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ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING  
CENTER AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM AND STUDENT GRADE FIVE  
ACHIEVEMENT

By

Willie T. Herbert, Ed.D.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Dr. Kay A. Keiser

Omaha, Nebraska

December 2013

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## **Abstract**

# ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM AND STUDENT GRADE FIVE ACHIEVEMENT

Willie T. Herbert, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: Dr. Kay A. Keiser

This study explored the fifth grade achievement in reading, math, and language as measured by the California Achievement Test for students who were selected because of at-risk factors into an after-school achievement and enrichment program. Students in grades one to five attended this 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center Program from one to five days per week. Means of fifth grade achievement from participants in 2008-2012 were compared to the means of students within the same school setting.

Students who participated in the after-school program consistently scored within the same range as contemporaries not deemed as needing the after-school support. Further research with larger numbers and multiple settings is suggested to investigate the significance of providing additional after-school support for academic, enrichment, and social development to address the achievement gap.

## Acknowledgements

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Each week, about 77% (as many as ten million) American youth (latchkey kids) leave school with their house keys in their pocket, bag, purse, or around their necks because they will have to enter an empty house when they return home (Cole, 2006). That means no supervision, academic support, social expectations, or life-enriching activities (Collins, 2006). After a day of successes and failures, these students return to an empty home with no one to celebrate their successes or ease the pain of their failures. In some cases, their parent(s) are working two jobs to barely provide the family's basic needs (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005).

Due to socioeconomic factors and the growing number of single parent families, these students face unhealthy and unsafe circumstances when they return home from school (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). Collins (2006) implies that they are vulnerable as they walk home from school alone. Twenty-seven percent of the latchkey kids under the age of 18 will be raised in a single-parent home. Therefore, they are given the responsibility of return home without an adult escort and sometimes without peer-assistance. The increasing cost of childcare coerces single working parents to give their children the responsibility of returning to an empty home at the end of the school day. Among the 22% of working poor families with single parents, 40% of them spend at least half of their income on childcare.

Another 25% of these families spend at least 40% on childcare. To ensure that food and shelter is provided, some parent take the risk of having their children return

unsupervised homes as opposed to paying for expensive childcare services (Collins, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007).

### **Unsupervised and Unsafe Environments**

The high rate of crime in some impoverished communities, fatherless homes, and the lack of good parenting skills contribute to the high levels of child abuse and neglect. Children need adults to protect them and teach them how to avoid danger. From the time latchkey kids arrive home until the time their parents arrive, they are unsupervised. Depending on their age, they may not be able to properly respond to the crises which may occur during the absence of adult supervision. Regardless of their age, they are expected to manage the house and respond to emergencies without the support of a responsible adult. Responsible adults include parents, older siblings, aunts or uncles, grandparents, or reliable neighbors. Single-parent families, poverty, and inflation are major factors producing the increase of unsupervised children in the United States. These factors contribute to some parents' decision to allow their vulnerable children to remain in these unsafe environments. To make matters worse, some latchkey kids are responsible for supervising their younger siblings. During a time when these children are in need of adult assistance, they are expected to conduct themselves as adults (Cole et al., 2006; Collins, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Gurian, 2009).

Every day, nearly five American children die from abuse and neglect. Some of these cases occurred because of unsupervised and unsafe environments. An estimated 1,560 abused and neglected American children died in 2010. That means that

possibly 1,560 families were experiencing grief, separation, financial distress and educational barriers. During that year, Children's Advocacy Centers around the country served over 266,000 child victims of abuse and neglect and provided victim advocacy and support to victims and their families. Because of these circumstances, some of these students missed days of school. Approximately 695,000 children suffered from maltreatment. Some of these students were expected to achieve at the same level as other children who were not suffering from maltreatment. Forty-seven states reported that Child Protective Services provided preventive services for approximately 3.4 million children. The fact that preventive services had to be provided for this high number of children throughout forty-seven states indicates a serious problem across our nation. Over 20 out of 1,000 of the children younger than one year had the highest victimization rate. This fact could imply that parents do not have the patience to meet the needs of their children during the first year of their child's life. In 2010, of the 695,000 cases of maltreatment or abuse, 78% were abuse, 17% were neglect, just under 10% were sexual, approximately 8% were psychological, just over 2% were medical neglect, and approximately 10% experience other forms of maltreatment. Children who are not properly supervised become victims (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; National Children's Alliance, 2012). In 2011, the count increased from 266,000 to 279,000. In other words, there was a 13,000 victim increase from the previous year. Among the children served by Children's Advocacy Centers, 106,522 were ages 0-6 years, 99,624 were ages 7-12 years, 69,372 were ages 13-18 years, 187,862 were sexual abuse, 48,264 were physical abuse, and 179,014 of the victims participated in forensic interviewing at a

Children's Advocacy Center. More children from 0-6 years were victimized. There were almost four times as many sexual abuse cases than physical cases. Over 226,000 alleged child abuse offenders were investigated for cases from January through June 2011. These investigations have yielded interesting findings. Of these investigations, 146,981 were 18 or more years old, 24,075 were ages 13-17 years, 17,250 were under the age of 13, and 71,877 were unrelated but known by the victim. As we can see, about 195,000 out of 266,000 were student-age perpetrators. Also, 71,877 or 266,000 abusers were friends of the victims having access to the victim in unsupervised and unsafe environments (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; National Children's Alliance, 2012).

### **No Academic Support at Home**

Linda Reksten (2009) wrote about a contract submitted by Camellia Elementary School in Sacramento, California. In the contract, the parents were asked to commit to encouraging and supporting their child's learning, maintain contact with the school and their child's teacher(s), review their child's progress with his or her teacher(s), seek necessary help from the schools, provide a quiet place to study without television, and know the school's homework policy (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). It is extremely important that parents have a clear understanding of the level in which they are to participate in their child's learning experiences. A clear understanding of their responsibilities will allow them to effectively support their child in completing homework and other necessary duties. In addition to having a clear understanding of their parental responsibilities, parents must be present to assist their child in successfully completing the academic

and social challenges they face on daily basis (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007, Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008).

Students who return to empty homes after school lack the academic and social support needed to successfully complete homework and any other necessary duties (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). This lack of support could be the result of the parent(s) having to work long evening hours or the parent(s) lower literacy level. This has become a greater problem, since the amount of homework has reached an all-time high. The idea of giving students additional time to practice with their parents at home is great (Bouie, 2007). However, all students are unable to receive the same level of support as others. In an effort to give students opportunities to use time away from the classroom to participate in additional skills practice, teachers have sent worksheets and projects home for completion and credit in hopes of preparing their students to compete in a global marketplace (Bouie, 2007). Although the teachers' intentions were good, their abilities to consider all barriers were limited. Latchkey kids will not receive the quality academic support to achieve high. They will not have the quality one-on-one academic support of a qualified adult. The challenge of homework is good because students should have additional opportunities to revisit and practice the skills which are taught in class (St. Clair, 2010). However, quality support is beneficial. The most productive practice occurs when the practice is guided or supported by at least one qualified adult (St. Clair, 2010). With the increasing number of single-parent families, the level of quality guidance has decreased because there is no one home to assist these students. Sometimes, the parent(s) are home but inundated with the tasks of managing a



home with more than one child. Although these students long to complete their assignments with accuracy, many of them do not have the skills to do so independently. They must have the assistance of a qualified adult (Chaika, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009; St. Clair, 2010). Some schools no longer give homework because some students refuse to complete it (Gurian, 2009). These students understand the value of time and the fact that homework will prevent them from doing other life-enriching activities (Gurian, 2009).

### **A Need for Life-Enriching Activities**

Children between the ages of 5 and 14 spend up to 80% of their time out of school. The evenings, nights, and weekends allow the students have time to enjoy life. This time should be used to develop their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills along with their life-long interests (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). Some of this time should be devoted to making life more enriching or enjoyable for the children. The best use of out-of-school time is to allow children to join enrichment activities that promote basic skills and higher-level thinking. Some of the parents do not understand the concept of promoting higher-level thinking skills. Enriching activities may include: reading and math games, science projects, studies of plants and animals, play writing, publishing newspapers, music appreciation, sports, dance, team-building activities, computer exploration, special interest group or club participation, organizational strategies, and homework completion strategies. Many of these activities require certified teachers and/or highly-qualified paraprofessionals to promote higher-level thinking skills. Children need extended

time to learn from adults who are passionate about making a difference in their life, willing to learn the best practices for teaching, and able to invest time and energy into providing quality learning activities. Although parents have passion for making a difference in their child's life, they may lack the knowledge of best teaching practices and the time and energy to provide quality learning activities (CampbellJones, CampbellJones, & Lindsey, 2010; Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

The enrichment activities teach the necessary academic, enriching, and life skills in a manner that is creative and different from the activities provided during the regular school year. These activities require a higher level of energy and collaboration with staff and students to ensure that each student enjoy and succeed (Coltin, 2006; Jensen, 2009). These extracurricular activities broaden the students' view of how they learn and help them realize their learning potential. Enriching activities are designed to help each student learn a particular skill but also allow the child to learn more about their learning style. Regular classroom instruction focuses mostly on logical or mathematical intelligences. Enrichment activities allow the students to learn at a higher level of creativity. In many of the students' cases, regular classroom instruction is all the quality instruction they receive.

