

Executive Summary



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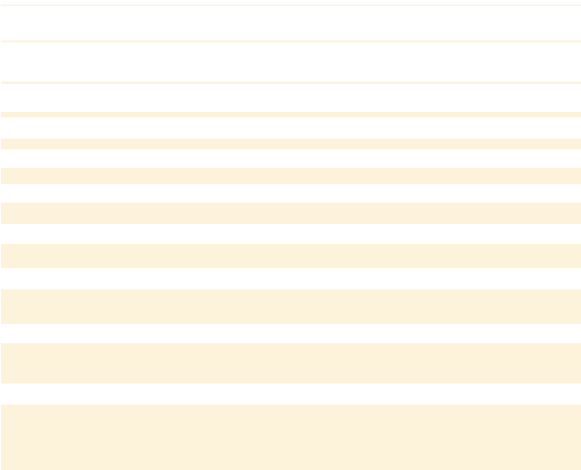
The Future of Children

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WHEN
SCHOOL
IS OUT



When School Is Out



ANALYSIS

There are 39 million American children between the ages of 5 and 14, yet the United States has no organized system for providing supervision, activities, and opportunities to them during the hours when school is not in session.

- ◆ Public schools meet for only 6 hours per day, 180 days per year, leaving 185 days and many hours each day free for leisure and nonschool activities.
- ◆ Three of four mothers with school-age children are employed, and two-thirds of them work full time. Their children need supervision after school lets out.
- ◆ During the afternoon hours, rates of juvenile crime triple, and many unsupervised youngsters experiment with tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Nonschool programs can give children safe, supervised places to spend time, along with chances to learn new skills and develop resourcefulness, responsibility, and reliability.

- ◆ After-school options include child care centers, tutoring programs at school, dance groups, basketball leagues, and drop-in clubs. Public facilities such as libraries, recreation centers, and playing fields help meet the needs of school-age children if they are safe, in good condition, and accessible by public transportation.
- ◆ State and federal budgets for education, public safety, crime prevention, and child care provide some funding for after-school programs, including \$200 million in federal grants in 1999 to enable schools to establish after-school programs called 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- ◆ Nevertheless, parent fees of about \$2,000 per year are the main support of after-school programs.

- ◆ Recent polls (1998 and 1999) show that most voters believe there should be organized activities for children and teens after school, and they are willing to pay more in taxes to increase the availability of after-school programs.

Research on after-school programs is not well developed, but studies suggest important benefits for some children:

- ◆ Younger children (ages 5 to 9) and those in low-income neighborhoods gain the most from after-school programs, showing better behavior with peers and adults, work habits, and performance in school.
- ◆ Young teens who attend after-school activities achieve higher grades in school and engage in less risky behavior. Because these programs are voluntary, however, participants are likely to be among the more motivated youngsters in a given population.

Four major hurdles impede program delivery:

- ◆ *Finding ongoing operating funds:* Government and foundation grants are a key source of start-up funding and project support, but little public funding is available for operations.
- ◆ *Maintaining qualified staff:* After-school programs revolve around relationships between adults and children, but there is no agreed-upon credential for work with school-age children. Additionally, appropriate training is scarce, staff salaries average less than \$10 per hour, and staff turnover exceeds 40% per year.
- ◆ *Securing appropriate space:* In 1991, some 48% of daily after-school programs operated in shared space that they did not control, and many lacked access to libraries, computer labs, art rooms, and playgrounds. Increasingly, after-school programs are housed in relatively well-equipped school buildings, though negotiation over shared resources remains difficult.
- ◆ *Developing an accurate understanding of likely program impacts:* Reliable information about supply and demand for after-school options is lacking. Strong, long-term evaluations of after-school and youth development programs are also scarce, although new evaluations will soon provide much-needed data.

These problems cannot be well diagnosed or resolved program by program, but should be addressed systemwide through national research, advocacy, and policy work; through the development of professional leadership and standards; and through the pursuit of specific program solutions at the community level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Nationally, continue advocacy and public education efforts supporting the use of government resources to address children's out-of-school time. Locally, undertake community planning efforts to identify needs, establish priorities, mobilize resources, and guide investments to create communities in which children can thrive.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Conduct studies that document the supply of, and the demand for, after-school programs by type, hours, location, and cost of care for children of different ages. These studies can guide community planners, program developers, and policymakers as they allocate new funds and design new programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Develop new models for financing after-school programs that incorporate affordable parent fees, private sector support, and expanded government funding. Combine and balance these funding sources to ensure that programs can be sustained and made accessible to low-income families and children.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Invest in efforts to conceptualize the skills required for professional work with school-age children; to create tailored training courses and degree programs; and to design a career ladder that links compensation to increasing qualifications.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Establish strategic partnerships between public and private institutions to maximize the benefit derived from facilities suited for school-age children (such as computer labs, gymnasiums, art or music rooms).

