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Afterschool Program Quality and Effectiveness:

25 Years of Results!!

Policy Studies Associates has evaluated afterschool programs and policies for more than 25 years. Our evaluations examine the implementation and impact of programs located in schools and in community centers, and the effectiveness of initiatives to enhance the quality of programs and the capacity of educators and volunteers delivering services. Our clients at the federal, state, and local levels use evaluation data to make policy decisions, identify program strengths and challenges, target technical assistance, and understand the needs of the students and communities served by afterschool programs, including those supported by 21st Century Community Learning Center program. Here are some highlights of what we have learned.

For STUDENTS, afterschool programs:



**Engage students
in learning**

Students who participated in programs supported by Expanded Schools (formerly [TASC](#)) had greater gains in school attendance than students who did not participate and these gains were particularly strong for the crucial middle and high school years. The [4-H Science](#) program offered students project-based opportunities that generated excitement for and continued engagement in learning: students were more enthusiastic about science than peers on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).



**Improve students'
academic
performance**

Schools that partnered with [City Year](#) to implement the Whole School Whole Child model, which includes an afterschool program, were more than two to three times more likely to show improvement on state ELA and math assessments than matched schools that did not partner with City Year. In addition, middle school students who participated in [Citizen Schools](#) in Boston transitioned to high school more successfully and completed high school on time at higher rates than matched nonparticipants.



**Develop
students' life &
career skills**

Afterschool enrichment opportunities help students develop teamwork and interpersonal skills, and gain confidence in their ability to succeed, as found in the evaluation of the [ExpandED Schools](#) national demonstration.

For FAMILIES, afterschool programs:



**Provide
peace of mind**

Families appreciated the safe spaces for enriching activities and academic support provided to their children and expressed high satisfaction with the programs supported by the [New York City](#) Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).



**Help parents
stay employed**

In New York City, 74 percent of parents said the afterschool program made it easier for them to keep their job and 73 percent missed less work because of the program.

For SCHOOLS, afterschool programs:



**Complement & support
learning during the
regular school day**

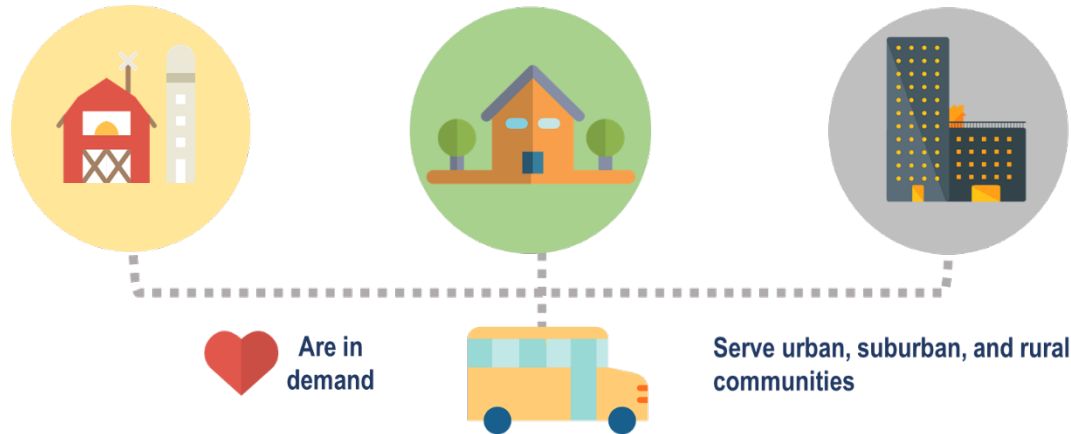
Ninety-seven percent of principals with programs funded by the [New Hampshire](#) Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program reported that the program enhanced the overall effectiveness of the school, and 91 percent said that the program reinforced the school-day curriculum. Three-quarters of New York City principals whose schools partnered with City Year reported that City Year had a positive impact on school climate and that City Year corps members helped establish a college-going and career-aspiring culture in their school.



**Foster a welcoming
school environment**

More than ninety percent of students in the [ExpandED Schools](#) national demonstration, for example, reported feeling safe and comfortable at school, that teachers cared about them, and that school was a fun place to be. In addition, the program helped students learn strategies for managing social and emotional issues that could otherwise distract from learning.

For COMMUNITIES, afterschool programs:



PSA is currently evaluating several 21st CCLC-funded programs, including [Save the Children](#) in Appalachia, focused on literacy skill development; [Montgomery County Public Schools](#), focused on English language skills for high school immigrants; [Baltimore City Public Schools](#), focused on STEM development in an elementary school; and the [National Environmental Education Foundation](#), focused on citizen science projects implemented in partnership with the National Park Service and Bureau of Indian Education schools.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS:



Invest in evaluation to support quality

Policymakers, funders, and program leaders are investing in continuous quality improvement efforts through initiatives designed to build the capacity of afterschool program staff, improve the quality of programs, and maximize the benefit for students.

Policy Studies Associates frequently conducts formative evaluations to inform continuous improvement efforts. We have collaborated with [After-School All-Stars](#) to develop a rubric to guide and track fidelity of implementation of a model for engaging middle-school students; with the [YMCA of the USA](#) to examine a pilot effort to provide guidance to systematically enhance afterschool programming; with [Higher Achievement](#) to explore strategies to broaden its proven success throughout partner school buildings; and with [DYCD](#) to evaluate efforts to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations, staff, and volunteers providing services in public, charter and private schools, community centers, religious institutions, public housing, and recreational facilities.

Founded in 1982, Policy Studies Associates conducts research, program evaluation, and policy analysis to support clients in sound decision making. Our projects focus on initiatives and policies that support positive outcomes for youth, families, and their communities. For more information about our afterschool evaluations, please contact Christina Russell at crussell@policystudies.com or 202-939-5340.