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Perceived Impact of Quality in a 21st Century Community Learning Center Out-of-School Time Program: A Case Study

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PERCEIVED IMPACT OF QUALITY IN A 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTER OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF QUALITY IN A 21st CENTURY COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTER OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Concern for the safety, education and well-being of children during out-of-school time is helping to change the landscape and priorities of families, educators and policy-makers. Changes in family structure and society have presented the need for quality out-of-school time programs. The changing family structure caused by both parents working outside the home, the advent of the single-parent household, the necessity of federally mandated standardized testing for student achievement, certain criminal activities and the expanding population of children have contributed to the question of how to protect children and enrich their lives during out-of-school time hours. The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to describe the key elements of quality in out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants and to determine the impact of the quality standards in out-of-school time programs as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students. The program participants are middle school students based on academic performance enrolled in a 21st Century Community Learning Center out-of-school time program in Southeast Arkansas.

Participants included a diverse population from various socioeconomic backgrounds that were enrolled in the program because of basic or below scores on the benchmark examination. The study is designed around the premise out-of-school time programs built around key elements of quality reinforce outcomes of student achievement, personal enrichment and out-of-school time programs matter. Interview content regarding student achievement was found to be the richest category with related themes of grades and homework. Interview data revealed shared themes regarding the program for the participants' category.

The study provides insight into quality elements of out-of-school time programs, specifically, student achievement through gains made in homework and grades. The case study

identified elements of quality that support student achievement outcomes for school-based programs including positive program perceptions, sustainable funding, and building strong interpersonal relationships. The findings suggest key elements of quality were identified and may contribute to positive outcomes for students. Program sustainability was a major concern for staff and the future of the OST program. This study contributes to the data needed to identify out-of-school time quality elements across program types and geographical locations.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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With sincere gratitude and appreciation for the “village” that provided the foundation and support to complete this journey. Through the lessons learned in the village, I realized that all things are indeed possible, if you keep the faith.

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Last, but certainly not least, my family and friends that are too numerous to name for being such a wonderful, caring, supportive family and lifetime friends. I am truly humble and grateful to those that have paved the way for me and my desire is to do the same for others.

“To God be the glory for the things He has done.”

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memory of my parents and grandparents:

To my husband Vern, for your unconditional love and the dedication you have shown me. To my children and grandchildren, thank you for your patience, kindness and the love that you have shown during my journey. To my parents and grandparents, the lessons and values that were taught and instilled in me at an early age provided the foundation for aligning my life by putting God first, family second, and third, becoming a lifelong learner to be of service to others. To my family, friends and neighbors for being a part of the village that provided continuous encouragement, love and support.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Out-of-school time (OST) programs protect children and youth from victimization and delinquency during what law enforcement officials' term "danger zone" hours between 3 and 7 p.m. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2006). Programs offer students rewarding, challenging, age and developmentally appropriate activities in a safe, structured, supervised environment. Students receive remediation in core academic areas where they may be struggling, assistance with homework and a chance to choose from a variety of enrichment programs that support growth and development of youth. OST programs support student achievement and address risks associated with dropping out of school. Some of these OST programs are possible through grant funding, fees, and private contributions.

The largest federal funding source is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers made possible by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). Federal dollars were appropriated to states for disbursement through a grant application process. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) out-of-school time program provides extended learning opportunities before and after-school for school-age children in public schools, community, and faith-based organizations. Programs offer opportunities for students to receive homework assistance, academic remediation, a chance for students to choose which enrichment activities interests to engage in, and an opportunity to participate in recreational and community activities. The programs are helping to address the change in family structure that often create the problem of unsupervised children and youth during out-of-school time by keeping children safe and in an environment of learning and enrichment until parents return home from work (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The desired outcome of an out-of-school time program is to improve the status of schools and academic performance of students. According to the Arkansas Department of Education reports, the school district selected for this case study was listed on the “School Improvement” list. Schools in need of improvement failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals for two consecutive years therefore listed as in need of improvement-Year 1 and must offer public school choice according to No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). Continual improvements over two consecutive years allowed the middle school to be removed from the state’s list of problem schools because of assistance received from Yale University as a 21st Century Charter Member and as a 21st CCLC grantee. Student achievement improved at the middle school as reflected by test scores, homework completion and attendance. However, progress for economically disadvantaged and African-American students was slow (Beebe, 2008).