Extracurricular activities have always been available to affluent suburban children. Their parent(s) have provided time and energy to ensure that their children receive additional quality instruction. Now, more attention has been focused on proving that these activities which provide additional quality instruction are important in the lives of all children. These activities may include learning experiences which

include: photography, chess, hands-on math, martial arts, dance, music appreciation, science projects or social studies projects. They are learning experiences that support the skills needed to be successful during the regular school day. Certified teachers, highly-qualified paraprofessionals, and trained community experts guide the students through each activity to ensure the highest quality learning experiences and task completion. They are positive adults who offer the students additional academic and social support. These activities are designed to challenge the children and improve their ability to learn about themselves, their community, and the world. They assist the children in understanding themselves and other environment with impact their lives (Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009).

Academic enriching activities are used to develop a child's academic skills in a way that is different from the regular school day strategies (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). They are designed to creatively support the skills needed during the regular school day activities. These activities provide the homework help that most parents request for their children. Many of the students do not have academic support at home. After a full day of school, some students will need to have a light snack, release energy, play with friends, and build healthy relationships with caring, dependable, and competent adults. Certified teachers and highly-qualified paraprofessionals and vendors provide quality activities to improve the students' academic and social skills (Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009).

Latchkey kids do not have opportunities to enjoy some community enriching activities because their parents may not have time or energy to locate the programs

and enroll their children. Parents of latchkey kids are so busy during the week, they do not enroll their children in programs that may require additional time, energy, or fuel. Some of these parents spend a great deal of their day trying to maintain a schedule that may include two or more jobs (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). The only time they may have time to locate or gain knowledge about programs may be on Saturdays or Sundays when most of the program offices are closed for the weekend. In addition, Saturdays and Sundays may be needed to prepare for the following week. Some enriching activities require fees that make them only accessible to middle-and upper-income families. Many of the quality programs require fees to ensure that high-quality staff members are hired. Latchkey kids rarely have opportunities to interact with high-quality adults after school. This in-accessibility sometimes causes students to create their own enriching activities. When some children are left alone to create their own enriching activities, they often choose activities that are unsafe and not skills-based enough to promote success in school. Some students are greater risk-takers than others. However, the risks they take are not taken with full-knowledge of all possible dangers (Coltin, 2006; Jensen, 2009).

### **A Need for Life Skills Support**

Linda Reksten (2009) wrote about a contract submitted by Camellia Elementary School in Sacramento, California. Each student was asked to commit to following the district, school, and classroom rules, respecting the rights of others and wearing the school uniform consistently. Latchkey kids do not experience quality life skills support. They lack the necessary skills to respect and communicate with others effectively. To ensure that students are academically

successful, schools must include life skills' education (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). They need education that not only teaches them how to read and think mathematically but how to respect and accept respect from their peers and the adults within their school. Students effectively learn when they experience high levels of respect, honesty, kindness, and lawfulness. Although these skills may be taught and enforced at school, as it is with homework support, adult guidance is needed for students to consistently practice these skills while they are out of school. Students need additional opportunities to practice life skills to use them effectively in a variety of environments (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Kagan, 2003).

When students lack life skills, the learning environment becomes bombarded with social conflicts (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). Not only are they faced with academic challenges but social challenges as well (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). Negative behaviors such as skipping school, bullying, harassing, cheating on assignments, and stealing become prevalent. Over 160,000 students skip school each day due to bullying or harassing incidents. Some bullying incidents extend over several years. Many of such incidents have been reported to parents, teachers, and principals. However, their efforts to resolve the issues are ineffective. Thirty-three percent of American students report that they feel unsafe at school. These feelings may be the result of reported incidents which were handled in an ineffective manner. Imagine how unsafe Latchkey Kids feel without the support of an adult at home to address their bullying concerns at school. Many of them may become bullies themselves. Students who lack life skills may have tendencies of showing affection or joking in inappropriate ways. Eighty-three percent of the girls

and 60% of the boys have been touched, pinched, or grabbed in a sexual way during the school day. These types of offenses will definitely alter the learning environment if the proper intervention strategies are not provided to redirect the perpetrator. To overcome their academic challenges students who lack life skills may resort to cheating on tests or to complete homework assignments. Fifty-four percent of middle school and 70% of high school students admitted to cheating on a test. When cheating occurs, it makes it difficult for parents and school staff to properly identify the level on which a student is operating in academics. Resisting the temptation of stealing is also a problem for students who lack life skills. Forty-seven percent of high school students admitted to stealing from a store. When analyzing the levels of honesty of these students, know that some of them may have the responsibility of supervising their younger siblings (Kagan, 2003).

Developing life skills is essential for developing a child's work ethic. A good work ethic is the greatest asset a child can possess. This is true as it relates to efforts in school and life in general. A child must be taught how to motivate him or herself even when the rewards or gratitude is not so great. When analyzing this concept, attending school is in some ways like reporting to work and giving your best efforts. Although the child is not given money for his or her hard work, grades and credits are provided to reward each child for their acceptable participation and work. As a child develops his or her study habits, he or she develops their ability to research and persevere through life's challenges. Children who have good study habits, time management abilities, and organizational skills excel in academics, post secondary education, and the workplace. It is crucial that students understand the

importance of developing good study habits, valuing time, and utilizing good organizational skills. Although having a high I.Q. is good, it does not always result in success. A child's I.Q. must be supported with good life skills and work habits. "Smart" kids have dropped out of college and lost jobs because they lacked good work habits. Good work habits require perseverance in overcoming academic and social challenges. Some students need additional opportunities and coaching to develop good work habits. A quality after-school program may provide the needed support (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Evans, 2012; Gurian, 2009).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of participation in a combined after-school, non-school, and summer school academic and enrichment program on elementary students' academic achievement.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center After-School Programs**

Since November 2007, the researcher has had the privilege of being a member of the Technical Assistance Team for the Omaha Public Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CLC) After-School Programs. Based on the researcher's firsthand experience with the CLC a description of the program mission statement, aims, and goals, an overview of the school and agency participation, and program staff will be provided.

**Mission of the 21st Century Community Learning Center**

The mission of the 21st Century Community Learning Center is to provide educational opportunities which enable all students to achieve at their highest potential (Dean, 2012).

**Aims of the 21st Century Community Learning Center**

The aims of the research district's 21st Century Community Learning Centers includes: 1) high student achievement; 2) safe and secure learning environment; 3) effective and professional work force; 4) partnerships; and 5) effective and efficient use of the district's resources (Dean, 2012).

**Goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Center**

The goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program are to:

- 1) improve all students' learning performances by providing extended academic and enrichment support opportunities designed to meet the needs of the whole child;
- 2) increase all students' social success by working collaboratively with community partners to develop a quality program that addresses the needs of the students, staff members, parents and families;
- and 3) increase parental, family, and community engagement in promoting high academic achievement for all students (Dean, 2012).

**Description of the 21st Century Community Learning Center**

Currently, there are 19 elementary 21st Century Community Learning Centers within the research district (Dean, 2012). All sites provide after-school, summer and non-school day programming in a safe and secured environment. During the 2010-11 school year, 1,495 students in grades K-6 completed a minimum of 30 out of 164 days of programming. Programming includes: homework and



academic support, enrichment activities, field trips, cultural events, community service, and personal growth (Dean, 2012).

### **Supportive Community Agencies**

During the 2010-11 school year, the following agencies supported the programs with staff and funding: 1) Student/Community Services, Curriculum and Learning, Title I/ARRA Funds; 2) Nebraska Department of Education; 3) Omaha Schools Foundation; 4) Boys and Girls Club; 5) Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership; 6) Developing Relationships Through Education and Mentoring (DREAM); 7) Church of the Resurrection Episcopal; and 8) Bethesda Urban Development. These agencies collaborate with elementary school principals to employ a qualified site supervisor, certified teachers, highly qualified paraprofessionals, and quality vendors (Dean, 2012).

### **Technical Assistance Team**

The Community Learning Centers Technical Assistance Team consists of: Student/Community Services Coordinator, Grants Coordinator, CLC Coordinator, CLC Co-coordinator, two Student/Community Relations Specialists, Data Technician, State Evaluator for the Nebraska Department of Education, and Local Evaluator from the Monroe-Meyer Institute (Dean, 2012).

