of students who are not achieving as well as they need to during regular school hours.

Fashola (1998) examines current after-school and extended school-day programs, to review the limited research on the effects of these programs on student achievement and to describe promising strategies that communities can use in partnership with schools to create effective after-school programs for all children in elementary and secondary schools. The broadest possible search was carried out for programs that had been evaluated and/or applied to students in after-school settings. Evaluation requirements for these programs were not rigorous, however, and many of the evaluations looked only at pre-post and National Curve Equivalent (NCE) gains as evidence of effectiveness.

Thirty-four programs met the inclusion criteria included in the review. The programs are not necessarily academic in nature, but are sometimes located in schools, and

sometimes operated as community-based and community-owned programs. Based on the review (Fashola, 1998), the first group of programs are designed to provide assistance to students experiencing difficulties or programs designed to provide enriching opportunities. Some of the Language Arts after-school programs include Books and Beyond, a voluntary reading program that combines discriminate television watching and enjoyable recreational reading, the ultimate goal of Books and Beyond is to improve reading skills and to improve students' attitudes towards books and reading. The evaluations of Books and Beyond do not include evaluations of the program in after-school settings. The studies rely on self-report data only and have no assessment of actual gains in reading achievement. The gains that were noted on pre-to-post surveys were also seen among non-participants, and the studies were limited to students who had read at least a certain number of books. A second program, Junior Great Books Curriculum of Interpretive Reading, Writing, and Discussion (JGBC) strives to promote cognitive processing in reading comprehension and literacy in children in grades 2-12 by emphasizing factual, interpretive, and evaluative thinking. The JGBC is used as a partial replacement of or supplement to the regular reading program during the school day. The evaluation of the program researched effects on academic achievement during the school day, and not after-school. Academic achievement in reading vocabulary was evaluated on 150 JGBC students that were matched with 120 control students in four schools. JGBC students outscored their control group counterparts and an additional internal evaluation of the program showed that students involved in JGBC demonstrated stronger interpretive thinking skills than did the students in the control group.

The second area addressed by Fashola (1998) is the Study Skills Programs which emphasizes how to successfully organize and retain information taught in the classroom. Study Skills Across the Curriculum is a program designed for students in grades 5-8 to improve their academic performance by teaching study skills. Project Impact is also a study skills program that is designed to train teachers to use critical thinking skills in Mathematics and Language Arts with children in grades 3-12. Both programs were not evaluated for after-school use, but results report positive gains when implemented.

Another area (Fashola) reports is the Academically Oriented After-School Programs in Other Areas. Five of the programs (Voyager, Explore, Midsurf, Foundations, Inc., and HOSO) were developed and are used by private organizations. These programs are currently being implemented in after-school settings across the country. For example Voyager Expanded Learning program includes a variety of academically enriching themes, designed to help elementary school children in grades K-6 become active learners in mathematics, reading, science, arts, and social studies. Results reported to date are based largely on teacher-parent surveys and the analysis showed that students made gains in math and reading. Hands On Science (HOSO) was developed to encourage all children to have fun learning science, and to learn by example and experience that anyone can engage in scientific inquiry. Results showed that HOSO participants made statistically significant gains in their understandings of what science involved, and better understanding and perceptions of who can do science. The Fifth Dimension is based on the theory that exposing young children to increased opportunities to learn academic and social skills in collaboration with more capable others will allow them to develop their academic and social skills. In four studies, students in the program

showed improvement over time in playing computer and board games. Students also showed improvement of factual knowledge of computers and in areas they had been taught. The Imaginitis Learning System is a cooperative learning after-school language arts program created to expose participants to skills needed for effective and productive learning, in hopes that these will help the participants develop strong workplace competencies. Four sites were used as test sites and overall the results showed that Imaginitis students were significantly higher than control students in the areas of academic self-esteem, cooperation, and perceptions of student-teacher relationships. It was difficult to maintain a control group as is the case with other after-school programs. One program, Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) is a model that helps schools create tutoring programs for at-risk students using a mentoring approach. HOSTS evaluations have not included pre-post experimental-control group comparisons. Another example of a tutoring program is the Intergenerational Reading Program (IRP) designed to improve the reading skills of first grade students experiencing difficulties with reading, using an intergenerational model. This program trains and sometimes pays senior citizens and foster grandparents as tutors. The program is being evaluated, but no data is yet available. The READ*WRITE*NOW program is a comprehensive effort to encourage children to enjoy reading in hopes of improving reading among at-risk youth before age nine. The program basically is an organizational effort to provide information about how to set up a "reading buddies" program. READ*WRITE*NOW does not have evidence of effectiveness, but is currently being evaluated formally.

The final area examined by Fashola (1998), cited Community Based After-School Programs. For example, the New York City Beacons Program is a located in schools and

provides a combination of educational, cultural, and recreational programs for all of the community participants. The Beacons have four main goals: youth development, parental involvement and family support, school-home-community linkages, and building safe and supportive neighborhoods for child and youth development. Beacons exist in forty New York City schools and are currently undergoing an evaluation. A second program, LA's Best was created to provide students with enhanced educational, enrichment, and recreational activities, and to teach socio-economical skills. The first evaluation of LA's Best was a formative evaluation in which surveys were given to parents, staff, and children. Parents and students felt that they had benefited from the program, but evaluators advised that future evaluations should include more rigorous qualitative and quantitative evaluations. A third example, the Child First Authority (CFA) is a Baltimore community-based after-school program that seeks to improve the quality of life in low socioeconomic status communities. Similar to LA's Best and the Beacons program, Child First seeks to tie parents and communities together. The main evidence of effectiveness for CFA consists of anecdotal data passed on to CFA staff by teachers, parents, children, and other participants in the program.

Fashola (1998) concludes that time after-school is prime time for implementation of programs to complement, enhance, and enrich what happens during the school day. Effective after-school programs are capable of addressing three development needs of the "whole" child: academic, recreational, and cultural. Given the components that belong in an after-school program, strong implementation of the components must be accomplished. Some of the factors that appear to be conducive to the implementation of good after-school programs are as follows:

- Train and provide effective supervision of the staff.

- Create a program that has clear goals and well-developed procedures to attain these goals.

- Evaluate the gains of after-school program students by comparing them with a control or comparison group of students in the school or district who are similar to those in the program but who have not been exposed to it.

- Include families and children in the planning, especially in programs that offer cultural and recreational programs during the non-school hours.

- Create an advisory board that maintains strong links between the community, families, religious organizations, and the school system.

Fashola (1998) describes a variety of programs that are being or capable of being used during after-school hours. Educators and policy makers should see these programs as interesting alternatives that offer practical ideas and some indications regarding the structure of after-school programs. The review showed that research on after-school programs is at a very precarious stage as after-school is not mandatory and there are always uncontrollable factors as to why children attend these programs and others do not.

Summary

The time when parents are at work, but children are out of school can be particularly stressful ones for parents regarding their children's safety. Young people spend the majority of their waking hours during the after-school period and how that time is spent can significantly impact their overall development. Quality after-school programs play a crucial role in which young people can develop the range of skills they need to be successful in school and in the workforce. Many after-school programs provide support

for the core academic subjects and this part of their program is strongest when it reinforces educational standards. After-school programs also create opportunities for young people to develop other essential skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, self-direction, and the use of technology. After-school programs provide hands-on, experiential learning opportunities, apprenticeships, mentoring, as well as opportunities for exploring new ideas and taking risks. In addition to developing core and new basic skills, after-school programs give young people the opportunity to explore and deepen individual interests in the arts, music, drama, or foreign language. Leadership skills and a sense of citizenship also began to emerge as they become involved in a community service project. Health and fitness improve as they participate in sports or other physical activities. Finally, after-school programs give young people the opportunity to develop positive relationships with peers and adults, as well as stronger connections between their school, family and community.

Since the mid 1990s, there has been growth in funding for after-school programs. Leaders at the city and state levels have committed greater attention and resources to support quality after-school programs in their communities. Federal programs as well as private corporate and other philanthropic investments have also grown through a series of innovative public and private initiatives regarding after-school programs. Overall, increased support has not translated into the development of after-school programs in most communities and the demand far exceeds the resources directed to programs. Increased investments in after-school are needed to enhance the development of young people.

According to the review of the literature, after-school programs are often labeled effective when they are well-organized, develop a good reputation within the community, and become self-sustaining. After-school programs should also be designed to achieve desired outcomes. Strategies, techniques, approaches, and activities should be selected that are likely to produce results as well as engage and satisfy participants and their families. Finally, in this era of accountability, evaluation and research that indicates program success will be the ultimate factors that draw financial support and build program credibility in the field.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle schools after-school programs. This chapter presents research questions, research design, procedures for data collection, data analysis, and data representation. The chapter focuses on useful strategies that are successful in enhancing after-school programs and identifying useful strategies to improve learning and teaching. The framework represents how after-school programs in middle schools can enhance student learning and prepare students for future skills necessary to achieve positive academic outcomes and career goals.

Research Question

The research design was qualitative in nature and focused on the following research question: What strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs?

Research Design

In order to answer the research question incorporated in this study, the researcher used a qualitative research design. The qualitative design allowed the researcher to use open-ended interview questions that consisted of four categories that included eleven sub-questions. The sub-questions were organized into the following four categories regarding after-school programs: primary goal(s), structure and organization, relationship to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), and administrative support. The researcher interviewed two Georgia middle school after-school directors and two

additional individuals linked to the after-school program that were recommended by the

director. Interviews enabled participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in

which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

In theses senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is

part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison,

2000). Lichtman (2006) stated that "interviewing is the most common form of data

collection in qualitative research" (p. 116). The researcher initiated a structured

interview in which open-ended questions were asked so that the participants could best

voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past

research findings (Creswell, 2002). Selecting two middle schools from the Northeast

Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency and after-school directors from each of

the two schools, and a focus group consisting of three to five individuals from each of the

two schools was appropriate for the study because it represented a manageable number of

participants from the total populations. The sample was also included in a network of

Georgia schools that serve as a link to support and share information to improve the

effectiveness of educational goals, programs, and objectives. The researcher tape-

recorded the responses and reported the findings through the use of summaries.

Interviewing and focus groups were the primary methods of data collection used in

this study. A representative from the Northeast Georgia RESA was contacted to obtain

information regarding individuals at the middle schools that are located in this area. Prior

to participating in the interviews, the principals received a letter explaining the purpose of

the study, and requested to respond as to their willingness to participate in the study.

Letters were also sent to after-school directors in order to educate and inform potential

participants regarding the research project. Following the letter of intent, the researcher followed up with a phone contact to either the principal or the after-school director to further explain the intent of the research project.

During a structured interview, the interviewer can explain more explicitly the investigation's purpose and just what information he or she wants (Best & Kahn, 2003). Recording interviews on tape is preferred because they are convenient and inexpensive and obviate the necessity of writing during the interview. Interviews recorded on tape may be replayed as often as necessary for complete and objective analysis at a later date (Best & Kahn, 2003). The interview tapes were transcribed and reviewed by a professional court legal transcriptionist. All tapes and transcribed responses were kept under lock and key by the researcher. The tapes and transcribed responses were destroyed upon completion of the research project. Results were available upon request to research participants. An appreciation gift certificate was given to interviewees upon completion of the interviews for their time and support of the research project.

Participation Selection

The participants of the study were a purposive sample that included educators from middle schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Agency (RESA) area. The participants consisted of a total of two after-school directors from each of the two middle schools selected. The two directors were used as informants to identify two additional individuals that they felt qualified as interviewees. In addition, two focus groups consisting of three to five individuals that were connected to the after-school program were selected to participate. No more than one middle school was selected from the same system of schools in the Northeast Georgia RESA area.

Any study involving human subjects requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The researcher submitted an application to the IRB at Georgia Southern University. The application contained the researcher's assurance statement regarding ethical practices, including confidentiality, in conducting research. The interview questions were also submitted to the IRB for consideration and approval.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted a qualitative study and utilized structured interviews of selected participants by the researcher. The structured interviews consisted of eleven open-ended questions or statements developed by the researcher, which required selected after-school directors and teachers to respond according to their beliefs and experiences regarding effective strategies for implementation of after-school programs. The curriculum director, reading coach, and three after-school teachers were asked to review and provide suggestions regarding interview questions and statements.