Background of the Study

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee initiated a Governor’s Summit on Extra Learning Opportunities to address the need to expand, support, and improve the quality of out-of-school time (National Governors Association, 2006). Huckabee opened the dialogue for programs to receive statewide support allowing Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe to continue the work two years later by establishing his Task Force on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs. The Governor’s Task Force released a report entitled, *Enriching Arkansas Children’s Lives Through High-Quality Out-of-School Activities* (Beebe, 2008) that identified key elements for quality programs utilized by other states and national organizations. The

Arkansas Out-of-School Network (AOSN) aligned their quality standards to the quality framework issued by the Governor's Task Force.

The Demand Study for After-School Programs conducted in 2008 by students from the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service indicated half of 3,700 students surveyed in Arkansas were unsupervised after-school on a regular basis. The study concluded "regardless of gender, race, or grade level, a large portion of students are unsupervised after-school," particularly older students (Guzzardi, Little, & Mitchell, 2008, p. 13). Key recommendations summarized from the study included:

1. Efforts for program recruitment should focus on students that are unsupervised after-school, particularly middle school students.
2. Additional after-school programs may be needed in various parts of the state to address the needs of children and families.
3. The state should also focus on funding sources for after-school programs to ensure that programs are accessible and affordable for families.

Society's investment toward the success of a child who becomes a taxpayer and college graduate versus the cost to society for one child in the criminal justice system reflects the benefits of out-of-school time programs. Out-of-school time programs benefit children and youth by increasing safety during out-of-school hours, reducing risk-taking behavior, and providing a safe, structured and supervised learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

Changes in American society since the industrial revolution have presented the need for quality out-of-school time care for children and youth. The changing family structure caused by

both parents working outside the home, the advent of the single-parent household, the necessity of federally mandated standardized testing for student achievement, criminal activity and the expanding population of children, have contributed to the problem of how to protect children and enrich their lives during out-of-school time hours.

Traditionally, the composition of the family consisted of a two-parent household, one parent serving as the caretaker, and the other parent working outside of the home. In the modern family, both parents work with sixty-nine percent (69%) of all married couples with children ages 6-17 working outside the home and seventy-nine point five percent (79.5%) of single parents employed outside the home (OJJDP, 2006). The change in family economic structure from one breadwinner to two has impacted childcare in the United States. In 2004, twenty-five percent (25%) of U.S. children took care of themselves after-school while only eight percent of Arkansas children were in self-care during after-school hours. In 2009, national and Arkansas statistics were the same; twenty-six percent (26%) of children are in self-care after-school (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

The growing public interest regarding how and where children spend their time during out-of-school time because of the increased number of working parent households has sparked the need for quality out-of-school time programs. The definition of out-of-school time referred to both traditional after-school programs operating in the afternoon hours and programs with “more comprehensive efforts that respond to the needs of children, youth, and parents during evenings, weekends, summers, and holidays by offering activities that help youth grow, learn, and develop” (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006, p. 5). A shift from academic remediation and the safety aspects of after-school programs has occurred toward out-of-school time

programming with comprehensive efforts to serve young people and produce positive outcomes for program participants. OST programs are offered by various organizations including schools, community and faith-based organizations, libraries, museums, municipalities, and volunteer groups seeking to serve youth.

However, the difference in family structure creates hardships for poor families regardless of the type of organization that offers OST programs. Statistics depict the disparity in income required to cover basic needs. Forty-five point nine percent (45.9 %) of poor single parent families reported hardships associated with unmet basic needs compared to thirty-eight point six percent (38.6 %) of poor two parent families. In families reporting no hardships, twenty-three point three percent (23.3%) were single-parent families compared to forty-one point two percent (41.2 %) of two parent families (Beverly, 2001). Female headed single-parent households are more at risk for higher levels of stress; have less social support overall including less contact with friends and family and less involvement in church and social groups. In fact, single mothers experience depression twice as often as married mothers (Carney & Boyle, 2003).