### **Attendance Reporting**

Each site supervisor is emailed a copy of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers monthly attendance spreadsheet and once completed is forwarded to the research district data center. All community learning center participants are expected to attend at least 30 of the 164 possible days of programming to support

the program in receiving maximum funding from the state (Dean, 2010; St. Clair, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question #1.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test reading scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #2.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test math scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #3.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test language scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #4.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support

activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test total battery scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Analysis.** Research Questions #1-4 will be analyzed using independent *t* tests to examine the significance of the difference between elementary students academic achievement following attendance in 21st Century Community Learning Center academic and enrichment program activities after-school during the regular school years, non-school days, and summers compared to the research site's (building's) average. Because multiple statistical tests will be conducted, a two-tailed .05 alpha level will be employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations will be displayed on tables.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Academic achievement.** Using the fifth grade California Achievement Test scores to determine the students' mastery of reading, math, and language arts skills (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; Answers.com, 2012).

**Academic activities.** These are learning activities which support reading, math, and language arts skills. These activities are not to look like the learning activities practices during the regular school day. Use of worksheets is not encouraged. These activities are aligned with the school's goals to improve the participants' reading, math, and language art skills (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; St. Clair, 2010).

**After-school program.** A program designed to extend the academic and enrichment learning opportunities for participants pass the dismissal of the regular

school day. This program could provide at least one hour of academic activities and at least two hours of enrichment activities for 134 days during the school year (St. Clair, 2010).

**California Achievement Test.** A test administered to determine skill mastery in the reading (Vocabulary and Comprehension), math (Computation and Concept and Application), and language arts (Mechanics and Expressions) (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; Answers.com, 2012).

**Enrichment activities.** These are learning activities which provide additional art, music, PE, and life skills support. These activities are taught by community vendors who specialize in the areas such as: dance, martial arts, vocal/instrumental music, painting, weaving, nutrition, golf, basketball, and flag football (St. Clair, 2010).

**Language Arts achievement.** The fifth grade California Achievement Test scores to determine the students' mastery of language arts mechanics and expressions skills (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; Answers.com, 2012).

**Math achievement.** The fifth grade California Achievement Test scores to determine the students' mastery of math computation, concepts, and application skills (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; Answers.com, 2012).

**Non-school days.** These are days when the participants are offered at least four hours of programming during a time when school is not in session. These days may not be offered during teacher work days or in-services to encourage certified teacher participation. 10 days, during winter or spring breaks or designated holidays may be selected (St. Clair, 2010).

**Reading achievement.** The fifth grade California Achievement Test scores to determine the students' mastery of reading vocabulary and comprehension skills (Omaha Public Schools, 2008; Answers.com, 2012).

**Summer school.** The participants are offered 20 additional days of programming. The CLC staff members assist the regular school staff during four out of six or more programming hours (St. Clair, 2010).

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center.** An after-school program designed to provide at least 164 days of at least three hours of programming for at least 50 students. The participants will receive academic and enrichment learning activities (St. Clair, 2010).

### **Assumptions of the Study**

Students who participate in the Community Learning Center (CLC) benefit from the program's many well thought out supportive features including nutritious meals, learning in a safe and secure learning environment that includes quality security staff who track the whereabouts of all students as long as they are participating in the program. Furthermore, the CLC is located in the participants' own neighborhood to promote parental involvement and reduce transportation needs. The CLC provides certified teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals who teach during the regular school day to create a learning linkage between the regular day and after-school programming and support the participants in developing their reading, math, science, and life skills. The CLC provides one hour of academic support including 15 to 20 minutes of time devoted to homework completion. The rest of the time students participate in teacher-directed learning

activities to support reading, math, and language arts skills development. The CLC has offered programming for all participants of this study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was confined to 29 students who participated in one of the research district's Elementary Community Learning Center (CLC) during the 2008 through 2012 school years. Only the fifth grade reading, math, and language arts California Achievement Test scores were used for this study. All of the participants were offered 164 days of programming that include one hour of academic activities and at least two hours of enrichment activities.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to first through sixth grade students participating in an Omaha Public Schools' Community Learning Center (CLC) designed to provide academic and enrichment activities after school. The students were selected by the principal and site supervisor in a manner that reflected the demographics of the entire student population. They participated in the CLC and were administered the fifth grade California Achievement Test during the 2008 through 2012 school years.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study contributes to research, practice, and policy. The study is of significant because it may promote further studies in the near future. It can provide valuable information to guide urban school districts as they strive to assist students who live: in unsafe and impoverished neighborhoods; with one parent or foster parents; without homework support and proper nutrition or without proper adult supervision during the hours of three to six o'clock in the evening in reaching

educational and social excellence. The study may assist the urban school districts in determining whether or not they need to increase or decrease the number of after school programs within their districts.

**Contribution to research.** A review of professional literature suggests that more research is needed on the subject of after school program attendance and the impact it has on student achievement as it relates to reading, math, and language arts skills. Furthermore, the results of this study may inform the district central office and building leaders of the impact of extended time for academic, enrichment, and social support has on student achievement. In addition, the findings may indicate specific factors for increasing student academic achievement.

**Contribution to practice.** A school district with a high population of low-achieving students may decide whether or not to maintain current after school practices or consider implementing practices articulated in this study, increase efforts to fund additional after school programs, increase efforts to develop parental engagement, and heighten community and school based awareness of issues surrounding low-achieving students to ensure that all students have the academic, enriching, and social support needed to achieve at a higher academic level.

**Contribution to policy.** The results of this study may offer insight in how school district policies affect student achievement. If results show there is a difference in achievement scores, the school district may choose to increase or decrease the number of available after school programs designed to support students in the areas of academic.

**Outline of the Study**

The literature review relevant to this research study is presented in Chapter 2. This chapter reviews the professional literature related to the impact that after school program attendance has on student achievement. Chapter 3 describes the research design, methodology, independent variables, dependent variables, and procedures that will be used to gather and analyze the data of the study. This includes a detailed synthesis of the participants, a comprehensive list of the dependent variables, the dependent measures, and the data analysis used to statistically determine if the null hypothesis is rejected for each research question.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

This review of literature focuses on the importance of student attendance and its impact on student achievement. It includes information that supports: (a) the need for students to attend school to promote consistent learning and community support, (b) providing academic and social support, (c) reducing the dropout rate, (d) supporting No Child Left Behind, (e) relationships between the factors of after-school program attendance and student achievement, (f) related studies on student variables, such as high and low attendees, (g) needs for school, family, and community collaborations, and (h) chapter summary.

#### **Attendance and Consistent Learning**

Schools are considered successful when the students attend regularly. Reksten wrote about Camellia Elementary School and its efforts to ensure that high attendance rates were sustained. She shared components of a contract which made the students commit to attending school every day unless they were sick. Her contract included a statement asking that primary students commit to an 8:00 pm bedtime to ensure that they had the proper amount of rest in preparation for their academic and social challenges. The intermediate students were asked to commit to a 9:00 pm bedtime. Parents were expected to commit to accepting the responsibility of assisting their children in regularly attending school, getting to bed by 8 or 9:00 pm, and arriving to school by 8:00 am. In the same contract, teachers were challenged to motivate good attendance by providing: quality instructions; academic and social incentives; and positive communication with students. This

contract supported the idea that students require a certain amount of rest and parental and teacher support in order to attend school and meet the academic and social expectations of each school day (Reksten, 2009).

When students attend school, they decrease their risk of becoming a victim or possibly victimizing someone-else within their community (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Cole et al., 2006). Truant students sometimes set their own agendas for the day. As a result, they learn to defy authority and create their own learning experiences (Gurian, 2009). Their ideas of learning experiences may include: stealing cars; trashing someone's home; or assaulting a community member. Therefore, students' attendance rates are tracked at the building, district, and state levels (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). Some districts have specific administrators who monitor truancy and are held accountable for reporting high truancy to the County Attorneys (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). This allows the district to monitor attendance behaviors of students and hopefully provide intervention strategies such as incentives to reduce poor attendance behaviors (Bouie, 2007). Intervention strategies may include providing the student and his or her family with a community counselor or social worker to support the student and family in making productive decisions and life changes which support positive relationships and increased school attendance (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Bouie, 2007). Another strategy may include asking principals to compare their attendance rates to those of other buildings throughout the district and state to determine whether or not his or her building attendance is meeting or exceeding the State Standard (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). If the building exceeds the State Standard, the principal is given the

opportunity to share his or her effective building-level efforts with other principals in a forum setting. If the school's attendance rate is not meeting or exceeding the State Standard, the principal is asked to submit his or her plans for addressing the issue of low attendance (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). The principal is allowed to meet with his or her planning team to identify effective intervention strategies (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Great School Staff, 2012; Reksten, 2009).