The second instrument for this study consisted of two focus groups consisting of three to five individuals from each of the two selected participating schools. The purpose of the focus group was to gather information from participants about the topic of interest. Group interaction, unlike individual interviews, may trigger thoughts and ideas among participants that do not emerge during an individual interview (Lichtman, 2006).

The interviews and focus groups were designed to last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour in length. The responses provided by the respondents were tape-recorded and transcribed at a later date by a professional transcriptionist.

Data Collection

The procedures for this study began with gaining approval from the Institutional

Review Board (IRB). Next, the researcher used information collected from the Northeast

Georgia (NEGA) Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) to determine

preliminary information designed to help draw a purposive sample. The researcher sent a

letter of intent to all Northeast Georgia RESA middle school principals requesting their

school's participation and explaining how this research may be used to impact student

achievement. The researcher then made telephone contact with the selected schools that

met the requirements of the purposeful sample and began to logistically determine a

timetable for the in-depth interviewing of each participant.

The next phase of the study began with the in-depth interviews of selected individuals

and focus group participants conducted by the researcher. Data was electronically

recorded on a cassette recorder. A back-up recorder was available in case of equipment

failure. The interviewer also took notes during the interviews. Three days prior to the

time of the interviews, each participant was given an opportunity to review the 11 open-

ended questions that constituted the actual tape recorded portion. During the interviews,

participants were probed to allow each one an opportunity to explain their answers.

Participants were informed that all data gathered would remain confidential and securely

stored by the researcher. A letter of appreciation was sent to the participants following

the interviews.

Data Analysis

A qualitative research design was used to analyze data gathered from the in-depth

interviews. The interview tapes were transcribed and reviewed by a professional court

legal transcriptionist. Once all information had been gathered, the researcher analyzed the data and developed a system to find patterns, themes, and categories within the data. The collected data from the in-depth structured interviews and focus groups were analyzed, integrated, summarized, and organized into written text. The researcher may be unintentionally biased in seeking themes and patterns because she currently serves and has served as the after-school coordinator for five years at the middle school she is employed. To address this concern, the researcher conducted a preliminary interview to eliminate biases that may occur.   An interview matrix was designed by the researcher to generate a list of common useful strategies that were effective in implementing after-school programs

Summary

   The methodology is defined as a qualitative study design for investigating the common useful strategies to implement after-school programs. The research design allowed the researcher to hear what the participants had to say in their own words and participants shared what they knew and had learned and added to the researchers understanding of the situation that questionnaire data does not reveal. The researcher used a purposive sample consisting of after-school coordinators from two middle schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) and two focus groups, one from each middle school. From the purposive sample, a snowball sample was obtained; which consisted of two individuals (one from each middle school) who had the characteristics in which the researcher was interested was identified. These individuals were then used as informants to put the researcher in touch with two additional individuals who were directly linked to the after-school program. The

researcher conducted structured interviews to identify strategies that were useful for effective implementation of middle schools' after-school programs. The open-ended questions provided information that offered the researcher a deeper understanding regarding strategies that are useful in the effective implementation of middle school after-school programs

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine strategies used for effective

implementation of middle schools' after-school programs. The federal No Child Left

Behind Act (NCLB) has played a powerful role regarding academic achievement and

accountability. Due to the current NCLB Act and high-stakes testing, raising student

academic achievement has put pressure on educators to closely examine the effects of the

after-school program. It is important for schools to have proven strategies to improve

and maintain acceptable scores because each school is held accountable for their test

results. The researcher conducted structured interviews that were tape recorded, stored in

a locked safe, and transcribed to analyze the data. The research question that guided the

study was answered by the researcher based on her analysis of the information that was

transcribed from the interviews, and the relationship, if any, to the contemporary

literature in the study. The research question was as follows: What strategies are useful

for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs?

Research Design

The research design was qualitative in nature. The researcher used an open-ended

interview method to collect information. The open-ended method required participants to

respond according to their beliefs and experiences as opposed to a closed-ended survey

instrument. The structured interviews consisted of four categories that included eleven

sub-questions. The sub-questions were organized into the following categories regarding

the after-school program: primary goal(s), structure and organization, relates to Annual

Yearly Progress (AYP), and administrative support.

<div align="center">Portraiture of Researched Schools</div>

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the schools and participants interviewed by

the researcher, the names of each school, the after-school directors and teacher

representatives were deleted from the data and responses were coded. School portraitures

were written to assist the reader in connecting each school to the after-school directors

and respective teachers. Schools were assigned pseudonyms for the purpose of

presenting the data.

Brown Middle School serves over 800 students in the Brown County School system.

The demographics of the school are 47% white, 45% black, and 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic,

and 3% multiracial. Brown Middle School's free and reduced population is 67% which

means that 67% of the students attending this school are living in households with

incomes below the economic poverty level. Meg is the after-school director at Brown

Middle School and has served in this capacity for two years. Paul is a teacher in the

after-school program and was selected by Meg as the additional individual to be

interviewed at Brown Middle. Paul is a seventh grade science teacher and has taught for

four years. He has taught in the after-school program for one year. The focus group at

Brown Middle School consisted of four individuals; two that actually teach at Brown

Middle and two that are not teachers at Brown Middle School. Jen is a four year veteran,

eighth grade English teacher at Brown Middle and has served as a teacher in the after-

school program for one year. Kate is also a teacher at Brown Middle and is an eighth

grade English teacher. She has taught for five years and one year in the after-school

program. Kay is a teacher in the Brown County School System and teaches in the Adult

Literacy Program. She has been employed for one year in this program and has served as

a teacher in the Brown Middle School after-school program for one year. Alex is

employed as a high school mathematics instructor and teaches ninth, tenth, and eleventh

grade students. He has been teaching at the high school for two years and has served as

an after-school teacher at Brown Middle for two years.

Wright Middle School serves over 1,000 students in the Wright County School

System. The demographics of the school are 85% white, 10% black, 1% Asian, 2%

Hispanic, and 2% multiracial. Wright Middle School's free and reduced population is

48% which means that 48% of the students attending this school are living in households

with incomes below the economic poverty level. Pat is the after-school director at

Wright Middle School and has served in this capacity for two years. Abby is a teacher in

the after-school program and was selected by the assistant principal as the additional

individual to be interviewed at Wright Middle. Abby is a seventh grade science teacher

and has taught for four years. She has taught in the after-school program for one year.

The focus group at Wright Middle School consisted of four individuals, all of which are

teachers at Wright Middle. Dot is a seventh grade math and social studies teacher of

seventeen years. She has served in the after-school program for one year. Carla is a sixth

grade math teacher. She has taught at Wright Middle for ten years and has served as a

teacher in the after-school program for three years. Jo is a twenty-four year veteran and

teaches math; she has served in the after-school program for approximately eight years.

Jess has been teaching for seven years and currently instructs a computer literacy class.

She has taught in the after-school program for one year.

Table 1: *Demographics of Schools*

School	Students	Economically Disadvantaged	White	African-American	Other
Brown Middle	800	67%	47%	45%	8%
Wright Middle	1,000	48%	85%	10%	5%

Table 2: *Brown Middle After-School Staff Demographics*

Name	School	Title	Teaching Experience	After-School Experience	Subject Area
Meg	Brown Middle	After-School Director	0 years	2 years	N/A
Paul	Brown Middle	After-School Teacher	4 years	1 year	Science
Jen	Brown Middle	After-School Teacher	4 years	1 year	Language Arts
Kate	Brown Middle	After-School Teacher	5 years	1 year	Language Arts
Kay	Brown County School System	After-School Teacher	1 year	1 year	Adult Literacy Program
Alex	Brown County School System	After-School Teacher	2 years	2 years	Mathematics

Table 3: *Wright Middle After-School Staff Demographics*

Name	School	Title	Teaching Experience	After-School Experience	Subject Area
Pat	Wright Middle	After-School Director	0 years	2 years	Special Education Paraprofessional
Abby	Wright Middle	After-School Teacher	4 years	1 year	Science
Dot	Wright Middle	After-School Teacher	17 years	1 year	Math/Social Studies
Carla	Wright Middle	After-School Teacher	10 years	3 years	Math
Jo	Wright Middle	After-School Teacher	24 years	8 years	Math
Jess	Wright Middle	After-School Teacher	7 years	1 year	Computer Literacy

After-School Directors' and Individual Interview Information

In this section, responses from each after-school's director are documented. In order for the participants to feel relaxed, they were interviewed at their respective schools. The population for this study consisted of two Georgia Title I middle school after-school directors within Northeastern Georgia. In order to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participants, the researcher scheduled interviews to accommodate times that were best suited. Meg scheduled her interview after all the after-school staff and students had been dismissed. Paul scheduled his interview during the after-school program hours. Pat scheduled her interview once the after-school staff and students were

settled and began instructional activities. Abby scheduled her interview during the after-school program hours. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Their responses were organized according to their responses as they related to the interview question. An analysis of their data responses were provided for each interview question that the researcher asked the participants. To ensure the anonymity of the participants they were assigned pseudonyms names as previously indicated. Therefore, the names of Meg, Paul, Pat, and Abby were used to protect their identity.

After-School Directors' and Individual Interviews' Demographic Profile

Meg is a White American female who currently serves as the Brown Middle School After-School Coordinator and has been employed in this capacity for two years. She is anticipating returning to school to earn her degree in middle grades education.   Paul is a White American male who teaches seventh grade science; he has been employed for four years at Brown Middle. He has served as a teacher in the after-school program for one year. Pat is a White American female who has been in education for a total of fifteen years. She is employed as a Special Education paraprofessional and serves as the director of the after-school program at Wright Middle. Abby is a White American female employed by Wright Middle as a mathematics teacher. She has taught for a total of twenty-eight years and has served as a teacher in the after-school program for five years.

After-School Directors' and Individual Interview Additional Information

The analysis of Part I were individual interviews of the after-school directors and two additional participants that were selected to be interviewed. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed from the eleven sub-questions that were organized into the four categories developed and asked by the researcher: goals, structure/organization,

relationship to AYP (Annual Yearly Progress), and administrative support. There were

eight findings that emerged from the study: (1) After-school programs primary focus was

academics based on state and federal mandates. (2) After-school directors were

responsible for structure and organization and teachers were responsible for curriculum

decisions. (3) After-school personnel believed that a positive correlation existed between

after-schools and academic achievement (4) Participants believed an effective

communication system between all stakeholders is extremely important (5) After-school

teachers believed that the after-directors gave them the opportunity to voice their

opinions (6) After-school directors and teachers believed that an environment that

fostered care and positive relationships was a vital component (7) After-school personnel

believed that a variety of learning and teaching strategies was their most successful

strategy (8) After-school personnel believed that the administrators in their school

supported the after-school programs

Category I – Primary Goal of the After-School Program

Researcher: In your opinion, what is the primary goal of the after-school program?

Meg – Basically to make sure our students have academic support for their academic

achievement. Make sure we are supporting the school's role in making AYP (Annual

Yearly Progress), just providing a safe learning environment, somewhere that the kids

can come to get the support for the academics they need.

Paul – I think it's got several different goals, the primary one is kind of obvious, it helps

the kids to learn. But besides that it is also there to help them learn, when they are doing

research, you can't just say, here is a computer, go do research. You have to teach them

how to use the research tools on that computer. So, we are teaching them not just the

subject matter but how to learn for themselves when they have something that they are interested in.

Pat – Um, my personal opinion is to prep the students for the CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test) testing and hitting the areas where, we have a lot of students failing behind in the math area and work really hard on the math; getting them prepared for the testing.

Abby – Our primary goal is to help kids that are probably not going to do well on the CRCT based on their scores last year. They didn't pass the Math or Language Arts part or they were very, just barely, so we are trying to target those and offer them help so they will pass this time, hopefully.