Also, living in households without both biological parents augment risk factors for children and youth. Middle school age youth living in a household without both biological parents have four times the risk of developing an affective disorder (Cuff, Keown, Addy & Garrison, 2005). Single mothers raising children alone increase the risk for teenage pregnancy, marrying before obtaining a high school diploma and marrying someone without a high school diploma (Teachman, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

Now, more than ever, an increasing body of research focusing on the safety, education and well being of children during out-of-school time is helping to restructure the national policy agenda for parents, educators, and policymakers throughout the United States. The purpose of this case study is to describe the key elements of quality in out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants. The program participants are middle school students based on academic performance enrolled in a 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program in Southeast Arkansas. The faculty includes a Site Coordinator, certified teachers, paraprofessionals and peer tutors. A 21st Century Community Learning Center OST program in southeast Arkansas is the target of this case study.

Out-of-school time programs are measured by student attendance and academic achievement. Students who become bored, dissatisfied with academic improvement, or disengaged in program activities sometimes leave the program and may never return. Students stay engaged in program activities that best meet their academic and personal development needs. Quality OST programs utilize student interest surveys that provide students a choice of enrichment activities and a voice in the program structure.

Significance of the Study

Benefits of quality out-of-school time programs can be explained by looking at the cost of society's investment toward the success of a child that is able to contribute to society as a taxpayer and college graduate versus the cost to society for one child in the criminal justice system. A high-risk student that benefits from attending a community program that encourages

scholastic achievement becomes a college graduate with a meaningful career and is able to benefit society by making a 1 million dollar tax contribution during his lifetime (Trostil, 2007). A high-risk fourteen year old embarks upon a life of crime and costs society 2.7 million to 4.8 million dollars to navigate through the criminal justice system rather than matriculating, obtaining a college degree, and contributing as a tax paying citizen (Cohen & Piquero, 2007).

Research Questions

The following two key research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the elements of quality out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants?
2. What is the impact of quality as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in out-of-school time programs?

Research design. The purpose of this research design is to provide a framework for this case study based on the premise that quality in out-of-school time programs matter. This study is designed around the premise that OST programs built around key elements of quality reinforce outcomes of student achievement and personal enrichment. A qualitative approach provides the best pathway for this researcher to explore the effects of quality keys in OST programs as related through the experience of all participants: program administrators, faculty (site coordinator, teachers, paraprofessionals, and peer tutors), students, parents and community partners. Descriptive research designed around a case study “focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 534).

Research setting. The following is a description of a middle school out-of-school time program in Southeast Arkansas. This OST program strives to assist poor and minority students

with academic challenges. The program begins at 3:00 p.m. as 80 – 130 students start the program with a nutritional snack and then turn to an emphasis on academics. Certified teachers, classroom aides, and peer tutors work with students to complete homework assignments and receive one-on-one help to increase proficiency in literacy and math. The program ends at 6:00 p.m. and includes time for student enrichment and recreational activities. Students choose enrichment and recreation activities among offerings such as science lab, arts and crafts, music classes (guitar, piano), physical education, drug prevention programs emphasizing alcohol and tobacco abstinence, archery club, book club, nutrition and cooking class, character education, service learning projects, technology camps, foreign language class, and virtual field trips.

Middle school teachers reported students participating in the after-school program completed homework, improved their grades, and experienced fewer disciplinary problems in the classroom. This school has experienced improvement in attendance rates and standardized test scores. In the 2008-09 school year, African-American students scored sixty-seven percent (67%) in math and sixty-four percent (64%) in literacy compared to overall student scores on the benchmark exam of eighty-six percent (86%) in math and seventy-nine percent (79%) in literacy. African-American students and students from poverty stricken families are still behind other students but show marked improvement on standardized test scores (Beebe, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Maslow (1954) constructed a theory derived primarily from his clinical experience as a psychologist, and secondarily as an effort to synergize the knowledge of functionalists, James and Dewey, the holistic psychology of Wertheimer, Goldstein, and Gestalt, and the dynamic work of Freud, Fromm, Horney, Reich, Jung, and Adler. Maslow's theory is often over-

simplified as a step-system of human gratification of needs; however, the reality of his theory represents a complex synergy of modern era knowledge that endures into the post-modern age and beyond. The theorist concluded that reaching the highest level of human motivation (self-actualization) is only possible when other basic human needs are met. Maslow explained this actualization process as reaching ones full potential, that is, “to become everything one is capable of becoming” (p. 22). Self-actualization will vary from person to person depending on individual desires; however, there is one thing common to all cases, other basic needs: “physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs” have been already met (p. 22). The model (Figure 1) is linked to Maslow’s hierarchy and suggests key elements to build a quality framework that must be present in out-of-school time programs.