### **Providing Academic and Social Support**

Addressing the attendance issue is important because students are more likely to succeed academically and socially when they consistently attend school. Teachers are more effective when the academic information is shared with as many students as possible to ensure that all students consistently receive the same information and time to promote academic success. If large numbers of students are absent on a regular basis, teachers are unable to consistently: create a cohesive classroom; develop the skills of each student; and promote collaborative learning opportunities. Students, particularly on the elementary level need consistent support from staff members and peers to be academically and socially successful (Bouie, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007).

### **Reducing Dropout Rates**

Dropout rates have been linked to poor attendance, beginning in kindergarten. When students are allowed to dictate when they attend school at an early age, it becomes a detrimental habit as they get older. As that student becomes older and more independent, he or she will become more defiant and truant (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). As a result of these behaviors, across our nation, some

states have decided to allow the average daily attendance and participation to determine the funding support at each building. This supports the belief that schools with low attendance do not need as much funding as schools with high attendance. Therefore, the schools, with high absenteeism, receive less funding for their program (St. Clair). This standard is in place to ensure that the cost per student is equitable (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Great School Staff, 2012; Reksten, 2009; St. Clair, 2010).

### **Supporting No Child Left Behind**

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires that all students are educated regardless of barriers that may reduce attendance. This act has challenged educators across the nation to explore strategies for overcoming all barriers to high academic achievement (Bouie, 2007; Reksten, 2009). Low attendance is a major barrier to high academic and social achievement. Researchers have attempted to define student attendance to investigate its importance and relationship to academic achievement (St. Clair, 2010). Test scores and grades of certain students have been analyzed to determine if there are relationships between attendance and student achievement. Their findings have shown that students with higher attendance rates have higher grades than low attendees. These findings support the idea that the more students attend school the higher their grades will be in comparison to students with high absenteeism (Bouie, 2007). School failure rates were explained through student attendance percentages. Principals and teachers realized that some students were not successful because they were not in attendance to learn necessary concepts on which other ideas are founded (Reksten,

2009). As a result of the research and explanations, many state departments of education and school boards have analyzed and redesigned their school attendance policies to include programs which implement more rigorous attendance-monitoring systems for schools. Some school districts hire Student Personnel Assistants to monitor, document, and report high absenteeism (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). Students must be present to gain prior knowledge to allow them to understand the next concept. Research has indicated that regardless of social and economic factors, schools with the highest attendance rates have higher test scores and that increases in absenteeism have shown correspondingly negative impacts on student achievement. Students who attend school on a regular basis have a better chance of receiving the academic and social support needed to be successful (Jones, 2006; Reksten, 2009).

This review of literature focuses on the importance of student attendance and its impact on student achievement. The following sections include: (a) relationships between the factors of after-school program attendance and student achievement, (b) related studies on student variables, such as high and low attendees, (c) needs for school, family, and community collaborations, and (d) chapter summary.

### **After-School Program Attendance and Student Achievement**

In regards to after-school programs and student achievement, the following questions have been asked by evaluators on the district, local, and state levels: 1) Relationships between the factors of after-school programs and attendance. 2) Relationships between the factors of after-school programs and student

achievement. 3) Relationships between the factors of attendance and student achievement. 4) Relationships between the factors of after-school program attendance and student achievement.

### **Relationships Between the Factors of After-School Programs and Attendance**

Students and parents have responsibilities in ensuring that the students attend school. Students are not allowed to attend after-school programs when they are absent during the regular school day. This requirement can assist parents in promoting high attendance during the regular day as well as the after-school program (Reksten, 2009; St. Clair, 2010). Most after-school programs use program attendance as the key factor in determining the quality of the program. If students enjoy the after-school programs and feel that their academic, enrichment, and social needs are being met, they will attend (St. Clair, 2010).

Students do not attend programs that do not offer support or engaging activities. Students benefit from academic and enrichment activities which are managed by quality staff and presented in a manner that enables them to learn. As a result, the students desire to attend each day. Parents have a difficult time encouraging students to attend programs which lack staff support and engaging activities. When after-school programs do not produce quality staff and engaging activities, students become interested in other non-academic activities within the community which might not include a high level of accountability and safety (Reksten, 2009; St. Clair, 2010).

It is vital that children have a high level of accountability and safety from the time the child is dismissed from the regular school day activities until the time he or

she is picked up or allowed to walk home. After-school programs provide a safe and accountable environment for students to enjoy high levels of activity engagement (Jenner & Jenner, 2007; Reksten, 2009; Reno & Riley, 2000; St. Clair, 2010).

### **Success of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC)**

**Programs.** CCLC programs are having positive academic impacts on students who attend the program for 30 days or more. Some programs offer up to 164 days including 134 regular days, 10 non-school days and 20 summer school days during one calendar school year. Students are encouraged to take full advantage of all that the program offers. These after-school programs are structured to maximize attendance. Each program strives to hire certified and high-qualified staff and vendors to provide a program that students would desire to attend consistently. Although attendance is a good indicator of program success, principals and after-school site supervisors are encouraged to include other indicators of program success (St. Clair, 2010).

After-school programming staff requires students, parents, regular-school staff, vendors, and community partners to complete and submit surveys to provide feedback on the program's quality. Monthly Success Stories are submitted to the local and state evaluators describing the impact the program has had on selected students (Litke, 2009; St. Clair, 2010).

**Encouraging Student Participation.** Offering a wide range of creative academic-support and enrichment activities encourage students to attend after-school programs. Although students need consistency in discipline, they crave variety in instructional strategies and learning activities (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007).

After-school staff members are asked to plan the academic time in a way that links the students' learning activities to the regular school day without making them feel as though they are attending regular school day sessions (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; St. Clair, 2010). Although some of the same classrooms are used during after-school programming, the academic and enrichment activities do not have to be the same. Therefore, the use of worksheets during after-school programming is discouraged. Teachers are asked to search for creative ways to allow the students to build their academic and social skills without using pencil and paper activities. Pencil and paper activities do not always promote student collaboration or quality student-teacher interaction (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Kim, Samson, Fitzgerald, and Harty, 2010; St. Clair, 2010).

**School, Family, and Community Collaboration.** After-school programs should promote high levels of school, family, and community collaboration, chronic absenteeism decreases. High levels of collaboration create the level of support needed to ensure that students will attend the program (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; St. Clair, 2010). Programs that conduct a greater number of attendance-focused activities were more likely to see a decrease in chronic absenteeism. When students' attendance levels are recognized consistently, students become more aware of the level on which they are being held accountable for attending the after-school program. Some programs displayed students' attendance on a weekly basis by plotting each student within one of three groups to indicate their level of participation. This method allows student to connect with their level of attendance



with hopes of aspiring to the next level (Cole et al., 2006; Gurian, 2009; Reksten, 2009; Sheldon, Epstein, & Joyce, 2004; St. Clair, 2010).

**The Need for Life-Enriching Activities.** Some states mandate the amount of time allotted for physical activity. This mandate is supported by the belief that a students' level of physical fitness improves his or her health and alertness during instructional time along with academic interests (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). There is the need to structure each after-school program to ensure that after the academic session of after-school programming, students are allowed to sign up for highly-active enrichment experiences such as dance, martial arts, baseball and golf. These activities allow the students to learn on a more active level and possibly release excessive amounts of energy. The lesser-active enrichment activities offer music appreciation, painting, knitting, weaving, along with numerous other opportunities. These activities allow the students to interact with staff and students in a more calming environment which may allow students to reflect on their day. For some programs, the enrichment sessions last for at least one hour to allow the students enough time to become engaged and assist in cleaning up. It is crucial that students have enough time to develop physical and social skills as well as learn how to be respectful of learning environments (Beets, Wallner, & Beighle, 2010; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; St. Clair, 2010).

### **Relationship Between the Factors of After-School Programs and Student Achievement**

Some 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) have significant impacts on the academic achievement of its participants. Students who attend after-

school programs show academic progress as a result the academic and social support they receive while attending the programs (Cole et al., 2006; St. Clair, 2010). After-school programs allow students to focus their attention on their specific areas of needs in academics in a relaxed, supervised, and enriching environment. Some of these programs are designed to provide the participants with creative ways of improving academic and social skills. Teacher and parent surveys have indicated that after-school participants develop their social skills and manage conflict in a socially-acceptable manner. Some students need additional time after school to develop their academic and social skills (Cole et al., 2006; St. Clair, 2010). Parents add that their children feel safe and learn more in a safe and structured environment. After-school programs provide another safe and structured environment in which students can learn. Students who attend after-school programs express interests in completing high school and attending college. They began to develop an appreciation for learning efficient and effective ways of overcoming academic and social barriers in a safe and structured environment (Cole et al., 2006; Jenner & Jenner, 2007; Little & Hines, 2006; Reno & Riley, 2000; St. Clair, 2010).