Researcher: How are decisions made about how the after-school program is operated?

Meg – Basically, I make most of them, I am the after-school site coordinator so, and a bunch of that falls under my responsibility. Of course, we include the daytime administration and some of our decision making affects the things that go on in the daytime school or how some of the program runs, but for the most part, I make those decisions.

Paul – I think some of those questions or those decisions are based on the requirements of the grant. You tell somebody when you are taking a grant that you are going to do certain things and you have to meet those expectations. But um, as far as the day to day way its run, um, the after-school director is pretty much our leader and her decision is the one that goes, but she gets a lot of input from us and she requests a lot of input from us

and you might see things change, and we always do over a period of time, based on

trying new things.

Pat – Um, me and the two head teachers, what I do is I have a sign for teachers in sixth,

seventh, and eighth grade and if there is a problem or anything we get together and we

talk and we talk to the principal.

Abby – Usually our administrators make decisions about that, our after-school program

was open to anybody last year and we did homework help, this year we serve just at-risk

kids and we focus strictly on Language Arts and Math and not a lot on helping

Researcher: Describe an academic learning activity that you feel has been

successful regarding student academic achievement.

Meg – I really think the OAS (On-line Assessment System) has been wonderful, that is

something that they recommend for the daytime teachers as something that they have to

implement into their system for meeting the AYP, I think, or whatever their standards

are. I am not sure exactly of the proper title would be for that but, um, the kids really get

into seeing, it tracks everything, it gives us charts of their progress and we can actually

put that, when we do the reviews, in front of the children and say "this is where you were

and this is where you made it to, look at all the progress that you have made, you are

capable of doing this" and we give then incentives for meeting these goals or

expectations that we set forth in the reviews. Say they are on Level 3, when they are in

6th grade, we will say, "we will give you this x amount of weeks to make it to Level 4 and

once you make this level you will get this many points towards your challenge" and

that's something else we have done that the kids have really responded to. So, they

actually see it in black and white and we show them that we are monitoring them and that

we care and someone is looking for that progress and they really tend to respond to that and try harder because of it.

Paul – Oh, I can describe more than one. Um, last year one of the girls in my Math class, first nine weeks she was failing, second nine weeks she was barely passing, but then third and fourth nine weeks she was making B's and Math had never been her strong point but you know, we looked at what she had done on the CRCT, we looked at her weak areas, we looked at the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) showing her weak areas and her teacher recommendations and we focused on them in the class, the things we focused on the most were her biggest weaknesses. And one thing I believe in and I did everyday and everybody who was in the class had to get up and work a problem on the board, everyday and it really got to be a game where we would get two people to go up to the board and see who could solve it first and it became more fun for them rather than just one person doing it up there in front of everybody.

Pat – What stands out in my mind the most is there is an actual computer program, Orchard Program, that they do and they can actually do the CRCT, its like a prep test and the kids really enjoy doing that and I think that has helped out a lot, the way the teachers, especially the 6th grade, the 6th grade to me really stands out even though they are not really ready for taking the CRCT as the 8th graders are. I like the way the 6th graders, the teachers do it. You know, they add a lot of fun things with it, you know but the 7th and the 8th grade they basically stick right in track, like this work needs to get done, let's just get this work done you know this is what we are doing you know, but I don't get to spend that much time in the classroom setting because I am usually the one doing this.

Abby – I think probably its being personable, I think with the kids because like I said two of our kids just came in from the alternative school, they are a little bit overwhelmed even though they are "bad", they are overwhelmed in regular classroom, they are lost and I think that helps as much as any other strategy because they actually feel like somebody cares about them. So, I think that is one of the best things. We did a basketball activity, where they had to, we just used baskets and paper wads, and they shot paper wads and they had to count the number of times they shot, they had to draw that out of a hat and they would shoot and see how many they got and then they had to take that and make a fraction and a decimal percent and we did some other statistical stuff with that and they enjoyed that because they were outside shooting the paper wads, which is always good. And then the math part, they didn't mind doing after they had done the activity part so, it worked out well. I have also used a measurement activity, where they had to measure things around the school so they actually were up and out and measuring and then they had to take those measurements and convert them to metrics or they had to do fractions or percents or decimals or whatever from those. They like that kind of thing, they do like to be up and doing around. I also did another activity with the Titanic where they had a picture of the Titanic and the iceberg and the bottom of the ocean and they had to do some calculations based on that information, they were interested in that because they liked the Titanic movie.

After analyzing the responses, the researcher concluded that the primary focus of after-school programs is to improve the academic performance of students and to meet state standards regarding the CRCT. There was no one process characterized regarding decision making, but respondents referenced an emphasis regarding academic and CRCT

practice skills which indicated that, again, an emphasis is placed on academic

achievement and meeting state and federal accountability requirements. Most decisions

were based on math and reading accountability expectations, and it was obvious that

activities such as computer based instruction, one-on-one, and learning strategies that

engaged the students in movement were utilized in an attempt to improve academics,

especially students that had not met state standards.

Category II – Structure and Organization of After-School Programs

Researcher: Describe a typical day for students that are participating in the after-school program?

Meg – Okay, we meet in the cafeteria, they come in, and we make our daily

announcements, check the kids through roll call, they get a healthy snack, at that time

they are to sit at the table that is designated for them, which is by grade level, we have

homework help, if they have homework they sit at that table, if not, they sit at their grade

level table, and we also have the tech lab and the reading class, and they know the days

that they are designated to go to those, um, we, the children that have projects or current

events or what not go to the technology lab, and then we select a number of students for

the day to go do the OAS testing for each hour. So, say, we will do 10 the first hour and

10 the next hour and we let those children know at that time when they are supposed to

be in the tech lab for that. So, this is a consistency, I mean we constantly have them

coming in to re-take and achieve a better level on these. Then they are dismissed to class

for the first hour, they are either in homework help, Language Arts, math or remediation

and preparation and then at 4:00 they have their bathroom break and go to their next

class, which will be the opposite of whatever they took the first class.

Paul – Okay, I would say, let's say, take two weeks ago, my 6th grade kids, they don't have any projects due yet, don't have any assigned, Monday they come to class, they probably don't have anything other than math homework, the ones that haven't done it during class go to homework help and the others sit to go to class. Then the math and Language Arts teachers come in divide that group up and take them on to class. And then a little after 4:00 they switch. Then the group that needs homework help gets homework help and when they finish with that they are sent on to class. On Tuesday though, I have assigned a project and all the kids that I have in the 6th grade, there are 3 different pods. 2 pods probably haven't assigned theirs yet, we usually try to stagger them so that we're not all using the resources at the same time, so all the kids that I have need to go to the lab that afternoon and work on their projects so, I check them off and they come to the lab with me while the 6th graders from the other two pods will separate into those that need homework help and those who need, that are going to class.

Pat – Okay, um each grade is divided, the head teacher decides what they are going to do. Let's take the 8th grade for instance; um 8th grade is split up. You've got half of them go to Language Arts and half of them go to math. It is just according to where their most help is needed. If they needed more help in math they will do both sessions in math, they come in, its from 3:30 to 5:30, from 3:30 to 4:30 they work on math, they take a fifteen minute break, where we provide some type of snack and something to carry them over, then from 4:45 to 5:30, if they switch, then they would go to Language Arts, if not, they go to their second half of math. And it varies, it varies how hard the students work, sometimes they do computer programs that pertain to the math, preferably for the CRCT or you know, they will do some kind of book work or some kind of paper work or

something like that, you know they vary to keep the interest of the kids because you know if you keep it, you know they are here all day at school and if you don't keep it interesting you know they tend to get a little agitated and a little bored.

Abby – Okay, they are dismissed from school after the second bus load. They leave and come to our rooms and they know that the 8th grade math goes here and 7th grade goes here and whatever. So, they come and they are able to buy a snack and you know something like that if they want it, and then we spend the first part from about 3:30 or so until 4:20 working on either math or Language Arts. Today it was math just because they had some questions and then they have a break in there and then we come back and work on Language Arts until 5:30 or so when their, that's when their parents are supposed to be here and pick them up. So they have a little socialization in there, a little break so that helps a little bit because they are worn out after being at school all day.

Researcher: Can you recall a student that would be characterized as a success story as a result of the after-school program?

Meg – Yeah, there's a couple of them that come to mind, um, one of them, the student is actually in 9th grade now, but she had a very traumatic family life. A lot of issues that went on at home and she was involved in the drama program, wonderful aspiring actress, I should say, and drama has been incorporated with our after-school program along with some other extra curricular activities, but in order for them to participate they have to maintain a certain grade level or grade averages and things that like that and um, just seeing her with the support and caring concern the staff has gotten with the children. I have just seen this grow how the children really respond to that care and concern that they weren't receiving at home and she flourished, she went from failing several grades

to coming up to honor roll, therefore being able to participate in the after-school program and just from what I hear she is doing wonderful and great in high school. So I think that intervention somewhat really changed where she could have really gone down hill and just flourished when she was given that care and concern that she needed and somebody that held her accountable for her actions and behavior.

Paul – Yes, for the majority of them, I definitely do. I mean, I know in my own class that most of the kids that failed my class in science, in 6th grade are the ones that don't do homework and they won't do projects. That anything that involves going home and doing it.

Pat – Well, being that I am not in a classroom setting, that much it would probably be better for a teacher to answer that one. I have some that I could say that disciplinary wise and um, I think their grades improved, but I don't know how well since I am not actually in the classroom. And didn't do well at all and we worked specifically on some test taking skills, like how to read the questions, how to narrow it down, to maybe the two best answers and he said that helped more than anything. He said, "Oh, no one has ever told me this before." I am sure they had but maybe he didn't hear it until we were kind of one on one and he was able to pass it in the 8th grade without having to take it twice, not just pass it but he did pretty well and we were pleased with that.

Researcher: Is the after-school program more supervision, enrichment, or academics? Explain.

Meg – Its mainly academics, but it has all those very strong components of what the after-school program is, some of these kids don't have anybody to go home to in the afternoon, so of course we supervise, it's a very disciplined atmosphere because with that

many children it has to be, and some, it changes everyday. The different students that come sometimes, you know, what the needs of the students are, you have to be able to be flexible so, having a staff that is willing to do what ever it takes to cater to what these children need is very important, having a lot of organization and understanding of how we want to go everyday makes a huge difference so yeah there is a lot of supervision and there's academics, our first concern, that is what we are here for so all that does play a large role.

Paul – The way we are pretty much set up, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, it's all academic. I mean, basically even misbehavior, if you are distracting from the learning of others, you know staying for this program is a privilege not a right, you don't have to be here and they will, you go home. You don't come back, wait a week to come back or whatever, we don't have the discipline problems in the afternoon that are like we might have during the day, although the kids we've got right now are really great.

Pat – Academic oriented. Well, um, at the beginning, we have parents that send kids here because basically they don't want them to come home you know or they don't have anywhere for them to be at that time so, um we make sure that all the students know that we are here for a purpose and our purpose is prepping you for the CRCT now 6th and 7th grade, like I said, is a little different you know, we are really pushing hard on the 8th graders, but we really work hard, the kids really work hard.

Abby – It's focused more toward academics, most of the kids that attend are children that are behind, and they just need to focus on what they need to pass the CRCT.

Researcher: What do you think are the major weaknesses of the after-school program?

Meg – I would say that the only weakness that we need to work on a little bit more, that I can say right off the top of my head is communication. When I came here, people didn't, a lot of people didn't know what this program was and that included some of our teachers. So, working on that communication to make sure that the after school teachers are aware of what the children are having a rough time with in the daytime, that is crucial, we have to have that openness and that communication so that we know what the children need extra help on and that is what we have tried to create with the Q-Drive folder, having that all the time communication and I just really think that is one of the main things, so that the parents know what is going on and what resources are available to them and their children. You know, the teachers are aware of what we do and how we can support them because that is what we are here to do not just the kids, but support them and what they are trying to achieve in the daytime. So, I think communication is probably one of the things we could work on.

Paul – I haven't really thought much about that. I just, I really don't see anything. It keeps changing and growing, but I'm really pleased with the program. I'm pleased with my own involvement in it.