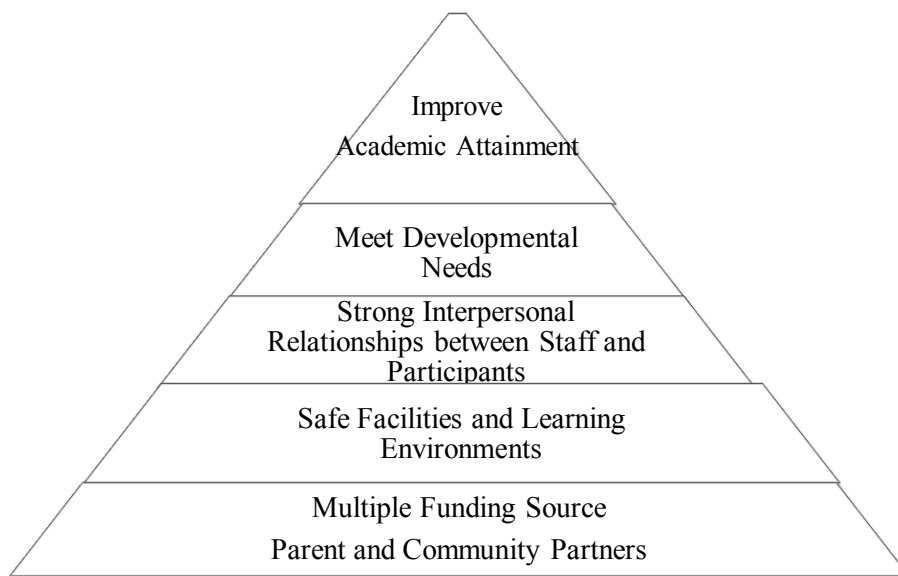


Figure 1. Quality elements for out-of-school time programs

Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the case study included the site selection of one 21st Century Community Learning Centers middle school located in Southeast Arkansas rather than multiple sites with similar demographics. The selection process included a middle school funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers authorization and identified by the Arkansas Department of Education as under “School Improvement.” As a result of the requirements of programs funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the target population included 50% or more economically disadvantaged students with three or more risk factors. The risk factors included single-parent families, limited English proficiency, and academic failure. Students selected for the out-of-school time program were identified based on test scores, academic performance and the need for enrichment activities beyond the regular school day. Because of the risk factors, students participating in the out-of-school time program were representative of certain subgroups. Restrictions to the OST program due to location, program schedule and district policies also limited the study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are listed and summarized below to provide an understanding of the terminology used in the study (Arkansas Department of Education, 2010).

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC): a community learning center located within a school district, nonprofit or faith-based organization that offers academic, artistic, and cultural enrichment opportunities to school age students and their families during non-school hours. The centers are administered through state agencies under the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002).

Academic Achievement: refers to the success of students in learning and mastering the school subjects that they study as measured by tests of knowledge and skills.

Adequate Yearly Progress: a measurement used by the U.S. Department of Education that is included in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB, 2002) to determine how school districts are performing academically as shown by the results on standardized tests in mathematics and English Language Arts. Test results are determined for whole groups as well as for subpopulations of students.

After-School Programs: activities following the official end of the school day, typically sponsored by the school, district, or community organization. Interchangeable terms with after-school include, school age care, out-of-school time and expanded learning opportunities.

Alert Status: schools are designated this status by the Arkansas Department of Education the first year the school fails to meet adequate yearly progress.

At-risk Students: students identified and are in danger of failing in school and becoming academically disadvantaged in comparison to peers.

Latchkey Children: children that are left in homes without adult supervision during non-school hours.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: No Child Left Behind (formerly called the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*) is a set of laws that supports standards based education and calls for disaggregation of student-performance data by student subgroups.