**School and Community Projects.** The current emphasis on meeting academic performance standards has motivated some districts to partner with community agencies to provide after-school programs. Research has shown that 60 minutes added to the school day has shown significantly positive impacts on the reading and math achievement of students (St. Clair, 2010; Yeh, 2011). The district applies for grants to fund the programs. The agencies hire the staff to manage the

programs. The goals of these programs are to develop students' academic and social skills in addition to providing a safe and secure learning environment during the hours of 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm when students are more at risk (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; St. Clair, 2010). Some after-school programs are sponsored and operated by for-profit businesses, community organizations, public schools, private schools, universities, church groups, and government agencies such as park and recreation departments (Cole et al., 2006). These community partners are convinced that their efforts in providing a safe and structured learning environment for students will promote an increase in their academic and social developments (Cole et al., 2006; St. Clair, 2010). Some of these partners collaborate with the school district to support the mission of that district and provide opportunities for the students to develop skills and interests in life-enriching activities such as dance, music, science, or arts and crafts (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; St. Clair, 2010). Each of these skills and interests are relevant to the life-enriching success of the students. Studies have shown that because of high risk circumstances, some students who are unsupervised during these after-school hours are more likely to be victimized or victimize others. When students are allowed to explore in unsafe and unsupervised environments, their findings are usually harmful and destructive (Gurian, 2009; Shumow, 2006; St. Clair, 2010).

### **Relationships Between the Factors of Attendance and Student Achievement**

High attendance positively impacts high academic success. In other words, students who attend school on a consistent basis are more academically successful. Because of this knowledge, schools have implemented strategic plans for ensuring

that students are attending school on a consistent basis. Some schools have developed school-wide plans to ensure that attendance is monitored, corrected, and celebrated. Some schools reward students for 95-100% attendance records. These rewards may include small tokens of appreciation such as pencils, erasers, pens with educational slogans...etc. Others may include monthly parties or game celebrations (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011; Reksten, 2009; Roby, 2003; Jenner and Jenner, 2007).

**Attendance Impacts Test Scores.** Although socioeconomic conditions are uncontrollable, students of low socioeconomic families are able to meet high academic standards. In the United States, many of these families rely on the public education systems to develop their children's academic abilities. Although poverty is a major variable, studies have indicated that after comparing scores of Proficiency Test to the school attendance, it has been determined that there were positive correlations between student attendance and student achievement. Poverty is an uncontrolled variable. However, attendance has the greatest impact on achievement (Roby, 2003; Moore & Jensen, 2008; Gottfried, 2009; Reksten, 2009).

**Truancy Lowers Academic Achievements.** Elementary students with a higher number of unexcused absences are at risk in math achievement. Since math concepts build in sequential levels of difficulty, students with a high number of absences could have difficulty in progressing in math when he or she is not present to learn and link one sequential level to another. When students are absent, additional instruction is needed to re-teach the lessons which have already been presented to the rest of the class. Teachers are forced to make time to teach truant

students the concepts which some of the other students may have already mastered. The additional time teaching students with high truancy rates decreases the amount of time the teacher or paraprofessional has to support the students with high attendance rates. In other words, the students with high attendance are generally disadvantaged when their class has a large number of truant students who require additional instructional time from the teacher. Based on that thought process, it would seem that the fewer truant students a class has the higher the level of student success within that classroom should be expected. Learning requires ongoing instruction and student efforts to promote ongoing academic success. When the level of attendance is high, students learn at a quick and consistent rate (Gottfried, 2009; Moore & Jensen, 2008; Reksten, 2009; St. Clair, 2010).

**Student Must Be Present to Learn.** Students with high absenteeism increase their daily attendance, the number of discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions decrease. Students must attend school to learn the social constructs of the building. Increasing the amount of time that students interact with other students and school staff increases their understanding of how to meet social expectations (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). Some students are referred to the office because they are experiencing social challenges that the teacher may not have time or the capability to resolve within the classroom. When students are truant, the academic and social progress that teachers, principals, counselors, and other staff members have made with the student may be lost. Students need time to develop their understanding of school expectations as they may differ from family expectations (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). They must be taught and given

opportunities to practice meeting others' expectations within the school building. Since regular school attendance is necessary for the learning process, high frequencies of absenteeism can be an indication of academic and social performance issues (St. Clair, 2010). High absenteeism not poverty is correlated with low academic achievement. Disadvantaged students who have good attendance rates acquire more literacy skill than their higher socioeconomic status peers on the kindergarten and first grade levels. Since resources are provided to teach and assess students, attendance not additional money from the families is needed to ensure that the students take advantage of the provided educational resources (Martin, Martin, Gibson, & Wilkins, 2007; Spencer, 2009; St. Clair, 2010; Weismuller, Grasska, Alexander, White, & Kramer, 2007).

### **Relationship Between the Factors of After-School Program Attendance and Student Achievement**

Students who attended after-school programs improve their regular day attendance and express desires to finish school and attend college. Attending school is a learned behavior that must be valued and modeled for younger students. When this concept is applied, students are less likely to experience high truancy or drop out of school. Encouraging students to attend functions such as sports practices, church functions, and others extracurricular engagements will help a child understand the importance of attending to complete what he or she has begun. Another way to encourage high attendance is to provide incentives for regular attendance. After-school participants are more likely to improve their state assessments scores (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). After-school programs are expected

to hire certified teachers and qualified paraprofessionals to support the students in academics and social skills. In return, the students show significant improvements in reading and math skills. Some of the after-school programs schedule at least one hour to provide 30 minutes of both reading and math activities which support the regular school day lessons presented during the current or prior week. More than half of the students participating in academically-driven after-school programs improved both academically and socially. These students are provided additional time and opportunities to interact with certified teachers, qualified paraprofessionals, and their peers support the idea that they are receiving academic and social support (St. Clair, 2010). Across the country, annual performance report data is showing that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program participants improve their reading (43%) and math (42%). These students reap the benefits of investing at least two hours of their evening each day to develop their reading and math skills. Those who regularly attended high-quality programs for over a two-year period of time have shown significant gains in math. High-quality programs include high-quality staff and resources. Other students who have attended after-schools programs for at least 280 hours annually averaged double-digit increases in math and reading proficiency. The additional time that students invest in attending high-quality after-school programs has contributed to increased achievements. The number of students receiving A's and B's showed a 38% average increase while those receiving F's decreased 50%. When students invest time in collaborating with high-quality staff and their peers, they improve academically. Students and staff provide valuable learning experiences for each other. 21<sup>st</sup>

Century Community Learning Centers program participants have received better English and math grades than non-participants. When students invest time into the after-school programs with quality academic support, they improve their academic skills (Afterschool Alliance, 2011).

**The Benefits of Extended Learning Opportunities.** Students who attend school for longer periods of time during the day have shown positive academic achievement results in literacy (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). Some students need additional time and support to master literacy skills because they are unable to receive additional support at home (Cole et al., 2006). When students are allowed to interact with qualified adults for extended amounts of time, they can develop the desired academic skills through additional instruction and modeling (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). Students benefit from having qualified staff instruct and model the acceptable academic skills during after-school programs (Cole et al., 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Hall-Kenyon, Bingham, & Korth, 2009; St. Clair, 2010).

**Additional Support for Social Skills.** The more time elementary students spend in the learning environment, the more chances they have of becoming more socially developed (Cole et al., 2006; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). Additional time in the school setting provides students with additional opportunities to develop ways of collaborating with diverse leadership styles and resolving peer conflicts. Some students need extended amounts of time to interact with other students and staff to grasp social constructs. Their social constructs at home and school may differ in some or all aspects. These students must have additional time to learn and develop such skills as respecting personal boundaries and accepting the diverse expectations



of others (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Hallam and Rogers, 2008). The schools provide an environment that challenges each member to combine individual expectations into a set by which all members can abide. Because some families allow certain verbally and physically abusive interactions that are unacceptable in the school settings, the school staff and students must make time to create an environment that promotes social success for all students and staff (Allen & Webber, 2010; Cole et al., 2006; Cooper et al, 2010; Ready, 2010; St. Clair, 2010).