Pat – Um, that would be a hard one; I think our after-school program is really good. Um, I would love to see more students here and see more parents being serious about you know, and having their kids to stay because what we are here for is to help them and get them prepped and ready to succeed in life. But um, improvement wise, unless we had some other kind of material or something, but that's a hard one because I think our after-school program is really good and is out there and we have the material and you know, that's just a hard one for me to say.

Abby – I don't really think that, I mean we have really good computer programs, if we want to use that. We use it some of the time but not all. I don't think, I guess maybe that maybe some of the kids that need to come don't come because of transportation issues, that would be our major weakness, I would think.

Structure and organization varied by each after-school director but the ones that stood out were having programs that were designed to meet the academic needs of the students and to provide activities that were appealing to keep their interest. Responses also indicated that the respective after-school programs fostered an environment that students felt safe and parents were comfortable regarding their children participating in the program. In addition to the academic needs, it was concluded that forming relationships between the after-school staff and the students was equally important. All the strategies were geared toward improving the academic performance of the child and fostering an environment that ultimately was warm and welcoming to students. Students needed to be given the opportunity to receive additional support for areas that they were struggling during the regular school day and the extended learning day was geared to meet those individual needs to the best of its ability. Communication, transportation, and improper use of the after-school program for solely supervision were reported as weaknesses in the area of structure and organization.

Category III – Relationship to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

Researcher: How has your after-school program changed since Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Meg – Well, I have only been here 2 years, and so, they have been expectant of these, I mean, this was all already in place when I got here but it is very critical that we are

meeting all these expectations, like you said, all these different sub-groups, basically I don't know that it has changed the after-school program so much as it has changed the whole school. Being that our teachers are teachers that are already working within the school they are already aware of these things and are all already working towards the same immediate goal.

Paul – I don't, I'm not sure that it has really changed that much.

Pat – This is probably a question you might want to ask the group that you are going to have a meeting with.

Abby – Well, our focus went strictly to getting these children to the point where they could pass the CRCT, we kind of started off with some enrichment, some fun things, you know, just that, not really all that serious and then as we started to focus on AYP and of course when we did not meet AYP then we started focusing on strictly, okay, lets see what can we do to get these kids stronger in math and Language Arts and that is what we focused on.

Researcher: What are the primary strategies used to increase academic achievement?

Meg – Um, we have, here again, our different components on the technology lab with the OAS and everything. We have 4 review sessions a year and at the beginning of the session, we have a review of the child to see where their progress is or we pull their progress reports. We show the child what their grade is right now, we talk about immediate goals, about what their expectations are before the next progress reports.

Pat – There are three, um, I use Excelous, Orchard, and Cornerstone. We have actual CRCT books as prepping books that were donated through the University of Georgia.

And um, the 8th grade teachers use that and it is basically go in and do the programs on the computers because it just adds a little difference to it and it takes a different step and gives them a different look, a different perspective and everything but the majority is from book work, is what they use.

Researcher: Are there any other changes to your program as a result of federal mandates that have caused your after-school program to change?

Meg – As I stated earlier, the school as a whole has changed and the teachers that teach after-school are aware of the goals and the focus is the same.

Paul – Not that I can think of.

Pat – Not that I can think of.

Abby – Well, um, just the focus on strictly CRCT skills not doing anything other than just focusing on that.

Researcher: Does your after-school program coordinate with regular school day activities? Explain.

Meg – Oh definitely, because like I said, we don't just do, they talk to them as far as remediation is concerned as far as to get different you know, different techniques that the children are not picking up on which they can identify in large groups a lot of times because it's the same concept that several of the children aren't getting so they will spend time in remediation on those points and they will say what are you preparing for the following week and they even do acceleration so that when these kids go in, some of the kids that have never been able to participate because they didn't understand anything now have an overview of what they will be learning so, for them to be able to come and say I know what that is because they went over it, that encourages them and gives them drive.

Paul – Yeah, once again, we can go back and look at what they are teaching now because we can se their lesson plans. It's all on the Q-drive (shared computer file), if I want to know what Language Arts is doing in 8th grade right now, I can pull up on Q-drive the lesson plans, not lesson plans but unit plans and our unit plans are extremely detailed.

Abby – No, not really. We just, that's kind of all set apart and then after-school is just after school from 3:30 until 5:30. We don't have a set time to plan, we are given access to money to buy materials if we need them and we pretty much have to plan for after-school when we plan for everything else. So there's not like any extra time built in there for that. We use the GPS, Georgia Standards to plan.

Responses regarding changes in after-school programs varied, but the ones that stood out were the focus on Reading and Math. One middle school stated that the overall focus of the school had changed due to AYP and the focus of the after-school program was in compliance with the goals of the regular school day. Other subject areas such as Science and Social Studies were not emphasized in the curriculum of the after-school programs. The after-school program was making a conscientious effort to align teaching and learning strategies to the regular school day. A variety of teaching and learning strategies were utilized to improve the academic performance of students in reading and math.   On the other hand, communication was cited as a weakness regarding regular school day and after-school learning and teaching strategies.

Category IV – Support of After-school Program

Researcher: Do you feel that the administrators in your school and district are supportive of the after-school program at your school? Explain.

Meg – Very, very the more I have gotten involved working with the daytime administration and the teachers and everything, anything that I have ever asked for support in, anything I have ever needed to get messages to the rest of the staff, they have been more than willing to do whatever it was to make me feel a part of the school and make the program work.

Paul – Oh yeah, very much so.

Pat – Oh yes, um, the assistant principal, this is her first year with us this year and um, she is learning all the works that we do and everything but, last year um, Mr. Brown and Mr. Gregg both were the I call the head of it and they were constantly present and you know making sure what we had everything we needed to do, I mean they were 100% support, if you needed anything they were there.

Abby – Yes, I mean they are very supportive, they run it as best they could, you know, with the money they have and they encourage parents to let their kids come and try to make it as doable. The paraprofessional tends to business for us. They have let her stay, she can stay up to thirty minutes waiting for parents to get here, like if they got off at 5:30 and if they could come straight here so, trying to make it workable. I mean, I think they have done what they can.

Researcher: Do you feel that you have the resources that you need to be effective? Explain.

Meg – Yeah, I do, a lot of times its going and asking for help for those resources so that's more on my part of going out into the community and saying you know, we may need you to contribute this or that or can you come to be a part of this and let our students and families know what resources are available out here to them, so yeah, I think so.

Paul - You can always use more resources. Our computers are real old, as a matter of fact, I think most of the computers in our computer lab were refurbished from the old high school before they moved to the new high school that had all new computers. The computers at Wright Middle have not been made new in a long time. So that's really one area that we would like to see more in, but I would like to see more computers in my classrooms not just the labs that everybody in the school is trying to schedule time into, more computers in the classrooms that we could utilize on a daily basis.

Pat – The CRCT practice books were donated through the University of Georgia that was contacted through one of the administrators and he approved of it but other than that you know we basically have what we need.

Abby – I think we do, our money allotted for after-school I think is the same monies, the same money that goes for summer school, if I'm not mistaken, I think its all kind of one pot. And so, we have to budget, since we have all those 8th graders to run through summer school, they have to kind of budget to make sure we have enough money for this and to run summer school and but we have good materials.

Researcher: Can you recall an initiative by the administrators in your school or district that you believe has contributed to the success of the after-school program? Explain.

Meg – Um, well implementing the after-school program has and it still has a lot of change to come, I think some of the decisions my boss has made and her vision for this grant and everything, finding the right people to make it happen because a big part of this is a team that has come together and it takes a special group of people for that, so to be able to identify those people and make it all mesh together and make it become one

entity, because we are not just one program. We have the elementary and the high school program and also the African male initiative. We have the GED literacy program that runs under this, we have the evening recording center that is for our kids that are now in juvenile and they are getting this assistance so it is much more than just here at Brown Middle School. And for her to envision this and find the leaders that she needed to make it happen not just for that sight but for all to come together as a team is amazing.

Paul – I don't know, I have only been here four years, and it was here when I came.

Pat – Um, personally myself, I'm not sure, I wish I knew more about it but being a paraprofessional and not in an actual teacher setting, all I do is when I go through I can check to see if everything is okay you know, but the next group in there that you will be talking to next will be able to answer.

Abby – They have, during our, you know, they do run ads in the paper advertising it, its in their agendas at the beginning of school, when the kids can come to look at their classes and pick up their schedules they have a big display in the lobby where parents come in and they hand out information about our school. I know that the parents know it is there, but once again, our biggest thing is transportation.

Administrative support was found to be an effective aspect regarding the success of the after-school program. Although administrators were not directly involved in the decision making process, according to the participants, funds were available to operate and purchase needed resources. The responses reflected that the administrators trusted the decisions of the after-school directors to govern the structure and organization of the program. The responses reflected that administrative support was viewed as an

agreement that the program should exist and funding was made available to operate the

after-school program.

After-School Focus Groups' Interview Information

In this section, responses from each of the previously reported middle schools after-school programs were documented. In order for the participants to feel relaxed, the researcher interviewed them at their perspective schools. The population for this study consisted of four individuals that made up a focus group from Brown Middle and four individuals that made up a second focus group at Wright Middle. In order to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participants, the researcher scheduled the interviews around the times that best suited them. Both focus groups were interviewed during the hours of the after-school program at their perspective schools. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The researcher chose to organize their responses according to the interview question that was asked. An analysis of their data responses was provided for each interview question that the researcher asked the participants. To ensure the anonymity of the participants the names of Alex, Jen, Kate, and Kay were used to conceal their identity at Brown Middle School. Dot, Carla, Jo, and Jess were used to protect their identity at Wright Middle School.

After-School Focus Groups' Demographic Profile

Alex is an Asian Male and teaches ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade mathematics. He has been employed at the high school for two years and has two years of experience teaching in the after-school program. Jen is a Caucasian female and has taught English for four years; she has taught for one year in the after-school program. Kate is also a Caucasian female and has taught English for five years. She has served in the after-

school program for one year. Kay, a Caucasian female, is employed by the Brown County School System and is the Adult Literacy Program Coordinator. She has taught in the after-school program for one year.

The second set of interviews was conducted at Wright Middle and the focus group consisted of four individuals. Dot is a Caucasian female and teaches math and social studies. She has taught for 17 years and has served one year in the after-school program at Wright Middle. Carla is a Caucasian female and teaches sixth grade math. She has been teaching for ten years and has taught for three years in the after-school program. Jo is also a Caucasian female and is a twenty-four year veteran and teaches math. She has been teaching in the after-school program for at least five years. Jess is a Caucasian female and teaches Computer Literacy as an elective. She has a total of five years experience in education and has taught for one year in the after-school program.

<div align="center">Interviews with Teacher Focus Groups</div>

The two focus groups consisting of after-school teachers were interviewed at their respective schools. They were tape recorded and transcribed from the eleven sub-questions that were organized into the following four categories regarding the after-school-program: primary goal(s), structure and organization, relationship to AYP, and administrative support.

Category I - Goals

Researcher: What do you think the primary goal of the after-school program is?

Alex – I think the primary goal is enrichment of what we have done during the day, to supplement that, after-school.

Jen – We can either review things they don't understand in class or if they are getting everything in class we can actually use it as a preview of what is coming up in class so that they can stay ahead of the game and on top of what's going on everyday with more one on one help.

Kate – I agree completely, working with students after-school really does help bridge those gaps, things that they are not getting in class um, so, not only are we enriching what they are doing but also bridging those gaps and helping them with the deficits that they have because at the end of the year, regardless, they all have to meet the same target goals of passing the CRCT and in the 8th grade, passing the 8th grade writing test so these are things that we can really, really nurture in after-school that we just don't have time in class.

Kay – I agree with both of these ladies, I think that um, I come from the career academy so I don't get to see these kids during the day so I think that it gives the kids an opportunity to hear it from a different perspective also, and to get help from on outside, you know, outside person instead of their day to day teachers also. So, that helps them but, it's definitely about enrichment.