Out-of-school time (OST): refers to both traditional after-school programs operating in the afternoon hours as well more comprehensive programs that may include weekends, summers and

holidays. Programs may be offered by schools, community and faith based organizations, libraries, museums, municipalities, and volunteer groups.

Quality in out-of-school time programs: refers to the key elements that constitute program quality and promote positive youth development outcomes. Key elements include a safe and appropriate environment, training, evaluation, youth development, parental involvement, attendance and participation.

School Improvement: school designation due to the failure of the school to make adequate yearly progress for two or more consecutive years.

Conclusion

Chapter one provides the introduction, background, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study. The research questions to be answered, theoretical framework, limitation of the study, definitions of terms, and conclusion are also defined in Chapter one. Chapter two presents a review of related literature which includes the background, methods, search strategy, historical perspective, and impact of OST programs. The literature review includes the theoretical framework, significance, summary and conclusion. Chapter three includes an overview of the methodology, research questions, researcher's role, data management and summary. Chapter four presents the data analysis, introduction, description of participants, data management, research questions, elements of quality, description and distribution of themes and categories and summary of data. Chapter five includes the conclusion and recommendations, introduction, summary, research questions, interpretation of data, program and field recommendations. Chapter five concludes with the recommendations for future research and the conclusion.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Changes in American society since the industrial revolution have presented the need for quality out-of-school time care for children and youth. The changing family structure caused by both parents working outside the home, the advent of the single-parent household, the necessity of federally mandated standardized testing for student achievement, criminal activity and the expanding population of children, has contributed to the problem of how to protect children and enrich their lives during out-of-school time hours. Equally, Fashola's (2002) study strongly suggests the interest in out-of-school time (OST) programming encompasses societal issues such as welfare reform, changes in family structure, increased juvenile crime, and the overall poor academic performance of students. According to Miller (2003), the purpose of school or community based OST programs is to help working parents balance family responsibilities and promote "social, emotional, creative and physical development" of children in various activities (p. 25).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe key elements of quality in out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants. The study will identify standards for high quality out-of-school time programs linked to student achievement and positive outcomes for participants. Thus, the following two research questions will guide the study:

- (1) What are the elements of quality out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants?

- (2) What is the impact of quality out-of-school time programs as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students?

The aim of the literature review is to provide educators, policymakers and researchers with a review of research related to quality standards and youth development that is evaluative, comprehensive and current. The review of literature is categorized into nine major components: (1) background (2) methods (3) search strategy (4) historical perspective (5) impact of OST programs (6) theoretical framework (7) significance (8) summary, and (9) conclusion.

The review includes a discussion of youth development, quality standards and existing research on the relationship between out-of-school time programs and student achievement. While the review was narrowed to focus on out-of-school time programs that include measures of academic improvements, other benefits were addressed and included in the review. These benefits are related to the safety, social and developmental needs of youth.

Background

Improving student achievement and promoting the growth and development of youth are two of the major goals of out-of-school time programs. However, the growing population in the United States expands the problem facing parents, educators, and policymakers of how to manage children's out-of-school time.

According to the U.S. Census (2009) more than 58 million (58,528,070) students were enrolled in school including nursery school, preschool, kindergarten, elementary and secondary school programs in the United States in 2008. The 2008 statistics depict an increase of more than a half million students (653,263) in student enrollment over 2002 which was over 57 million (57,874,807). The dramatic increase of children in the U.S. population is illustrated by looking

at population increases of school age children from the year 2000 to projected populations of children by the year 2050. In 2000, children ages 6-11 total 25 million and children ages 12-17 total 24.2 million. By 2050, children ages 6-11 expand to 34 million and children ages 12-17 grow to 33.8 million, which projects a marked increase of school age children. By 2050, there will be an increase of children ages 6-11 of 9 million and an increase of children ages 12-17 of 9.6 million.