**Summer Programming Support.** After-school programs that extended into the summer help close the academic gap between high and low-income students. During the summer, some after-school programs provide additional services for the students such as exploratory activities (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). Students may receive the same high-quality programming for an additional 20 days. As a result, students who attend extracurricular activities or after-school programs improve regular school day success in academics, attendance, and reduction of discipline referrals. It is vital that students receive the amount of academic and social support they need to be successful in the school setting (Cole et al., 2006). In an effort to close the academic gap, recommendations include after-school programming, extending the school-year, and supplementing existing programs. Of the three, after-school programming has proven to be an effective way to close the academic gap. After-school programs provide opportunities for students to react positively to teachers and peers while developing their academic and social skills in a safe learning environment. Although extending the school-year and supplementing existing programs may have their impacts on closing the academic gap, after-school

programs continue to increase in number across the nation. Students who attend after-school programs increase their perceptions of safety, develop their time management and social skills, and receive additional academic support (Cole et al., 2006). These are all vital skills needed to ensure that all students become productive citizens (Afterschool Alliance, 2011; Cousins & Scribner, 2004; Fisher et.al, 2011; Gay & Corwin, 2008; Gottfredson, Cross, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010; Yeh, 2011).

### **Summary**

This reviewed literature indicates that further research should be conducted to study the effects that after-school program attendance has on student achievement to promote discussions for creating and implementing additional intervention strategies to reduce truancy and improve student achievement. Programs are considered successful when the students attend regularly. The more students attend, the higher their chances are of receiving the academic and social support they need to be successful in school.

Addressing the attendance issues is important because students are more likely to succeed academically when they consistently attend school. Some studies have proven that high attendance is positively related to high academic success. Students who attend school on a regular basis increase their chances of achieving high levels of academic success. Elementary students with higher numbers of unexcused absences are at risk in math achievement. Since mathematical concepts build sequentially, it is necessary that student attend school regularly to maintain a clear understanding of each concept. As students with high absenteeism increase their

daily attendance, the number of discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions decrease. Students need to be present to learn and practice the expectations of staff and peers within their building. When they attend school for longer periods of time, they show positive academic achievements.

Schools must realize that poor attendance could be a direct reflection of the quality of programming or whether or not there is a wide range of academic-support and enrichment activities. Offering a wide range of creative academic-support and enrichment activities encourage students to attend after-school programs. Students who enjoy a wide range of choices of academic and life-enriching activities develop their abilities to help themselves.

The NCLB Act requires that all students are educated regardless of barriers that may reduce attendance. Therefore, schools must be extremely creative in supporting families in overcoming barriers which make it difficult for students to attend school on a regular basis. Since some schools provide after-school programs, families are able to glean additional support to overcome barrier as they collaborate with the after-school staff. Most of the after-school programs use program attendance as a key independent variable. When students receive the academic and social support they need to be successful, they may attend more regularly. In addition, after-school programs are successful when they promote high levels of school, family, and community collaboration to decrease chronic absenteeism. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) programs are examples of this collaboration. Studies are showing that CCLC programs are having positive academic impacts on students who attend the program for 30 days or more. As students invest time into

attending after-school programs, they increase their chances of improving their academic achievement.

The studies of some CCLC programs indicate that the program provided positive academic impacts on the participants' achievement. The urgent emphasis on meeting academic performance standards has encouraged some districts the idea to partner schools and community agencies to provide after-school programs. Schools and community agencies have collaborated to hire certified teachers, highly-qualified paraprofessionals, and community vendors to offer quality academic and social support for students.

Although student achievement is effected directly and indirectly by many variables, variables such as: getting the proper amount of rest; eating appropriately, and exercising regularly can be controlled by students, parents, and educators. However, school attendance can be uncontrollable because of variables such as: illnesses, inclement weather, poor transportation, and frequent deaths of family members. Uncontrollable variables may reduce as families receive additional support from schools and community agencies. Socioeconomic conditions have been difficult to control. This is true primarily because some families are unable to manage their finances or make productive investments.

Some students need additional daily time to practice academic and social skills in order to meet expectations. The more time elementary students spend in the learning environment, the more chances they have of becoming more academically and socially developed. They learn more from having additional

opportunities to learn from certified teachers and high-qualified paraprofessionals as they model acceptable behaviors during after-school programming.

Students who attended after-school programs improve their regular day attendance and express desires to finish school and attend college. Since it is required that students attend classes during the regular school day in order to attend the after-school program, they increase their efforts to attend during the day. After-school programs that extended into the summer help close the academic gap between high and low-income students by providing at least an additional 20 days or 80 hours of academic and social support. These additional days or hours allow the students to receive the quality academic and social support they need to meet high expectations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of three years of attendance in a combined after-school, non-school, and summer school academic and enrichment program on elementary students' academic achievement.

#### Participants

Individuals who participated in this study were identified as a result of their 2008-2012 enrollments in an elementary 21st Century Community Learning Center (CLC) After-School Program. Identification of the study participants was based upon their enrollment in the CLC program from the fall of 2008 until the end of the 2012 summer school session. Individuals who participated in this study were enrolled in the same school program for the duration of the study.

**Number of participants.** The maximum accrual for this study was  $N = 29$  including a naturally formed intact group of students who attended 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities. The study subjects were enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities during the 2008 through 2012 school years.

**Gender of participants.** Of the total number of elementary students ( $N=29$ ) who attended 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities with three years of attendance, the gender ratio was 15 boys (53%) and 14 girls (47%).

**Age range of participants.** The age range for all elementary level study participants was from 6 to 12 years of age. The age range of the study participants is congruent with the research school's age range demographics for elementary students.

**Racial and ethnic origin of participants.** Of the total number of elementary students ( $N= 29$ ) who attended 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities for three years, the ethnic origin was 26 Black (90%), 1 Hispanic (3%), and 2 White (7%). The racial and ethnic origin of the study participants is congruent with the racial and ethnic demographics of the research elementary school.

**Inclusion criteria of participants.** All study participants enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities and who were assigned to the nearby neighborhood elementary school were eligible for participation.

**Method of participant identification.** All study participants enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities completing program activities during the 2008 through 2012 school years were identified for at least three years of participation.

### **Description of Procedures**

**Research design.** The posttest comparative efficacy study design is displayed in the following notation:

Group 1  $X_1 Y_1 O_1$

Group 2  $X_2 Y_1 O_1$

**Group 1 = study participants.** Students ( $N= 29$ ) enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities from the 2008 through 2012 school years.

**Group 2 = comparison group.** The research site (building) total student population during the 2008 through 2012 school years.

**$X_1$  = study constant.** In this study all study subjects ( $N = 29$ ) attended the same elementary school and were also enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center academic and enrichment program activities after-school during the regular school year, non-school days, and summer during the 2008 through the 2012 school years.

**$X_2$  = study constant.** All study subjects attended the same elementary school during the 2008 through the 2012 school years.

**$Y_1$  = study independent variable, academic and enrichment program attendance, condition #1.** Naturally formed intact group of elementary students attending the research site (building) during the 2008 through 2012 school years.

**$O_1$  = Study posttest dependent measures.** Academic achievement as measured by the fifth grade California Achievement Tests administered during the 2008 through 2012 school years for: (a) reading (Vocabulary and Comprehension), (b) math (Computation and Concepts and Applications) and (c) language arts (Mechanics and Expressions).



### **Independent Variable Conditions**

The independent variable of this study is elementary students' attendance at 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Academic and Enrichment Program activities after-school, during non-school days, and during the summer school session. The 21st Century Community Learning Center Academic and Enrichment Program activities supported participants' academic skills.

Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers provide support for students during after-school, non-school days, and summer school session academic and enrichment activities. The program hires certified teachers and paraprofessionals--many from the neighborhood elementary school--to provide at least one hour per day of homework completion assistance and additional differentiated instruction to promote student learning that creates a linkage between the regular and after-school learning experiences. The program emphasizes reading, math, and language art academic instruction.

### **Dependent Measures**

The following dependent measures, the 2008 through 2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores for reading (Vocabulary and Comprehension), math (Computations and Concepts and Application), and language arts (Mechanics and Expressions) provided by the research district's Research Department.

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question #1.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers have

congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test reading scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #2.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test math scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #3.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test language scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Research Question #4.** Do students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test total battery scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

**Analysis.** Research Questions #1-4 were analyzed using a descriptive test of mean scores for each year and an average of 2008-2012 to examine the fifth grade

students' academic achievement following attendance in 21st Century Community Learning Center academic and enrichment program activities after-school during the regular school years, non-school days, and summers compared to the research site's (building's) average. Means were displayed on tables and graphs.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

All student achievement data was retrospective, archival, and routinely collected school information. Permission from the appropriate school research personnel was obtained. Naturally formed group of 29 students enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school academic and enrichment program activities during the 2008 through the 2012 school years included reading, math, and language arts achievement data, as well as the total California Achievement Test Battery and subtest averages.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of participation in a combined after-school, non-school, and summer school academic and enrichment program on elementary students' academic achievement.