RECOMMENDATION 6

Create coalitions, councils, or coordinating bodies to serve as intermediaries and support systems for after-school programs, and to advocate for the interests of school-age youths.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Launch a limited number of rigorous evaluations of program models that are based on strong theory or are being widely implemented. Focus the evaluations on an array of outcome measures that matter to planners and policymakers, so that positive results can reinforce public confidence that government has a role to play in providing after-school solutions.

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

America's Schoolchildren: Past, Present, and Future

Elise Cappella and Mary B. Larner, Ph.D.

In 1998, there were 39 million children between the ages of 5 and 14. Cappella and Larner compare this modern cohort of children with their counterparts earlier in the century in terms of their demographic characteristics, family circumstances, and time spent in school. This article raises the concern that the changing demographics of the school-age population may influence public attitudes, and could undermine support for government funding focused on the needs of children and youths.

The Development of Children Ages 6 to 14

Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Ph.D.

Middle childhood and early adolescence shape the child's growing sense of identity. During these years, children make strides toward adulthood by becoming competent, independent, self-aware, and involved in the world beyond their families. As their bodies, minds, and social relationships are transformed, both expectations of success and personal problems take root as well. Eccles examines these changes, focusing on how experiences during the middle-childhood years develop children's sense of self-esteem and individuality, and how early adolescence is dominated by conflicting desires for autonomy, and for close ties to peers and adults. The author highlights ways in which the organization of programs, schools, and family life can better respond to the needs and emerging independence of youths.

Successful Parenting in High-Risk Neighborhoods

Robin L. Jarrett, Ph.D.

Many African-American youths growing up in impoverished, inner-city neighborhoods become caught up in the negative subculture of "the streets"; yet some parents in those same communities manage to keep their adolescents oriented toward mainstream success—education, employment, and family stability. This article uses qualitative studies of African-American families to identify parenting strategies that families use to promote mainstream achievement among children in impoverished neighborhoods. A review of detailed case studies identifies three parenting strategies—child-monitoring, resource-seeking, and in-home learning—that facilitate conventional youth development.

Cultural Brokers: Helping Latino Children on Pathways Toward Success

Catherine R. Cooper, Ph.D., Jill Denner, Ph.D., and Edward M. Lopez, Ph.D.

The transition from elementary school to middle school can be especially challenging to immigrant Latino students whose parents have little familiarity with American schools and the links between school, college, and career. Often this is a time when Latino youngsters begin to follow pathways toward responsible adulthood or high-risk behaviors. This article, which focuses on immigrant families from Mexico, stresses that family members, teachers, and young adults who Latino children meet in community-based recreation and tutoring programs all can play a role in helping the youngsters achieve their goals in a positive way.

Neighborhoods of Southern California Children and Families

Ross D. Parke, Ph.D., and Robin L. O'Neil, Ph.D.

During middle childhood, children move beyond the boundaries of family to explore the neighborhood, forge their own relationships with friends and neighbors, and experience life independent of their parents. Depending on the character of the surrounding community, parents are more or less comfortable allowing unfettered exploration by their children. This article reports a study of families with 9- and 10-year-olds in an array of southern California neighborhoods, showing close links between parent perceptions of their neighborhoods, the rules they impose on their children, and the children's social skills.

After-School Child Care Programs

Deborah Lowe Vandell, Ph.D., and Lee Shumow, Ph.D.

Public discussions of the risks and opportunities presented by the after-school hours often focus on the benefits that after-school programs offer. This article points out, however, that parents and children consider a wide variety of options for the after-school hours. Children may be with a parent or relative, go to lessons or play sports, or spend time alone or with friends. This pattern of activities reflects the family's resources and neighborhood surroundings, as well the child's own needs and interests. Drawing on recent studies, the article documents children's experiences in different settings, discusses the variable quality of after-school programs, and documents ways in which program participation and exposure to self-care affect children's adjustment in school.