Out-of-school time programs benefit children and youth by increasing safety during out-of-school time hours, reducing risk-taking behavior, and improving learning. There is an assumption during out-of-school time hours, juvenile crime peaks and out-of-school time programs provide a safe, structured, supervised, and academically engaging place for students and thereby reduce the temptation to engage in risk-taking behaviors related to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Keeping children safe and active in an out-of-school time program prevents crime, juvenile delinquency, and violent victimization. The positive impact of out-of-school time programs continues to be validated by research and the findings supported by the Arkansas Out of School Network (2010) report entitled, *Afterschool is Key* and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

According to a study prepared for The After-School Corporation (TASC) and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) by Policy Studies Associates (2005), quality out-of-school time programs make a real difference not only in academic achievement for participants, but also provide a support system and offer a variety of youth oriented activities. As a result, a review of literature is conducted in order to gain an understanding of out-of-school time in correlation with the quality standards. The purpose is to review empirical studies related

to out-of-school time programs which include an academic measure of performance and reflect the needs and characteristics of the students and community. The goal of the case study is to describe the key elements of out-of-school time programs for school age youth. The second goal is to determine the impact of the quality standards in out-of-school time programs as perceived by the administrators, teachers, and students. The participants for the study are middle school students attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program in Southeast Arkansas. Questions include the following: what programs and services are needed to address the needs of low performing students? What is the relationship between 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school programs and the regular school day? What are the characteristics that define quality in out-of-school time programs?

As a final point, according to Miller (2003) out-of-school time programs must identify and address the unique needs of the students and parents within the community through a variety of activities and opportunities. Out-of-school time programs play a vital role in the academic achievement, growth and development of youth in school districts. However, the structure, personnel, programs and funding are key elements that must be addressed in order to provide high quality out-of-school time programs. The focus is centered on youth development and student achievement; however, the programs must be more than an extension of the school day.

Methods

The studies included in this review of literature were based on four general criteria: (a) relevance; (b) quality; (c) empirical; and (d) scholarly nature. To evaluate the relevance of a study, the researcher determined if it was applicable to the research questions and addressed quality in relationship to out-of-school time programs. Due to the historical significance of out-

of-school time programs in relationship to the safety and welfare of school age children, older studies are included in the research and correlated with current research to reflect the changes in family composition and economic issues affecting children and families.

The criterion for the selection of qualitative and quantitative studies was determined by relevance, findings, sample size, validity, and rigor. Publications including books, book chapters, monographs and journals that failed to provide evidence to support the conclusion were restricted. In addition, the review included professional organizations and legislation relevant to the study.

Search Strategy

The search process utilized the electronic database that included ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Education Abstracts, Policy Briefs, educational journals, dissertations and books. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers national and state offices provided relevant and pertinent information regarding efficacy of out-of-school time programs. Due to the vast number of studies and articles, the criteria for selection and the two key research questions were the determining factors for the inclusion or exclusion of studies. The timeframe includes a brief history, from 1928 to the 2011 legislation.

Historical Perspective

After-school programs were started in the nineteenth century by community and faith-based organizations to care for children during out-of-school time. Halpern (2002) reports findings cited by Brenzel, et al. (1985) regarding the time education became compulsory for children in 1928 school enrollment increased by 80 percent as the labor force for children declined. The need for childcare was eminent by 1940 due to the growth of employment

opportunities for females which contributed to the demographic shift in the United States (Halpern, 2000). Demographic shifts contributing to the need for out-of-school time programs include the baby boom period, growth of single parent homes, and a lack of extended family members to care for children during out-of-school time. As a result, the government increased its support for after-school programs. Increasing societal concerns are creating a growth in the after-school movement related to the number of working households, extending learning opportunities for low-performing students and the increase in juvenile crime during non-school hours (Kugler, 2001).

According to Halpern (2002), the role and importance of out-of-school time programs was defined by historical events dating back to the nineteenth century. The historical events included (a) Defining the purpose and role of OST programs; (b) The Great Depression and World War II; (c) Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965; (d) Reauthorization of ESEA in 1966; and (e) No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). The timeline following these historical events impacted the economy, families, and the number of women entering the workforce.

Richard Riley's speech to grantees at the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Summer Institute 2000 further defined the purpose and role of out-of-school time programs:

Each weekday afternoon in America, the ringing of the school bell signals not just the end of the school day, but the beginning of a time when at least 8 million of our children are left alone and unsupervised. For working parents, ensuring appropriate supervision of their children during the afternoon can be an extremely difficult challenge. As a result, so called "latch-key" youngsters can be found in our urban, suburban and rural

communities where working parents, for a variety of reasons, are unable to arrange or afford a better alternative. Instead of being a time for growth and opportunity for these children, the hours immediately following the school day are their most dangerous, for these are the hours when children are most likely to commit or be the victim of crime.