Dot – Assisting students in passing the CRCT would be my thoughts about that. We were asked this year just to primarily focus on CRCT skills but not to work on homework a lot, but we do find sometimes that homework because it is standards based and it is related to CRCT that we do give students to some time to ask about homework because that, there is a big need for that and a lot of parents want their kids to get help with it especially with math. With the new connected math, but that's not our, we were told at the beginning of the year that didn't need to be our primary focus.

Carla – Remediation

Jo – Remediation, yeah.

Researcher: How are decisions made about how the after-school program is operated?

Alex – Well, the after-school director directs everything but she is very open to suggestions so if you ever have any suggestions about a way it would work better in your room or better for the program or just better for that day she is very open for you to change things up the way you feel is necessary in your classroom. So, we all kind of make decisions together but she outlines the program and how it is going to run as far as everything from discipline to scheduling but she leaves it up to the teachers enough to understand what the kids need and do what is best for them.

Jen – We try to stick fairly close to what their teachers are doing so, for example right now we are doing a lot of grammar in the 8th grade so, the after-school teacher is going to the program to reinforce those same things we are doing in class. So, we try to stick very close to what they are going to be experiencing in their classrooms during the day and the after-school director does give us a lot of freedom about what we are doing, how we are going to teach and how we are going to enrich those curriculum standards. We get to decide what we are going to use and then if we need resources and materials then she can get those for us. So , we just let her know what we need to get accomplished, what we need in our classroom but it is totally up to us as to what were are going to do as far as their academics are concerned and we just let her know what materials we need to get it done.

Dot - Administration

Carla – Administration

Jo – The assistant principal this year, particularly, right?

Carla – We make decisions about curriculum, I mean as long as we stay within the CRCT domains we, like I would stay within the 6th grade CRCT domains for math and I generally stay with the domain that we are working on in class right then since I teach that.

Researcher: Describe an academic learning activity that you feel has been successful regarding student academic achievement.

Alex – I will give an example of when we did summer school which is part of the after-school program. We were teaching the students different shapes the pentagon, the hexagon and all those things and we made a bird house, we gave them different shapes and they had to apply those shapes and they made a bird house and that clearly helped some of the kids understanding the different shapes rather than teaching it with a worksheet. So, that I feel was a big success.

Jen - Well, we are working on one now that we just invented. Even in 8th grade, kids are still having a hard time trying to pick out a subject and a verb. And it is because they get overwhelmed by all the other things that they have learned about the sentence and all the different parts so, what we are going to try is listing a sentence across the board and there are laminated cards that have all different types of parts of speech and we will play, kind of like the price is right. Where a student will go up there and label one thing at a time and then another student will go up and label another piece of the sentence that they know and in the end, hopefully, we will have the whole thing labeled and they will see that they can actually break down a sentence an not be overwhelmed.

Alex – Basically, we do not do any activity, those kids that have homework, they come to me and then I help out with their homework.

Jo – I think the first thing that comes to my mind, um with it being CRCT based this time, we actually have less students staying. We are able to sit with the students more one on one and give them that assistance that they really need in their classroom but they can't get. Um, the second thing is computer based skills, in fact we are in there right now using the different programs to build on their skills, the basic skills, they don't necessarily get in the regular classroom.

Dot – I use an internet sight, it is called Backwinds and you can go on and create your own tasks for them to take and you can see their grades and you can keep up with their progress. For you it's like a spreadsheet and I have all the students and I keep track of their scores and it's based on what we are covering in class at that time.

Carla – One of the things we try to do is, especially one of the big new units that we introduce in math is with rational and integers. The kids have needed a lot of help and we use manipulatives, like the two colored counters and that kind of stuff. But even with it sometimes kids don't get it. We also use the On-line Assessment System (OAS) and we use that very short test for the students to take to help them practice with CRC skills because those are very good questions. I think that most of them would agree the biggest help with after-school is just the one-on-one help they get. Because sometimes that is what the student needs, they can not get any other way and it equates the lack of confidence or lack of basic skills or some combination in between. We have had several students stay that are not academically weak in their basic skills, they just have a confidence thing.

Jess – I pair them up together to do their work and they have been helping the resource students and they are coming up higher in their skills and are able to do skills that they hadn't and weren't able to do earlier in the year.

After analyzing the responses of the after-school teachers, the researcher concluded that increasing academic achievement was the primary goal of the after-school program. The responses of the participants reflected that the after-school program was an initiative implemented in an attempt to bridge academic gaps. It was a consensus that the after-school director was responsible for the house-keeping responsibilities and the after-school teachers were given the freedom to plan teaching and learning strategies regarding curricular goals. It was evident that a variety of learning and teaching strategies such as peer tutoring, hands on instruction, and computer based programs were viewed as effective strategies to increase academic achievement.

Category II – Structure and Organization

Researcher: Describe a typical day for students that are participating in the after-school program.

Kate – Well, the first thing they are going to do is, they are going to get a snack, we provide them with a healthy snack and they do that from about when we dismiss our 2nd bus load, which will be the other kids in the cafeteria, so, from about 2:45 to 2:50 to 3:00 and then they will be divided into different tables, like 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students who have homework and will stay in the cafeteria to do homework and students that need to go to the Tech Lab that need to work on projects, because we do provide that as a resource, then students that are either going to go to math or Language Arts enrichment classes and then they will be dismissed and they are in there for about an hour and then

we switch and they will go to the other session so, if you had Language Arts for the first hour then your child will switch and go to get math enrichment.

Jen – And they know that they are supposed to sit at different tables like if they sit at 8th grade homework help one day because they have homework and they need help with it, the next day they might sit at the 8th grade table because that particular day they do not have homework, they are going to enrichment classes, instead and then on Thursdays is an enrichment day for all kids, we take the academics out of it for the most part and allow them to do something that they enjoy and that they are interested in whether it be cosmetology, home-economics, or computer technology. If you don't come on Monday through Wednesday, you can not attend the Thursday session.

Carla – We have a two hour block and the kids come in and we usually give them a chance to go to the restroom, get some water, get a snack, then we have a break in the middle. Then for 7th grade we just divide the two hours up and we have about fifty to fifty-five minutes of one subject, we take math first then we take a break and then we come back and do the other subject.

Researcher: Can you recall a student that would be characterized as a success story as a result of the after-school program? Explain.

Dot – I had one student that failed math for the first nine weeks, he was very weak in his basic skills and part of that was knowledge and part of it was confidence. He was able to get his math average up to a B in the second nine weeks. And some of that is due to the fact that I am his teacher in the regular school day. I have allowed him to redo some of his assignments and to work with him on an as needed basis on what he needs to work on from the classroom and that has helped him a lot. It is also encouraging because he will

volunteer and he is really participating in class a lot more and it has made a big difference for him.

Jess – I think mine would have to be one of the resource students that I have in there, that when she first started she was drawing tally marks and then crossing out tally marks in order to subtract and her resource teacher was telling me that she is now borrowing and knowing how to rename and subtracting without having to draw the tally marks and actually had her in there the other day and had her working on writing a fraction and then simplifying it and she was able to simplify it and I was like oh my goodness, this is a child that really doesn't know her multiplication tables but she was able to tell me what to simplify the fractions by and then do it, so yea. The strategy was just simple drill and practice and this is what we are going to do and we just repeated it and she worked on the same skills in that quiz several times until she was able to get her grade.

Researcher: Is the after-school program more supervision, enrichment, or academics? Explain.

Kate – I think we have room for both enrichment and academics.

Dot – Academics, we are not and have never been supervision or babysitting. They have always been very good if we had a problem with behavior, we have the system set up if they were warned and there were any more problems, the administrators called parents and said they can not stay, that is not what this program is about. These teachers are not going to spend their time teaching your child how to behave. So I would not say that it has been supervision.

Researcher: What do you think are the major weaknesses of the after-school program?

Alex – One of the things that I discussed with the after-school director last year was not enough communication between the after-school teachers and the regular day time teachers.

Kate – I think one thing, and I mentioned this before is student buy in, because there aren't grades hanging over their head so you know for some students that is their only motivator that if they do any work its for their own enrichment and this is a very hard age to get students to be intrinsically motivated. So, that's why I think the incentive program that the after-school director has implemented where if you get a gold star because your teacher says you were the best kid in his or her class this week or you came with your agenda book or all these, it's a huge points program that we have there are these great rewards like going on field trips and all kinds of special things. But that is a stumbling block, kids are here for their parents, I think we see that more with the older kids than like the younger ones.

Kay – And some of the parents use it as a punishment, "if you are failing I am going to make you start going to the after-school program" so the kids view it as a punishment.

Jen – And you know nothing against the coaches but it also has been used a baby-sitting program for sports teams too. Like we share the gym, we can't have boys and girls practicing basketball at the same time so during the season we may have the girls practice immediately after school but the boys are not going to practice for another hour or so, so the coachers send the boys to the after-school program for that hour. So they are just sitting around doing nothing or causing a disturbance so you end up doing a lot of babysitting and that is one of the biggest down falls. Either you are babysitting for parents because they force the kids to go because they are not passing class or they are

being punished or you are babysitting for other people that need the kids to stay after-school because they need the transportation from the after-school program.

Jen – There are times that they try to limit how many buses we are using so it may take a long time for your kid to get home because that bus may have to go way out here to take this kid home and then way back to the other side of the county to bring your kid. The parents are saying it takes too long for the kids to get home so they get frustrated with the transportation.

Alex – Another thing I see is um, the after-school schedule has been changed so often. That happened quite a lot last semester.

Kate – Like if there is not enough of us that are going to be here, you can't have the after-school program because there is no one to teach it and so we'll just get a mass e-mail at about 1:30, no after-school program and for our kids whose parents would normally pick them up that is a huge problem because, "I've, I expect my kid to be home at 5:00, I can't come pick my kid up at 3:00,: so, that I would say is a problem.

Jen – And it is stressful for the teachers because you are being pulled in three different directions, like Alex was saying, it's not like the teachers are saying "well, I'm just not going to after-school today, they can just cancel it." We are probably in a faculty meeting that we can't get out of and we have to attend anyway so you are stuck running because our kids don't leave us until 2:45 with second bus load, some leave at 2:15, but we still have kids on campus until 2:45 and after-school starts at 3:00. So you have fifteen minutes to gather your thoughts from the entire day, make any copies needed, laminating or whatever it is you need to get done and then go pick up your after-school kids.

Carla – I think, again, this is kind of I guess a logistics thing that we don't serve anymore

students than we do because we know that we have a lot of students that need extra help

but I think some of it has to do with transportation and this year a lot of it has to do with

the fact that we are not assisting them with homework, a major area. I had one student

that stayed everyday and her mother stated that she could not have her come home at 5:30

or 6:00 and even have started on her homework.

Structure and organization varied by each after-school program, but responses

reflected that there was an agenda that was expected to be followed. The ones that stood

out were dividing students by grade and providing areas that were designed to meet the

various needs of the students. All of the strategies were geared to promote a program

that was geared toward the improvement of academics while fostering an environment

that was comfortable and appealing to students. Some of the barriers of the after-school

program that were as follows: communication between stakeholders (after-school

teachers, after-school director, regular day teachers, and parents), transportation, use of

the program as primary supervision, length of the school day, and attendance.

Researcher: How has your after-school program changed or has it changed since

AYP?

Kate – Well, I would think that our after-school exists because of AYP. This is my

fourth year at Wright Middle and we did not have an after-school program um, in the way

we have it now, my first year. The second year it was different but not run nearly as well

then since the after-school director has had it. And then because this program is funded,

we have to make sure we are using the funds appropriately. I would say a tremendous

reason why it is more successful is that we have an after-school director that is solely over the program.

Dot – We have done homework and then we just worked on skills that the students needed, the main change is that we are not doing the homework, focusing on the skills.

Researcher: What are the primary strategies used to increase academic achievement?

Jen – Math and reading are the two areas that we break out into academically. We do not have an after-school class for science or social studies unless it's their enrichment on Thursdays.