After-School Programs for Low-Income Children: Promise and Challenges

Robert Halpern, Ph.D.

For all the promise of after-school programs, implementation challenges abound as well, especially for programs serving low-income children. This article focuses on those programs, describing what we know about supply and demand, program emphases, and program sponsors and support organizations. It also reviews the major issues facing the field in the areas of facilities, staffing, and financing. Details and examples are drawn from the ongoing evaluation of an after-school initiative called MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time), which seeks to expand and strengthen after-school programs in Boston, Chicago, and Seattle. Looking ahead, the article discusses the importance of finding ways to increase coverage to reach more low-income children, improve program quality, expand funding, and articulate an appropriate role for after-school programs to fill in the lives of low-income children.

Where Need Meets Opportunity: Youth Development Programs for Early Teens

Jane Quinn, M.A.

The period of early adolescence is marked by increased independence and autonomy, and is also a time when individual interests, skills, and preferences become salient to young people. Correspondingly, out-of-school programs for young teens are diverse in focus and varied in structure, ranging from sports teams to drop-in recreation centers to museum apprenticeships to scout troops. This article describes the diverse array of organizations that offer programs for youths in their early teens, and explains the philosophy of positive youth development that undergirds the work of many practitioners. It also addresses implementation challenges such as increasing participation by youths; expanding access to programs, especially in low-income communities; improving funding; evaluating program effectiveness; and increasing coordination among youth-serving organizations.

The Role of the School in Children's Out-of-School Time

Joy G. Dryfoos

Schools have much to contribute to plans for addressing the needs of today's youngsters during the time when classes are not being held. Many programs that provide after-school child care, educational enrichment, and safe havens for young people are housed in school buildings. Some are operated by the schools, some by community-based organizations, and others by partnerships between schools and outside groups. New public funding for after-school programs often flows through the school system. This article describes a range of school-based programs, from extracurricular activities to extended-day child care programs, enrichment activities, and ambitious efforts to transform the schools into full-time community centers. It also examines the challenges of sharing governance and space, upholding program quality, finding funding, and maintaining accountability. Dryfoos closes with the hope that the schools of the future remain open during extended hours for the enrichment of the children and the sustenance of the family.

FOUR COMMENTARIES:

The Policy Climate for School-Age Child Care

Michelle E. Seligson, Ed.M.

A researcher, author, and consultant in child care policy and practice who founded the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), Seligson reviews the evolution of policies related to school-age child care, and

identifies crucial issues that lie ahead in the coming years. According to Seligson, the new involvement of schools in a field that has been dominated by community programs raises issues of appropriate program goals and content, complicates decisions about staff qualifications and compensation, and requires new thinking about financing and quality oversight.

The Role of Schools When School Is Out

Cynthia G. Brown, M.P.A.

From her perspective on the staff of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Brown emphasizes the expectation of education reformers that all students will learn at high levels, and she stresses the value of using out-of-school time to help low-performing students catch up academically. She argues, however, that after-school programs are best positioned to offer learning opportunities that complement and extend—but do not reproduce—the academic teaching of the regular school day.

Federal Support for Youth Development

Kimberly L. Barnes-O'Connor, M.A.

Policy debates concerning children, youths, and families are daily fare for Barnes-O'Connor, who serves as director of Children's Policy for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. In this commentary, she illustrates that federal policy attention has focused on preschoolers and adolescents, ignoring the middle-childhood years and emphasizing the prevention, treatment, and punishment of problem behaviors. She argues that the proliferation of narrow programs targeting specific problems has undermined program effectiveness, and urges instead a focus on positive youth development and a shift toward flexible federal funding provided through block grants to communities.

The Policy Climate for Early Adolescent Initiatives

Gary C. Walker, LL.B.

An attorney and researcher who heads an intermediary organization focused on disadvantaged youths and young adults, Walker discusses how public attitudes toward adolescents and government shape the climate for policy initiatives. Support for any social policy initiative depends on the moral power of the issue, the effectiveness of advocacy surrounding it, and the availability of clear, understandable proposals for addressing it. Walker urges advocates to highlight mentoring programs and after-school activities as effective, popular, and concrete methods for meeting the needs of young people.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

CHILD INDICATORS: Children in Self-Care

Nancy Kerrebrock and Eugene M. Lewit, Ph.D.

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