For many others, the afternoon hours are simply a period of idle and wasted time, when opportunities to be monitored and academically challenged are squandered. (2000, p. 1)

In conclusion, Riley's speech addressed the need for out-school time programs and supported the benefits of these programs. By addressing the need to keep children safe, support working parents and provide opportunities for children to explore and learn in a quality setting, out-of-school time programs provide a safety net, eliminate unproductive time and support the growth and development of youth.

No child left behind act of 2001. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) requires high-poverty schools to show progress in standardized test scores in English and math, but disregards many aspects of student's experiences and goals of public school (Ascher, 2006). The NCLB Act requires students to "reach or exceed each state's proficient level of performance in reading and mathematics by the end of the 2013-2014 school year." States must report disaggregated scores for "economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, students from major racial and ethnic groups, and students with limited English proficiency" to mark progress of student subgroups (p. 3). Educators create supplemental programs to address the needs of students who are performing below basic on standardized tests including out-of-school time programs (Miller, Snow, & Lauer, 2004).

Out-of-school time programs. In 1998, the largest federally funded program under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) the 21st Century Community Learning Centers authorized under Title X, Part 1, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was introduced redefining the role of out-of-school time for school age children. Out-of-school time programs have taken on a new role in public education to bring opportunities for academic remediation and enrichment activities to students in need of support and mentoring Miller et al. (2004). One of the intended results of out-of-school time (OST) programs is for students to become proficient on standardized tests.

The U.S. Department of Education classifies the 21st CCLC as a key component of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). The 21st CCLC Program directive is to “establish or expand community learning centers that operate during out-of-school hours (before school, after school, or during holidays or summer) or full-day Prekindergarten programs” for four-year-olds. 21st Century Community Learning Centers provide opportunities for “academic, artistic, and cultural enrichment.” The program statute stipulates in section 4201 (1) (B) that a community-learning center “assists students in meeting state and local academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics through academic enrichment programs. Learning centers must provide “students in high poverty schools with intensive academic enrichment opportunities along with other activities designed to complement the students’ regular academic program.” Families of students targeted for the program must be offered “literacy and related educational services” (United States Department of Education, EC 4201, 2002b, p. 2).

OST program evaluations. In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education contracted with Mathematics Policy Research, Inc., and Decision Information Resources, Inc. to complete an evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. *When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program* is considered to be the largest and most rigorous examination of school based out-of-time programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b). Student outcome data were collected in 21st CCLC elementary and middle school programs. The data were categorized and linked to student and school outcomes. The five categories were: (1) after-school supervision, (2) location and activities, (3) academic performance and achievement, (4) behavior, and (5) personal development and safety. Findings of the first year report were released in 2003 and indicated that programs failed to provide academic improvement in math and literacy. The program evaluation was also unable to determine whether participants felt safe in the program environment. No significant changes were noted in the areas of behavior, interpersonal skills, parental involvement, self care and supervision. Year two findings reported data that were consistent with year one. Elementary students test scores and grades failed to show measurable improvement. The report indicated middle school students' grades were higher in social studies; however, lack of improvement was noted in English, math, and science. The report further indicated elementary students reported positive feelings in the area of safety, unlike middle school students reporting negative feelings in program safety. Minimal impact was noted on parental involvement for elementary students as well as middle school students. The annual evaluations are continuous for 21st Century Community Learning Center programs.

Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, and Baker (2000) completed a longitudinal study on LA's Best after School Enrichment Program for K-5 students. The purpose of the study was to analyze the program results of the students enrolled in the program and to compare the results with non-participants. Background information obtained on both groups included ethnicity, gender, disability, economic status, test scores and the number of years students were enrolled in the program.