Kate – OAS testing, we are currently doing, we pull a number of kids out everyday to do online testing and these are tests that have been created off of, just borrowed CRCT questions and we use that data to help us engage students' progress. We have recently added a reading program where one of our teachers from Wright in the afternoon take students from the OAS testing that have lower reading and CRCT scores. Those students are specifically pulled out of after-school to a reading class to meet those needs. They are doing Read 180 and SRA where they are working on reading frequency and reading fluency as well as reading comprehension.

Dot – Just the assessment maybe of their weaknesses and focusing on that and building from that point.

Jo – We access the computer lab with the programs that we have in math and Language Arts and then the internet and Online Assessment System.

Jess – The kids lover Cornerstone because if they will go through a lesson then it gives them a game and as long as they keep solving the problems within the game, it will pop

up a problem then they can continue the game. We can also choose the skills if we want them targeting on a certain area for that day.

Researcher: Does your after-school program coordinate with regular school day activities? Explain

Jen – We have the Q-drive, it's a drive that we share through the whole network of Wright County and we go on the Q-drive as regular teachers and put homework and project assignments on there.

Carla – All of us pretty much teach in those areas so we know what the standards are pretty much so you know we pretty much keep up with what we are doing in the regular classroom. We have curriculum maps and we all are exactly in the same page but we are close so we know in 7th grade math what we are doing.

Jess – We meet together weekly so we know where everyone's at and I know that they have got a test coming up because I created a study guide they've got. I think I have two that I actually teach the rest of them I don't.

All after-school teachers agreed that there were minimal change regarding the after-school program's focus as a result of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), however, it was reported that the program seemed to have a more overall focus due to the efforts of the after-school director. In one middle school, the homework component was omitted and teachers were expected to focus on raising CRCT scores only. It was obvious based on the strategies that were reported that a conscious effort was made to incorporate activities that were aligned with CRCT objectives at both middle schools. Computer-based programs that were appealing to students and also targeted reading and math standards were stated as being instructional strategies utilized. In addition, after-school

teachers felt very comfortable that after-school activities were aligned with regular

school day activities because the majority taught at their perspective schools

Researcher: Do you feel that the administrators in your school and your district are

supportive of the after-school program at your school? Explain.

Jen – I think they are supportive at a distance; they are limited in what they actually do to

get involved because I think that they really trust the after-school director to run it. As

long as the program is running smoothly then they do not have to intervene. They are

supportive in the fact that they allow the teachers to do after-school without giving us

grief or heartache about what we should or should not be doing. They are supportive of

us working with the program but they give it a very hands off approach and let the after-

school director run it.

Researcher: Do you feel that you have the resources that you need to be effective?

Explain.

Kate - Pretty much everything we need our after-school director makes sure we get it.

And because we are a Title I school and we have more money to be able to purchase

things in the school that the children benefit from. Like all of our computers, all of our

teachers have an LCD projector in their classrooms.   Those sorts of things are present

during the day the kids get more one on one time with in the afternoon.

Kay – And we all have supply lists of everything that we write down and hand in and she

gets it pretty quickly.

Jess – Yeah, I mean, in math we have adequate resources, I mean we do have a lot of

resources and like I said since we all have access to our own classroom materials we just

use what we have. So, I feel like we do.

Carla – And being able to use the stuff that we use in our classes, that's like the computer labs and all the programs.

Dot – The state sent books this year specifically for math. They sent a set of the coach booklets for all the students, for each teacher to have a set. We are trying to incorporate those, and they are a good resource too.

Researcher: Can you recall an initiative by the administrators in your school or district that you believe has contributed to the success of the after-school program? Explain.

Kate – I think just making sure that this is one of the first lines of defense for struggling students. If the parents don't know what to do the first place we turn is the after-school program so the parents I would assume see that the administrators and the teachers are all suggesting "look, one of the best things you can possibly do to help your student is to send them to the after-school program" then they know that this is something that is highly supported by our school and our faculty.

Dot – I don't really know much about the way the money is used to fund the program. I know that there is some pool of money that this comes from and that's all that I can say about that.

Carla – I don't know if it's Title 190 or where the pool of money comes from but pretty much we just have the money to pay us and then resources that are available, computer wise and other resources that we have. And like she said, we may have had extra money to spend that they can spend to buy supplies, but some years like this year we don't have any of that money but that does not hinder us I don't think from having a good program because you know the teachers that are working in it really want the students to see they

can go the extra mile to get whatever the students need. But, I mean the school and the system support the program just by having it. I don't know that there has been a big initiative in anyway, I mean they push it as much as they can by sending home information to parents and making it available on our school information, newsletters, website and things like that.

All teachers were in agreement that the administrators were supportive of the program simply because it existed. It was stated that the administrators trusted the after-school directors with the majority of the decisions regarding structure, organization, and needed resources. Responses reflected that teachers were aware that funds were available for salaries and the majority of the resources. It was reported that the resources that were used during the regular school day were available and labs were even more accessible due to the number of students served in the after-school program.

Response to Research Question

The research question that guided this study was as follows: What strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs? In response to the research question, it was stated that successful after-school programs incorporate structure and organization by implementing procedures that promote order and consistency. Awareness of student needs and defined goals were stated as significant factors regarding the successful implementation of an after-school program. Having an after-school director to facilitate the program was stated as being an important aspect of the after-school program. In addition, trust between the administrators and the after-school directors to initiate the majority of the decisions regarding structure, organization, and needed resources was reflected as a key component. Teachers communicated that

successful after-school programs incorporated a variety of learning activities such as computer-based instruction, hands-on-activities, movement and interaction, peer tutoring, and interactive games that incorporated academic skills. Having teachers make a conscious effort to align teaching and learning strategies to the regular school day has a direct impact on academic achievement. In addition to the academic needs, it was concluded that forming relationships between the after-school staff and the students were equally important. Being committed to the program and having a caring and supportive staff was stated as being instrumental to a successful after-school program. All the strategies were geared toward improving the academic performance of the child and fostering an environment that ultimately was warm and welcoming to students. Some of the barriers of the after-school program that were as follows: communication between stakeholders (after-school teachers, after-school directors, regular day teachers, and parents), transportation, use of the program as primary supervision, length of the school day, attendance, and transportation. Communication, transportation, and improper use of the after-school program for solely supervision were reported as weaknesses in the area of structure and organization.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

After receiving clearance from the IRB at Georgia Southern University to conduct the research, the researcher began the process of collecting data on the beliefs of two Georgia after-school directors, two after-school teachers, and two focus groups that consisted of after-school teachers from their perspective schools. The demographic profile of each participant represented a wide range of diversity. The population represented a manageable number of participants to interview. The interviews were scheduled at

convenient times regarding the participants. The researcher made a conscious effort to ensure that the participants were comfortable and relaxed by interviewing them at their perspective schools. The two after school directors, two after-school teachers, and two focus groups were asked eleven questions that were organized into the following four categories: goals, structure and organization, relationship to AYP, and administrative support. The interviews were designed to last approximately thirty minutes to complete. The researcher's role in the study was to schedule the interviews, interview the participants, tape-record and analyze their responses to the interview questions. The data from this research supports this conclusion. All of the participants were located within Northeastern Georgia. The study was guided by one research question that the researcher answered using the data that was collected and analyzed. There are eight findings that emerged from the study: (1) After-school programs primary focus was academics based on state and federal mandates. (2) After-school directors were responsible for structure and organization and teachers were responsible for curriculum decisions. (3) After-school personnel believed that a positive correlation existed between after-schools and academic achievement (4) Participants believed an effective communication system between all stakeholders is extremely important (5) After-school teachers believed that the after-directors gave them the opportunity to voice their opinions (6) After-school directors and teachers believed that an environment that fostered care and positive relationships was a vital component (7) After-school personnel believed that a variety of learning and teaching strategies was their most successful strategy (8) After-school personnel believed that the administrators in their school supported the after-school programs.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of the research findings, discussion of research findings, conclusions based on the findings, implications and recommendations based on the analysis of the data in the study. The research question for this study is as follows: What strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. There are eight findings that emerged from the study: (1) After-school programs primary focus was academics based on state and federal mandates. (2) After-school directors were responsible for structure and organization and teachers were responsible for curriculum decisions. (3) After-school personnel believed that a positive correlation existed between after-schools and academic achievement (4) Participants believed an effective communication system between all stakeholders is extremely important (5) After-school teachers believed that the after-directors gave them the opportunity to voice their opinions (6) After-school directors and teachers believed that an environment that fostered care and positive relationships was a vital component (7) After-school personnel believed that a variety of learning and teaching strategies was their most successful strategy (8) After-school personnel believed that the administrators in their school supported the after-school programs

The purpose of this study was to analyze the beliefs of after-school directors and after-school teachers about useful strategies for effective implementation of middle schools after-school programs. The effect of after-school programs and useful strategies for effective implementation is well documented in the related literature. Accordingly,

students who are provided additional learning time in after-school programs are more likely to improve academic success.

After-school programs that have a primary focus and provide structure and organization result in successful programs. The study of after-school programs in Georgia was warranted because after-school staff, students, and parents all benefited from the effects of after-school programs and student success. After-school programs influence student achievement and provide additional opportunities for students to be successful. This study's primary focus was to identify and examine strategies used for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs.

The population of the study consisted of two Georgia after-school directors, two individuals directly linked to the program, and two focus groups consisting of after-school teachers at their respective schools. Participants were asked eleven interview questions that were organized into the following four categories: primary goal of the after-school program, structure and organization, changes due to AYP and administrative and district support. The data collected by the researcher was obtained during February, 2008. The researcher scheduled the interviews with the participants at their respective schools so they would feel comfortable. The interviews were tape-recorded, kept in a locked storage, and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The data that was transcribed from the tapes was coded to protect the identity of the participants and their respective schools. After the tapes were transcribed the researcher destroyed them. The data was analyzed by the researcher before reporting the findings.

This research is important to educators, students, parents and community leaders. The research is important because the findings afforded all stakeholders the opportunity

to see the positive correlation that exists between after-school programs and student achievement. The variable of after-school programs is the component that benefits all students. The findings supported the contemporary literature referred to in the study. The researcher will communicate the findings to participants per school request.

Findings

As I interviewed with participants, I found that all after-school staff were in agreement that the after-school's primary focus was academics (**Finding 1**). This is consistent with the literature as stated by Willis and Steptoe (2007), that the law requires sanctions for schools that do not make annual progress toward closing the gap between sub-groups, as the intent of the law is to bring all students to grade-level proficiency in Math and Reading by 2014. The researcher believes that the after-school programs' primary focus is academics due to state and federal accountability expectations. Math and reading are the two areas that the after-school programs' initiatives were geared regarding academic achievement. At Wright Middle this finding was concluded when Meg stated, "Make sure we are supporting the school's role in making AYP" (Chapter 4, p.70). In addition, at Brown Middle, Dot stated, "Just to primarily focus on CRCT skills" (Chapter 4, p. 90). A direct correlation exists with the research question that focusing on Reading and Math is an important strategy that will reflect a successful after-school program.

After-school directors were responsible for structure and organization and teachers were responsible for curriculum decisions **(Finding 2).** This is consistent with the literature and Category II of the interview questions. Category II identified strategies regarding structure and organization that were considered useful for implementation of

effective middle school after-school programs. According to Manning and Baruth (1995), successful after-school programs were established by educators who recognized at-risk conditions, had a commitment to help these students meet their potential, and had the ability to design appropriate programs. The researcher believes that when stakeholders' expectations are clearly defined and responsibilities are aligned regarding areas of expertise then successful programs are implemented.

