

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Supporting Learners/ Building Resilience / Strengthening Families

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT LEARNING

- **Improved Student Outcomes.** Studies show that students involved in quality afterschool and summer learning programs have: improved school attendance, including fewer absences and less tardiness; more engagement in learning and better grades; more time spent on homework and higher rates of homework completion; increased rates of family involvement in school; greater sense of the relevance of curriculum; enhanced problem solving and conflict management skills; and increased responsibility and improved effort in school.¹
- **College Connections.** Students who are consistently involved in extracurricular activities (e.g., afterschool programs, sports, clubs, etc.) are about 70 percent more likely to go to college than kids who are only episodically involved—and roughly 400 percent more likely than kids who are not at all involved.²
- **Opportunity Gap.** Trends over the last 15 years show a widening gap between families of means and low-income families when it comes to spending on and participation in afterschool and summer enrichment activities.³
- **Summer Learning.** Research has shown that up to two-thirds of the academic achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities.⁴
- **Achievement Gap.** Studies demonstrate that more consistent time spent in afterschool activities during the elementary years is linked to narrowing the academic achievement gap. In a recent longitudinal study, income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent afterschool activities across their Kindergarten to Grade 5 years.⁵



AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS INCREASE RESILIENCE

- **Peak Hours.** On school days, the hours between 3-6pm are the peak hours for youth to commit crimes, be in or cause an automobile accident, be victims of crime, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.⁶
- **Positive Youth Development.** In addition to keeping kids away from drugs after school, afterschool programs build protective factors that prevent substance use disorders from occurring and can reduce risk factors that lead to misuse of substances. Afterschool programs reduce substance abuse through the development of protective or resiliency factors such as school connectedness, self-control, self-confidence, and quality peer relationships.⁷
- **Reduced Substance Use.** Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that students who participate in extracurricular activities each week (up to 19 hours/week) are significantly less likely to use any alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana than those who did not participate in any activities.⁸

- **Healthy Relationships.** Afterschool is a place where youth can build social skills with peers in a low-pressure environment and also develop trusting, stable relationships with adult staff. Across Vermont, only 60% of high school students feel like they matter to the people in their community. For young people who do not participate in afterschool activities at all, this measure of “belonging” drops to 47%, while for teens who participate 10 hours or more per week in afterschool activities it goes up to 71%.⁸
- **Response to the Opioid Epidemic.** Quality afterschool programs also provide trauma-informed practices that offset the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Addressing the impact of ACEs in turn reduces development of substance use disorders and other future health concerns.⁹ As the opioid epidemic continues to disrupt Vermont families this becomes increasingly important.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

- **Need for Programs.** In Vermont, 79% of children and youth ages 6-17 have all available parents in the workforce.¹⁰ For most families, there is a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are still at work and children and youth are out of school and need supervision. This need for programs is even greater during school vacation weeks and over the summer.
- **Parent Stress.** According to polls, 87% of working mothers say the hours after school are when they are most concerned about their children’s safety. This “after school stress” often can lead to lower productivity, high turnover in jobs, and work absences. In fact, parents miss an average of five days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool care.¹¹
- **Peace of Mind.** 81% of Vermont parents agree that afterschool programs help give them peace of mind about their children when they are at work, and 79% agree that afterschool and summer learning programs help working parents keep their jobs.¹²
- **Healthy Snacks and Meals.** 1 in 5 children in Vermont live in households that are struggling to keep food on the table. Programs that provide afterschool and summer meals and snacks make it easier for parents to make ends meet and may be a child's only chance to access nutritious food until the next school day.¹³
- **Unmet Demand.** Approximately 24% percent of Vermont’s children and youth, grades K-12, are currently enrolled in afterschool programs. Of those children and youth not currently in programs, 33% would participate if a program were available.¹²
- **Return on Investment.** For every dollar spent on quality afterschool and summer learning programs, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as accruing additional benefits from increased high school completion and work productivity.¹⁴



THE ICELANDIC MODEL FOR BROAD-BASED PREVENTION

In response to concerns about the increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol use among adolescents, social scientists with the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), a non-profit research institute affiliated with Reykjavik University, developed and implemented an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder, community-based model for adolescent substance use prevention. The Icelandic Model of Adolescent Substance Use Prevention, or “Icelandic Model”, aims to reduce the use of substances including cannabis, cigarettes, and alcohol by increasing parental monitoring and parental social involvement, and through youth participation in organized sports, the arts, and other structured activities after school. Studies conducted on the data collected between 1997 and 2014 have found that through implementation of this prevention model, substance use and risk factors such as engaging in a “party lifestyle” have decreased dramatically.

THE FINNISH MODEL FOR YOUTH WORK

The Finnish model for youth work recognizes adolescence and young adulthood as a special and important time in a person’s life. With one of the shortest school days but some of the highest test scores in the world, Finnish youth workers play an important role in supporting positive youth development in the out-of-school time. Finnish youth centers are open usually from 12pm to 9pm and offer a safe space for youth to congregate as well as access to a wide range of resources (e.g., digital recording studios, theatre programs, graffiti art, painting, crafts, jewelry making, video production, band equipment, etc.) Encouraging young people to discover passions and interests in community with other young people is a priority in Finland with the Ministry of Education and Culture setting as one of their key outcome measures that every youth in Finland will have a hobby. In this context, hobbies are seen as a way for young people to develop skills, interests, self-identity, self-efficacy, and social networks.

Offering a cross between social workers, prevention specialists, and educators, Finnish youth workers are highly trained experts on youth development, youth transitions, youth living conditions, and youth culture and connect with youth to support healthy decision making. Bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees in youth work are all available in Finland.



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