#### Research question #1

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test (CAT) reading scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Vocabulary NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 33.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.4$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Reading Comprehension NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.1$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 32.0$ ). For CAT Total Reading NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 34.8$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.8$ ). Vocabulary data is displayed on Table 1, Table 2 is Reading Comprehension, and Table 3 is Total Reading.

**Research question #2**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test math scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Computation NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 42.6$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Concepts and Application NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 40.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 36.3$ ). For CAT Total Math NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 41.4$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). Computation data is displayed on Table 4, Table 5 is Concepts and Application, and Table 3 is Total Math.

**Research question #3**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test language scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Mechanics NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 40.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 38.5$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Expression NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 35.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 31.6$ ). For CAT Total Language NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.0$ ). Mechanics data is displayed on Table 7, Table 8 is Expressions, and Table 9 is Total Math.

#### **Research question #4**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test total battery scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Total Reading NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 34.8$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.8$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Total Math NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 41.4$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). For CAT Total Language NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not

participate in the program ( $M = 34.0$ ). For CAT Total Battery NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 31.4$ ). Total Reading data is displayed on Table 3, Table 6 is Total Math, and Table 9 is Total Language, and Table 10 is Total Battery.

Table 1

CAT Test Fifth Grade Vocabulary Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Vocabulary Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	32.0	25.8
2009-2010	33.0	13.5
1010-2011	25.3	42.2
2011-2012	26.9	44.2
Total	32.0	25.8



Table 2

CAT Test Fifth Grade Reading Comprehension Mean Scores 2008-2012  
of 21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Reading Comprehension Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	33.2	27.6
2009-2010	35.7	28.8
2010-2011	30.6	50.6
2011-2012	28.5	36.7
Total	32.0	37.1

Table 3

CAT Test Fifth Grade Total Reading Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Total Reading Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	32.1	26.3
2009-2010	33.5	18.8
2010-2011	27.1	46.7
2011-2012	26.3	40.2
Total	29.8	34.8

Table 4

CAT Test Fifth Grade Computation Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Computation Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	39.3	40.7
2009-2010	38.3	23.5
2010-2011	30.4	47.1
2011-2012	29.9	51.5
Total	34.5	42.6

Table 5  
CAT Test Fifth Grade Math Concepts and Application Mean Scores  
2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School Participants and Non-  
Participants

Year	Math Concepts Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	41.4	30.9
2009-2010	35.2	31.3
2010-2011	34.1	49.4
2011-2012	35.4	48.7
Total	36.3	40.7

Table 6

CAT Test Fifth Grade Total Math Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Total Math Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	39.7	35.1
2009-2010	36.1	26
1010-2011	31.2	48.7
2011-2012	31.2	50.3
Total	34.5	41.4

Table 7

CAT Test Fifth Grade Language Mechanics Mean Scores 2008-2012 of  
21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Language Mechanics Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	38.5	33.0
2009-2010	40.0	23.5
1010-2011	41.7	52.9
2011-2012	34.2	45.3
Total	38.5	40.7

Table 8

CAT Test Fifth Grade Language Expression Mean Scores 2008-2012 of  
21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Language Expression Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	36.6	28.8
2009-2010	33.4	17.0
1010-2011	28.5	49.6
2011-2012	28.1	35.8
Total	31.6	35.3

Table 9

CAT Test Fifth Grade Total Language Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Total Language Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	36.8	30.1
2009-2010	36.1	20.0
1010-2011	33.9	51.3
2011-2012	29.7	40.3
Total	34.0	37.7



Table 10

CAT Test Fifth Grade Total Battery Mean Scores 2008-2012 of 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century After-School Participants and Non-Participants

Year	Total Battery Average NCE	
	Participant Scores	Non-Participant Scores
2008-2009	35.2	29.3
2009-2010	34.4	19.5
1010-2011	28.9	48.9
2011-2012	27.3	43.5
Total	31.4	37.3

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of participation in a combined after-school, non-school, and summer school academic and enrichment program on elementary students' academic achievement.

#### Conclusion

##### Research question #1

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test (CAT) reading scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Vocabulary NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 33.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.4$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Reading Comprehension NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.1$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 32.0$ ). For CAT Total Reading NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 34.8$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.8$ ). Vocabulary data is displayed on Table 1, Table 2 is Reading Comprehension, and Table 3 is Total Reading.

**Research question #2**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test math scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Computation NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 42.6$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Concepts and Application NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 40.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 36.3$ ). For CAT Total Math NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 41.4$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). Computation data is displayed on Table 4, Table 5 is Concepts and Application, and Table 3 is Total Math.

**Research question #3**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test language scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Mechanics NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 40.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 38.5$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Expression NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 35.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 31.6$ ). For CAT Total Language NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.0$ ). Mechanics data is displayed on Table 7, Table 8 is Expressions, and Table 9 is Total Math.

#### **Research question #4**

Do students participating in a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program including academic and enrichment support activities during the regular school year, non-school days, and summers lose, have congruent or different fifth grade California Achievement Test total battery scores than the research site (building) average 2008-2012 fifth grade California Achievement Test scores?

For 2008-2012 CAT Total Reading NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 34.8$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 29.8$ ). For 2008-2012 CAT Total Math NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 41.4$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 34.5$ ). For CAT Total Language NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.7$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M =$

34.0). For CAT Total Battery NCE , fifth graders who participated in the after-school program ( $M = 37.3$ ) achieved at a congruent level to the students who did not participate in the program ( $M = 31.4$ ). Total Reading data is displayed on Table 3, Table 6 is Total Math, and Table 9 is Total Language, and Table 10 is Total Battery.

## **Discussion**

Students who participated in the after-school program consistently scored within the same range as contemporaries not deemed as needing the after-school support. Further research with larger numbers and multiple settings is suggested to investigate the significance of providing additional after-school support for academic, enrichment, and social development to address the achievement gap.

These students were selected from the about 77 % (as many as ten million) American youth (latchkey kids) who leave school with their house keys in their pocket, bag, purse, or around their necks to enter an empty house (Cole, 2006). They students may have had no-one with whom to celebrate their successes or ease the pain of their failures. In some cases, their parent(s) may have had to maintain two jobs to ensure that the family's basic needs were provided (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005).

These after-school program participants were given the opportunity to avoid leaving the school during a time that their parents were still at work to face unhealthy and unsafe circumstances (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). They benefited from a program that offered them the opportunity to avoid walking home alone (Collins, 2006). The participants were selected from the twenty-seven percent of latchkey kids (under the age of 18) who were given the responsibility of returning home without an adult escort and sometimes without peer-assistance. The after-school program provided a quality

program without the increasing cost of childcare. These participants were selected from among the 22% of the working poor families with single parents, 40% of the families spending at least half of their income on childcare or the 25% who spend at least 40% on childcare. These students were not exposed to unhealthy and unsafe circumstances as a result of their parent attempting to avoid increasing childcare expenses (Collins, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007).

### **Supervised and Safe Environments**

The participants of this after-school program were given the opportunity to avoid situations that promote child abuse and neglect that exist in their impoverished community. The after-school program staff members were the adults these students needed to protect and teach them how to avoid danger. The staff members provided adult supervision until the parents were able to supervise the students. These students were offered an environment where the adults assisted them in responding to crisis situations. They were not asked to return to a home where they would have to supervise their younger siblings without adult assistance or emergency support (Cole et al., 2006; Collins, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Gurian, 2009).

These students were afforded the opportunity to avoid being one of five children who die each day from abuse and neglect due to unsupervised and unsafe environments. These students did not die as a result of abuse and neglect in 2010. Since their after-school attendance relied upon their regular school attendance, they received extra support in promoting consistent school attendance. Because the program offered a snack (meal), these students received three meals while they were at school (breakfast, lunch, and a snack/meal). This excluded them from the approximately 695,000 children who suffered

from maltreatment in 2010. These students' participation in the after-school reduced their chances of having to receive assistance from Child Protective Services who provided preventive services for approximately 3.4 million children in 2010. In 2010, of the 695,000 cases of maltreatment or abuse, 78% were abuse, 17% were neglect, just under 10% were sexual, approximately 8% were psychological, just over 2% were medical neglect, and approximately 10% experience other forms of maltreatment. Children who are not properly supervised become victims (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; National Children's Alliance, 2012).