After-school personnel believed that a positive correlation existed between after-schools and academic achievement **(Finding 3).** This study illustrates the researcher's belief that after-school programs have a direct impact on student achievement as stated in the literature which according to Fashola (1998) concludes that time after-school is prime time for implementation of programs to complement, enhance, and enrich what happens during the school day. Effective after-school programs are capable of addressing three development needs of the "whole" child: academic, recreational, and cultural. Many similarities existed in the participants' responses to their belief of after-school programs and academic achievement. Paul stated, "You have to teach them how to use the research tools on that computer. So we are teaching them not just the subject matter but how to learn for themselves when they have something that they are interested in" (Chapter 4, p. 70). Meg stated, "I think the OAS has been wonderful, that is something that they recommend for the daytime teachers as something that they have to implement into their system for meeting AYP" (Chapter 4, p. 72). Abby stated, "I think probably it's being personable" (Chapter 4, p. 74). Meg stated, "I should say, and drama has been incorporated with our after-school program along with other extra-curricular activities, but in order to participate they have to maintain a certain grade level or grade averages"

(Chapter 4, p. 77). Jen stated, "We can review things they don't understand in class or if they are getting everything in class, we can actually use it as a preview of what is coming up in class so that they can stay ahead of the game" (Chapter 4, p. 90). The research supports that after-school programs are utilizing a variety of initiatives that are believed to be components of a successful after-school program.

Participants believed an effective communication system between all stake holders is important **(Finding 4).** This is consistent with the literature as stated by Bhanpuri (2005), many after-school programs show mixed results because after-school staff often does not receive proper training in how to link after-school time with in-class learning, effective classroom management, and student behavioral issues. The researcher believes that it is through these different communication initiatives that after-school programs developed it's most useful resource and ultimately helped to improve the effectiveness of the program. Meg stated, "We have to have that openness and that communication so that we know what the children need extra help on and that is what we have tried to create with the Q-drive folder, having that all the time communication and I just really think that is one of the main things, so that parents know what is going on and what resources are available to them and their children" (Chapter 4, p. 80). Alex stated, "One of the things that I discussed with the after-school director last year was not enough communication between the after-school teachers and the regular daytime teachers" (Chapter 4, p. 97). Jess stated, "We meet together weekly so we know where everyone's at" (Chapter 4, p. 101). A direct correlation exists with the research question regarding useful strategies found to be most effective regarding implementation of middle school after-school programs.

After-school staff believed that an effective after-school program should allow stakeholders to provide input regarding operations **(Finding 5).** This is consistent with the literature and the research question which examined useful strategies for the effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. According to Dynarski, Moore, Mullens, Gleason, James-Burdmy, Rosenberg, et al., (2003), middle school programs in the study usually allowed program directors to supervise and serve in administrative roles, while program coordinators handled day-to-day details of the center. Nearly all other staff members were directly involved in student activities or instruction and spent most of their time working with students. Meg stated, "I am the after-school site coordinator and the decisions fall under my responsibility" (Chapter 4, p. 71). Paul stated, "As far as the day to day way its run, the after-school director is pretty much our leader and her decision is the one that goes, but she gets a lot of input from us and she requests a lot of input from us and you might see things change, and we always do over a period of time, based on trying new things" (Chapter 4, p. 71). Pat stated, "The two head teachers and I make the decisions" (Chapter 4, p. 72). Alex stated, "The after-school director directs everything, but she is very open to suggestions so if you ever have any suggestions about a way it would work better in your room or better for the program or just better for that day she is very open for you to change things up the way you feel is necessary in your classroom" (Chapter 4, p. 91). Carla stated, "We make decisions about curriculum" (Chapter 4, p. 92). The literature supports the statement that decisions regarding after-school programs should be a shared process by all stakeholders. The researcher believes that it is through shared collaboration that the communication

component developed into the after-school's most useful resource and ultimately helped to improve student achievement.

After-school directors and teachers believed that an environment that fostered care and positive relationships was a vital component **(Finding 6).** The participants interviewed by the researcher discussed about the concern of students that had issues of self-confidence. The majority of the participants interviewed recognized the importance of forming positive relationships with students to promote academic success. As found in the literature Munoz (2002), supports this finding because after-school programs are considered necessity in our society for academic, social, emotional, physical, and safety reasons. Meg summed up the responses of most of the participants when she stated, "Just seeing her with the support and caring concern the staff has gotten with the children. I have just seen this grow how the children really respond to that care and concern that they weren't receiving at home and she flourished, she went from failing several grades to coming up to honor roll, therefore being able to participate in the after-school program and just from what I hear she is doing wonderful and great in highschool" (Chapter 4, p. 77). This finding is in direct correlation regarding effective strategies that are useful for successful implementation of after-school programs in middle school.

After-school personnel believed that a variety of learning and teaching activities was their most successful strategy **(Finding 7).** This is consistent with the contemporary literature and Categories I, II, and III of the interview questions. All three categories included sub-questions regarding instructional learning and teaching strategies. As stated by Okey (1998), in regards to after-school programs, it is reported that students learn in a variety of ways, and research indicates that providing additional time to some students is

the critical factor to higher achievement. Meg stated, "We have our different components on the technology lab including the On-line Assessment System. It gives us charts of their progress and we can actually put that, when we do reviews, in front of the children" (Chapter 4, p. 82). Meg also communicated that enrichment activities were incorporated as incentives if students attended the program Monday through Wednesday and maintained certain grade averages (Chapter 4, p. 77). Abby stated, "I think probably its being personable, I think that helps as much as any other strategy because they actually feel like somebody cares about them (Chapter 4, p. 74). In addition to caring, Abby referenced two mathematical activities that students were actually engaged in meaningful activities that promoted movement incorporated into math skills (Chapter 4, p. 74). Meg stated, "It's a very disciplined atmosphere, you have to be flexible, and having a willing staff is very important" (Chapter 4, p. 78). Pat stated that computer programs and CRCT prep books are incorporated as learning strategies (Chapter 4, p. 73). Paul stated, "We can go back and look at what they are teaching now because we can see their lesson plans, it's all on the Q-drive" (Chapter 4, p. 84). Alex stated, We were teaching different shapes, we gave them shapes and they had to apply those shapes and they made a bird house and that clearly helped some of the kids understanding the different shapes rather than teaching a worksheet" (Chapter 4, p. 92). Jen stated, "What we are going to try is listing a sentence across the board and there are laminated cards that have all different types of speech and we will play kind of like the price is right" (Chapter 4, p. 92). Alex stated, "Basically they come to me and then I help out with their homework" (Chapter 4, p. 93). Jo stated, "We are able to sit with the students more one-on-one and give them that assistance that they really need in their classroom but they can't get" (Chapter 4, p.

93). Dot stated, "I use an internet site and you can create your own tasks for them to take and you can see their grades and you can keep up with their progress" (Chapter 4, p. 93) Carla stated, "The kids have needed a lot of help and we use manipulatives, like the two colored counters and that kind of stuff" (Chapter 4, p. 93). Jess stated, I pair them up together to do their work and they have been helping the resource students" (Chapter 4, p. 94). Dot stated, "He was able to get his math average up to a B in the second nine weeks. And some of that is due to the fact that I am his teacher in the regular school day" (Chapter 4, p. 95). Jess stated, "The strategy was just simple drill and practice and she worked on the same skill in that quiz several times until she was able to get her grade" (Chapter 4, p. 96). The research question discussed what strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. The literature supports the statement that kids learn in a variety of ways and after-schools are incorporating many learning and teaching strategies to achieve academic success. It is the researcher's belief that the strategies that after-school programs are implementing are actively engaging students in meaningful instruction and increasing academic success.

After-school personnel believed that the administrators in their school supported the after-school programs. As previously stated in the literature, Gayl (2004), stated that the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which holds schools accountable for ensuring that students meet high standards, makes providing additional learning time significant. Struggling students often need additional support to meet the minimum state expectations, and educators continue to develop after-school programs that can help them. Meg stated, "The more I have gotten involved with the daytime administration and the teachers and everything, anything that I have ever asked for support in, anything I

have ever needed to get messages to the rest of the staff, they have been more than

willing to do whatever it was to make me feel a part of the school and make the program

work" (Chapter 4, p. 85). Abby stated, "Yes I mean they are very supportive, they run it

as best they could, you know, with the money they have and they encourage parents to let

their kids come and try to make it doable" (Chapter 4, p. 85). Jen stated, "I think they are

supportive at a distance; they are limited in what they actually do to get involved because

I think that they really trust the after-school director to run it" (Chapter 4, p. 102). The

researcher believes that administrators are supportive because there is pressure placed on

schools to meet AYP. Administrators are aware that struggling students need additional

learning time and are willing to provide support to teachers that take the time to work

with these students after regular school hours.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

The following recommendations emerged from the study by the researcher. Schools

across the state of Georgia are experiencing pressure to ensure that all students achieve

proficiency on standards-based achievement tests in reading and mathematics. Educators

need to implement after-school programs that are developmentally appropriate and

attractive to participants. It is important to establish a primary focus and create goals that

will ultimately have a direct impact on student achievement. In order to implement

effective after-school programs that are beneficial for all stakeholders, there needs to be

training that teaches the appropriate way to develop after-school programs that provide

services that meet the academic needs of all students.

Research regarding useful strategies to effectively implement after-school programs

needs to be on-going. The researcher believes that if educators are aware of the most

useful strategies that are needed to implement an effective after-school program it would have a positive impact on student achievement. The researcher believes that school systems need to analyze the application of the four categories of after-school programs as defined by the literature. The four categories are goals, structure and organization, impact of AYP, and administrative support.

School systems should identify useful strategies of after-school programs that best meet the needs of their student population. This research can help school systems validate the useful strategies that are effective for successful implementation of after-school programs. Once the importance of implementing a successful after-school program is brought to the attention of educators, support and funding is attainable. Research needs to be conducted from the students' and the parents' perspective regarding the effectiveness of after-school programs and their beliefs about the strengths and weaknesses. Researchers should also conduct a quantitative study on students' and parents' beliefs about the effects of after-school programs on their achievement in Georgia middle schools. The needs to be additional research that supports the various perspectives that students and parents possess related to the impact of after-school programs on their academic achievement.

Implications

The implications for this study are that after-school programs provide the additional support that struggling students need to increase academic achievement. Implementing after-school programs that include a variety of useful strategies ultimately enhances the programs potential to increase academic achievement. It is important for educators, students, and parents to understand the relationship that exists between after-schools and

academic achievement. The regular school day is the first and foremost attempt to equip students with the skills that they need to be successful. Stakeholders must realize the importance of producing children that are well educated and how this factor impacts the future of society. If this nation continues to produce poorly educated children who are not experiencing success at school, then society will continue to experience the impact of these children. This implication affects education and the future of these children and future generations.

The short-term implications of the findings are that school systems can implement after-school programs that are successful. Results indicate that when useful strategies are implemented that there is a positive impact on student achievement. Educators find great satisfaction knowing that their efforts have contributed to the academic success of a child. Long-term implications to the findings are that all students can experience success when after-school programs are implemented effectively. School systems, educators, students, and parents must work together to achieve the best results regarding after-school programs. The No Child Left Behind Act holds everyone accountable and it is important that school systems are utilizing resources to their fullest potential. School systems will begin to recognize their value in assuring that students are receiving services to meet their needs in programs that are offered outside regular school hours.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

In conclusion, schools have traditionally been perceived as places that children leave when the school day is over. Due to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, that requires states to ensure that all students achieve proficiency in reading and mathematics, the school day is not long enough to teach the students all they need to learn. If effective

after-school programs were to become a primary focus, its impact on student achievement would be more defined. The regular school day includes many factors that affect a struggling student's ability to master skills. It is in the elementary and middle years that after-school programs are able to give students the additional learning time that may be needed to close achievement gaps. As a result of this study, it can be concluded that there is a direct relationship between after-school programs and academic achievement according to selected Georgia middle school after-school directors and after-school teachers. Both the directors and the teacher representatives' beliefs on the effects of after-school programs on student achievement are well documented. Overall, the findings suggest there are useful strategies for effective implementation of after-school programs.

The findings also suggest that after-school directors and after-school teachers are continuously seeking useful strategies that are effective for successful implementation of middle school after-school programs. It is through the process of strategic planning to achieve a primary focus that includes well-defined goals that result in effective after-school programs. Directors worked collaboratively with school staff to provide structure and organization regarding after-school programs. Teachers spent the majority of their time engaging students in meaningful activities to promote academic achievement in reading and math. After-school teachers felt that their opinions and suggestions were taken into consideration and were in agreement with the procedures that were implemented by the after-school director. After-school teachers accepted responsibility for curriculum decisions and aligning activities with the regular school day was a priority. However, communication, transportation, and misuse of the program as baby-sitting were

communicated as concerns. After-school programs make every effort to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. They are continuously seeking new and innovative strategies that are appealing to students and also improve academic performance.

The common factors expressed by all participants were that after-school programs were better because there was a director to handle overall structure and organization. They were in agreement that a variety of learning and teaching strategies were to be utilized to increase student achievement. Computer based instruction was prevalent and perceived by all participants as an effective strategy to increase academic achievement. It was also stated that care and one-on-one interaction was a key component of the after-school program. The strategies that after-school directors and teachers found least effective were depending on parents for transportation, work-sheet driven instruction, and communication between directors, teachers, students, and parents.

It is the researcher's belief, that in order for a student to benefit from an after-school program that educators must strive to implement programs that are relevant and promote positive relationships. The middle school years are critical and students that fall behind are at-risk. These students struggle during the school day and additional learning time is not always perceived as a positive intervention. It is critical for after-school programs to include useful strategies that are appealing and promote academic achievement.

Since it is obvious based on the research conducted by this researcher that a positive relationship exists between useful strategies and implementation of effective after-school programs, then educators have a responsibility to ensure that students are provided with extended learning time. The key is that useful strategies are identified and incorporated

into the after-school program that promotes a caring and positive environment conducive

to learning.

REFERENCES

Akey, T. M. (2006). *School context, student attitudes and behavior, and academic Achievement.* New York, NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 489 760)

Belden Russonello & Stewart (2001). *Principals and after-school programs: A survey of pre-k-8 principals.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 465 212)

Bhanpuri, H. (2005). *Ensuring equity, access, and quality in 21st Century Community Learning Centers.* Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Lab. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 489 523)

Birmingham, J., Pechman, E., Russell, C. & Mielke, M. (2005, November). *Shared Features of high-performing after-school programs: A follow-up to the tasc Evaluation.* Retrieved October 16, 2007, from http://www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/1353/

Briggs-Hale, C., Judd, A., Martindill, H., & Parsley, D. (2006). *After-school mathematics practices: A review of supporting literature.* Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 494 268)

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Collins, K. M., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2001, November). *Effect of an After-School Tutorial Program on Academic Performance of Middle School Students At-Risk.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research

Association, Little Rock, AK. Retrieved October 16, 2006, from

http://web.ebscohost.com/ehostdelivery

Cowley, K. S., Meehan, M. L., Finch, N., & Blake, J. (2002, November). *Kentucky district and school coordinators' perceptions of their extended school services programs.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Washington, DC. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from

http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail

Creswell, J. (2002). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* UpperSaddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.

Duffett, A., Johnson, J., Farkas, S., Kung, S., & Ott, A. (2004). *All Work and No Play? Listening to what kids and parents really want from out-of-school time.* New York, NY: Public Agenda Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 485 306)

Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that Promote personal and social skills.* Retrieved October 23, 2007, from

www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf

Dynarski, M., Moore, M., Mullens, J., Gleason, P., James-Burdumy, S., Rosenberg, L., Masnfield, W., Heaviside, S., Levy, D., Pistorino, C., Silva, T., & Deke, J. (2003) *When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21st-century community Learning centers program. First year findings.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 473 230)

Fashola, O., (1998). *Review of extended-day and after-school programs and their*

effectiveness. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from

www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report24.pdf

Gardner, R., Cartledge, G., Seidl, B., Woolsey, L. M., Schley, G. S., & Utley, C. A.

(2001). *Mt. Olivet after-school program: Peer-mediated interventions for at-risk*

students. Remedial and Special Education, 22, 22-23. Retrieved October 18, 2006

from http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail

Gayl, C. (2004). *After-school programs: Expanding access and ensuring quality.*

Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institution. (ERIC Document Reproduction

Service No. ED 491 206)

Hall, G., & Israel, L., (2004). *Using technology to support academic achievement*

for at-risk teens during out-of-school time. Washington, DC: National Institute

on Out-of-School Time for the America Connects Consortium at Education

Development Center, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED

484855)

Harvard University Harvard Family Research Project 2004. *Moving beyond the*

barriers: Attracting and sustaining youth participation in out-of-school- time

programs. Retrieved November 11, 2006 from http://webebscohost.com/ehost/detail

Hollister, R. G. (2003). *The growth in after-school programs and their impact.*

Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.

ED 474 873)

Kruczek, T., Alexander, C. M., & Harris, K. (2005). *An after-school counseling program*

for high-risk middle school students. Professional Counseling, 9, 160-163. Retrieved

November 11, 2006 from http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery

Lacey, C. H., & Leblanc, P. (2001, February). *Advocacy for all: A 21*st *century community learning center for at-risk students*. Paper presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Association for Teacher Educators, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved October 18, 2005, from http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail

Lauer, P. A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, B., Apthorp, H. S., Snow, D., Martin-Glenn, M., (2004). *The effectiveness of out-of-school-time strategies in assisting low-achieving students in reading and mathematics.* Washington, DC: Institute of Education sciences. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.483 021)

Lichtman, M. (2006). *Qualitative research in education.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Massachusetts After-School Research Study (MARS). *Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school?* Retrieved November 11, 2006 from http://www.noist.org/prokects/projects_jacksonville.html

Meehan, M. L., Cowley, K. S., Chadwick, K., Schumaker, D., & Hauser, B. (2004, April). *Evaluation of a ten-year statewide after-school program for struggling learners.* Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 484947)

Miller, K., & Snow, D. (2004). *Out of school time programs for at-risk students.* Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 484 550)

Munoz, M. (2002). *Outcome-based community-school partnerships: The impact of the After-school programs on non-academic and academic indicators.* Louisville, KY:

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 468 973)

Okey, T. N. (1998, November). Every child a promise: *How one school meets the needs of a challenging population or what can you do while you wait for reform.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Middle School Association, Denver, CO. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery

O'Donnell, J., Michalak, E. A., & Ames, E. B. (1997). *Inner-city youths helping children: After-school programs to promote bonding and reduce risk. Social Work in Education, 19*, 231-41. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from http://Web.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery

Reisner, E. R., White, R. N., Russell, C. A., & Birmingham, J. (2004). *Building quality, scale, and effectiveness in after-school programs.* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 491 883)

Russell, C. & Reisner, E. (2005). *Supporting social and cognitive growth among Disadvantaged middle-grades students in tasc after-school projects.* Retrieved October 16, 2007 from http://www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/1448/

Seidel, S. Aryeh, L. & Steinberg, A. (2002). *Project-based and experiential learning In after-school programming.* Retrieved October 23, 2007, from http:web.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery?

Shumow, L. (2001). *Academic effects of after-school programs.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 458 010)

SPSS 14.0 for Windows (2005). Retrieved from http://www/academicsuperstore on

    May 21, 2006.

Tannenbaum, S., Brown-Welty, S. (2006). Embedding service-learning into an

    after-school program. *Journal of Experiential Education,* 29, 111+. Retrieved

    October 22, 2007 , from Periodical Abstracts database.

Wahlstrom, K., Sheldon, T., & Murphy, A. (2004). *21st Century community learning*

    centers: Pathways to progress. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from

    www.naesp.org/client_files/afterschool/PathwaysFinalEvaluationReport2004.pdf

Wolff, J. (2002). Proven practices: *"More time on task" benefits students at-risk.*

    New York, NY: Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction

    Service No. ED 472 576)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Category I – Goal(s)
    A.   In your opinion, what is the primary goal of the after-school program?
          1.   What do you think the goal of the after-school program is?
          2.   How are decisions made about how the after-school program is operated?
          3.   Describe an academic learning activity that you feel has been successful regarding student academic achievement.

Category II – Structure and Organization
    B. Describe a typical day for students that are participating in the after-school program?
          1.   Can you recall a student that would be characterized as a success story as a result of the after-school program?
          2.   Is the after-school program more supervision, enrichment, or academics?
          3.   What do you think are the major weaknesses of the after-school program?

Category III – Changes Relating to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)
    C. How has your after-school program changed since Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)?
          1.   What are the primary strategies used to increase academic achievement?
          2.   Are there any other changes as a result of federal mandates that have caused you after-school program to change?
          3.   Does you after-school program coordinate with regular school day activities? Explain.

Category IV - Support
    D. Do you feel that the administrators in your school and district are supportive of the after-school program at your school? Explain.
          1.   Do you feel that you have the resources that you need to be effective? Explain.
          2.   Can you recall an initiative by the administrators in you school or district that you believe has contributed to the success of the after-school program? Explain.

APPENDIX B

IRB LETTER OF INTENT

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

November 26, 2007

Dear Educator:

   I am the assistant principal of curriculum and currently serve as the after-school director for the Triple "A" Tutorial After-School Program at the Elbert County Middle School. I am conducting structured in-depth interviews of middle school educators in the Northeast Georgia Educational Agency (RESA) area that currently implement after-school programs. The purpose of the study is to obtain information regarding educators' beliefs of useful strategies for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. The results of the study will provide educators with descriptive data about educator's beliefs relating to after-school programs. Results of the study will be available upon request.

   Your school is listed as a middle school in the Northeast Georgia RESA area and was selected to participate in the research project. The project will provide valuable information about educators' beliefs regarding after-school programs.

   I will be contacting the school to logistically determine a timetable for the in-depth interviewing of each participant and to schedule focus group interviews. Please be informed that all responses are absolutely confidential.

   If you would like to contact me, my e-mail address is foakley@elbert.k12.ga.us. My mailing address is 1108 Athens Tech Road, Elberton, Georgia 30635 and my phone number is 706-213-4212. You may also contact the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465 if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study.

   Thank you for your assistance in this study of after-school programs. Your time and willingness to participate is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Fran R. Oakley

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANTS' PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE
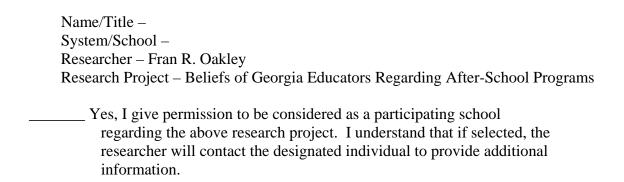
December 26, 2007

Dear Principal,

    My name is Fran Oakley, and I am a graduate student at Georgia Southern University pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Administration. I am employed as the Assistant Principal of Curriculum at the Elbert County Middle School in Elberton, Georgia. I also serve as the after-school coordinator and I am challenged with the responsibility of continuously seeking effective teaching and learning strategies to improve academic performance.

    As part of the graduation requirements, I plan to conduct a research project regarding after-school programs in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Agency (RESA) area. Due to the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and high-stakes testing, raising student achievement has pressured educators to provide additional learning time outside the regular school day. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to determine what strategies are useful for effective implementation of middle school after-school programs. It is my desire as an educator to share teaching and learning strategies with other systems in an attempt to improve the academic performance of students.

    In order to answer the research question, structured interviews designed to last approximately thirty to forty-five minutes will be conducted. The intent is to interview the after-school director or supervisor and one other individual that is directly involved with the after-school program. In addition, a focus group consisting of three to five teachers that are directly involved with the after-school program will be led in a thirty to forty-five minute discussion by the researcher. I do understand the importance of your time, but please know that every measure to accommodate participants' schedules will be considered.

    I am excited about the study and feel the results will provide valuable information regarding after-school programs. Please complete the information below and forward to the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board at ovrsight@georgiasouthern.edu and e-mail a copy of your response to foakley@elbert.k12.ga.us. If possible, please respond by Friday, December 21, 2007, as approval by IRB is required prior to any research action. I appreciate your support and thank you in advance for your time.

Name/Title –
System/School –
Researcher – Fran R. Oakley
Research Project – Beliefs of Georgia Educators Regarding After-School Programs

_____ Yes, I give permission to be considered as a participating school
regarding the above research project. I understand that if selected, the
researcher will contact the designated individual to provide additional
information.

APPENDIX D

IRB LETTER OF CONSENT