In 2011, the count increased from 266,000 to 279,000. In other words, there was a 13,000 victim increase from the previous year. Among the children served by Children's Advocacy Centers, 106,522 were ages 0-6 years, 99,624 were ages 7-12 years, 69,372 were ages 13-18 years, 187,862 were sexual abuse, 48,264 were physical abuse, and 179,014 of the victims participated in forensic interviewing at a Children's Advocacy Center. More children from 0-6 years were victimized. There were almost four times as many sexual abuse cases than physical cases. Over 226,000 alleged child abuse offenders were investigated for cases from January through June 2011. These investigations have yielded interesting findings. Of these investigations, 146,981 were 18 or more years old, 24,075 were ages 13-17 years, 17,250 were under the age of 13, and 71,877 were unrelated but known by the victim. As we can see, about 195,000 out of 266,000 were student-age perpetrators. Also, 71,877 or 266,000 abusers were friends of the victims having access to the victim in unsupervised and unsafe environments (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; National Children's Alliance, 2012).

Because of the participants' attendance in the after-school program, the staff members were given the opportunity to reduce the possibilities of participants being members of the statistics (reported above).

### **Academic Support**

The after-school staff members provided reading, math, and language arts support that the participants were unable to receive at home. They provided additional feedback and support for parent in regards to their children's academic progress. The after-school staff members were additional adults with whom the parents could confide in and collaborate with to ensure the academic success of their children (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007, Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). The after-school program participants were provided additional academic support in the absence of their parents or their parents' inability to assist them in understanding their homework (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). Since the amount of homework has reached an all-time high, these students were able to gain the support they needed to meet their teachers' expectations. These students were afforded additional time to develop their reading, math, and language arts skills (Bouie, 2007). It eliminated some of the disadvantages these students experienced due to their lack of academic support at home (Bouie, 2007). The after-school staff members' goals were to provide: quality academic support to achieve high; quality one-on-one academic support of a qualified adult; and additional opportunities to revisit and practice the skills which are taught in class. The most productive practice occurs when the practice is guided or supported by at least one qualified adult (St. Clair, 2010). Sometimes, the parent(s) are home but inundated with the tasks of managing a home with more than one child. Although these students long to complete their assignments with accuracy, many of them



do not have the skills to do so independently. They must have the assistance of a qualified adult (Chaika, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009; St. Clair, 2010). Some schools no longer give homework because some students refuse to complete it (Gurian, 2009). However, this after-school program provided an alternative to eliminating homework.

### **Life-Enriching Activities**

The after-school program provided life-enriching activities to allow the participants to decrease the 80% of out of school time. Some of their events and field trips occurred during the evenings and weekends. The after-school program gave the students and opportunities to develop their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills along with their lifelong interests (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). The program goals included making life more enriching or enjoyable for the children. The participants were able to sign up for enrichment activities that promote basic skills and higher-level thinking. Their parents were made aware of the importance of promoting higher-level thinking skills. The enriching activities included: reading and math games, science projects, studies of plants and animals, play writing, publishing newspapers, music appreciation, sports, dance, team-building activities, computer exploration, special interest group or club participation, organizational strategies, and homework completion strategies. Certified teachers and/or highly-qualified paraprofessionals were hired to ensure that higher-level thinking skills activities were implemented. These students were provided extended time to learn from adults who were: passionate about making a difference in their life; willing to learn the best practices for teaching; and able to invest time and energy into providing quality learning activities. Although parents had passion

for making a difference in their child's life, many of them lacked the knowledge of best teaching practices and the time and energy to provide quality learning activities (CampbellJones, CampbellJones, & Lindsey, 2010; Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

The enrichment activities taught the necessary academic, enriching, and life skills in a manner that is creative and different from the activities provided during the regular school year. These activities required a higher level of energy and collaboration with staff and students to ensure that each student enjoyed and succeeded (Coltin, 2006; Jensen, 2009). These extracurricular activities broadened the students' view of how they learn and helped them realize their learning potential. Enriching activities were designed to help each student learn a particular skill but also allow the child to learn more about their learning style. Regular classroom instruction focused mostly on logical or mathematical intelligences. Enrichment activities allowed the students to learn at a higher level of creativity. In many of these students' cases, regular classroom instruction was all the quality instruction they had received prior to participating in the after-school program. These students experiences extracurricular activities that have been available to only affluent suburban children in past years because their (the affluent children's) parent(s) have were able to provide time and energy to ensure that their children receive additional quality instruction. Attention was focused on proving that these activities which provided additional quality instruction were important in the lives of all children. These activities included learning experiences which included: photography, chess, hands-on math, martial arts, dance, music appreciation, science projects or social studies projects. They were learning experiences that supported the skills needed to be

successful during the regular school day. Certified teachers, highly-qualified paraprofessionals, and trained community experts guided the students through each activity to ensure the highest quality learning experiences and task completion. They were positive adults who offered the students additional academic and social support. These activities were designed to challenge the children and improve their ability to learn about themselves, their community, and the world. They assisted the children in understanding themselves and other environments that impacted their lives (Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009).

Academic enriching activities were used to develop a child's academic skills in a way that is different from the regular school day strategies (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). They were designed to creatively support the skills needed during the regular school day activities. These activities provided the homework help that most parents requested for their children. Many of these students did not have academic support at home. After a full day of school, some of these students needed: a light snack, to release energy and play with friends, and to build healthy relationships with caring, dependable, and competent adults. Certified teachers and highly-qualified paraprofessionals and vendors provided quality activities to improve the students' academic and social skills (Coltin, 2006; Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Jensen, 2009).

These latchkey kids had the opportunities to enjoy some community enriching activities because their parents made the time to enroll them in this after-school program. The parents of these latchkey kids were not too busy during the week, to enroll their children in this program. This program allowed some parents to spend a great deal of their day trying to maintain a schedule that included two or more jobs (Gabrieli &

Goldstein, 2008). Because the enrollment process occurred at the school, the parents did not have wait until Saturday or Sunday to gain information or enroll their children in the program. They were able to use their Saturdays and Sundays to prepare for the following week. Some enriching activities required fees that made them only accessible to middle- and upper-income families. The after-school program covered the costs. This quality program paid fees to ensure that high-quality staff members were hired. These latchkey kids were given opportunities to interact with high-quality adults, after-school. This accessibility assisted these students in avoiding the temptations to create their own enriching activities. They were not left alone to create their own enriching activities or choose activities that were unsafe and lacking skills-based plans to promote success in school. Some of these students were greater risk-takers than others. However, because of the after-school program, they were able to reduce their desire to take dangerous risks and focus their efforts on making more productive and helpful decisions (Coltin, 2006; Jensen, 2009).

### **Life Skills Support**

Because of this after-school program, these students experienced quality life skills support. They were provided additional time to develop their skills in effectively respecting and communicating with others (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). They obtained education that not only taught them how to read and think mathematically but how to respect and accept respect from their peers and the adults within the after-school program. These students were also able experience high levels of honesty, kindness, and lawfulness during each after-school program activity. They were consistently challenged to practice these skills while they are out of school and the after-school program. These

program participants were afforded additional opportunities to practice life skills and use them effectively in a variety of environments (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008; Kagan, 2003).

The additional life skills support allowed these students to reduce the number of social conflicts that bombard the learning environment (Gabrieli & Goldstein, 2008). These students were able to gain support that assisted them in facing their academic and social challenges as well (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005). Negative behaviors such as skipping school, bullying, harassing, cheating on assignments, and stealing were reduced. Because of the additional life skills support, the students were able to contribute to reducing bullying and harassment incidents to promote a safer and conflict-free learning environment. Many of the potential bullies were given opportunities to help their classmate complete projects to develop teamwork. These students were taught alternative way to have safe fun at school and to develop healthy friendships. They were taught how to avoid inappropriate touching and to report sexual harassment incidents to the after-school staff members. These students were challenged to do their best and to strive to improve. They were told that cheating was not an option. The after-school staff members taught the students to respect the school and the belongings of others. These students were taught that honesty was an expectation of the after-school staff members and participants (Kagan, 2003).

These students learned the values of a good work ethic as it related to school and life in general. They were taught the value of self-motivation. The after-school staff modeled good and punctual attendance to teach the students that attending school on time was important because school was the students' job and their grades were the payments. These students were encouraged to face life's challenges head-on. The after-

school staff members emphasized the importance of developing good study habits, valuing time, and utilizing good organizational skills to ensure that the participants develop their life skills (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Evans, 2012; Gurian, 2009).

### **Implications for Further Research**

A review of the results of this study suggests that more research is needed on the subject of after-school program participation and the impact it has on student achievement as it relates to reading, math, language arts, and possibly attendance. Although, the results of this study were not significant, another study using a larger number of participants and numerous research sites would produce more significant results. Furthermore, the results of this study can be used to inform the district's central office and building leaders of the impact of extended time for academic, enrichment, and social support has on student achievement.

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**Appendix**



