The findings of the LA's Best After-School Enrichment Program were positive based on student achievement and student performance. However, the findings indicated there were changes in the standardized test used by the district. The report indicated the school district changed from administering the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) to the Stanford-9. Later, the district changed to the SAT-9, Form S and then to SAT-9, Form T. The findings of the LA's Best study indicated participants felt safe in the after-school program and parents were positive regarding safety. Participants in LA's Best were more engaged in school as reflected by improved attitudes and positive relationships with adults and other students. Parents also expressed high expectations for their children. The children exhibited a personal interest in their future as demonstrated by answers on a questionnaire. The academic performance of the participants improved by a letter grade in the core subject areas. This was correlated to the number of years the students were enrolled in the program. The report concluded by discussing the economic factors that continue to affect the living conditions of students with an increasing number who are living in poverty and have a need for the program. According to Huang et al. (2000), "The rationale for LA's BEST and its programs are even more important and necessary today than they were twelve years ago, when LA's BEST was created" (p. 21).

Kane's (2004) study, in a working paper supported by the William T. Grant Foundation endorses the argument after-school programs are not only being defined as a new institution but are also part of the "national policy debate" (p. 1). Kane's report summarized the results of the four studies that include the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). The commonality among the four studies included centers that operated on a voluntary attendance basis typically averaging four or five days per week. Second, information was limited with only one study addressing the out-of-school time arrangements for participants in comparison to non-participants. Third and most significant of the results of the evaluations of the studies questioned the long term academic performance and impact of the students that remain in the program. Fourth, the findings indicate out-of-school time programs increase parental involvement in school, student engagement, and promote higher interest in the completion of homework, which was consistent in the majority of the program evaluations. The role of out-of-school time program and the expectations according to Halpern (2002) is often to function in a family and school support role by addressing academic and social needs that impact program goals and the identity of the programs.

Impact of OST Programs

Fashola's (2002) work on the impact of OST programs on at-risk youth in educational settings began in the 1990's. Fashola acknowledged the "problem of the after-school movement is the breath of its potential outcomes" (p. ix). Designing quality OST programs may require limiting program focus to address more select outcomes for the children and youth it serves. Funding sources help establish outcomes by defining evaluation measures such as standardized test scores in math and literacy. At-risk students are usually identified by performing below

basic in these areas. However, due to funding guidelines these students are mixed with proficient students in OST programs with less focus on academic achievement program outcomes.

Fashola (2002) evaluated thirty-four out-of-school time programs meeting four categories of selection criteria. First, the out-of-school time programs address a specific academic component, specific curriculum area, tutorial program with a focus on reading improvement and may be identified as a community-based program located within a school. The second category recognized that professional development and staff training helps ensure program success. Programs should rely only on qualified or certified staff to provide academic instruction. The third category recognized the importance of using pre-post data and school attendance as a measure of program success. The fourth category involved identifying barriers to student participation regardless of program location. For any program to be successful, the researcher concluded the categories identified must be in place to track the progress of the program and to successfully sustain the program.

Vandell, Riesner, and Pierce, (2007) conducted a two-year longitudinal study of the effects of high quality after-school programs tracking 3,000 low-income and ethnically diverse elementary and middle school students across eight states in urban and rural settings. This study determined regular participation in quality programs corresponds to increases in standardized test scores, improvement in work habits, and decreases in negative behaviors of disadvantaged children and youth. Vandell et al. (2007) constructed a theoretical model demonstrating the affect of students' personal and family background and developmental level prior to enrollment in an afterschool program. Program inputs such as correct dosage of program elements are

combined with experience in promising programs, sports activities, academic and enrichment activities, adult supervision at home, and supervised activities. Program outputs produce intermediate and long term outcomes including: (1) improved interpersonal behavior and social skills, (2) improved grades and work habits, (3) improved test scores, and (4) reduction in risky behaviors and disciplinary sanctions.

Vandell et al. (2007) reported the promising programs studied had strong community, school, and neighborhood partnerships in place in the communities they served. High quality programs were assessed using a rating system to document evidence of supportive interpersonal relationships between staff and students, evidence of academic support and enrichment activities such as recreation, opportunity to explore the arts, and other enrichment activities. The correct mix of enrichment activities were noted to build interpersonal relationships between students and to keep them actively engaged in activities. Promising programs offered age-appropriate opportunities for learning, tutoring, and games to enhance reading and math skills, recreational activities, community service, art and other enriching experiences. These programs provided staff training, maintained low student-to-staff ratios, and provided a strong partnership with schools and parents.

The findings acknowledged benefits of regular engagement in high-quality out-of-school time programs, community activities, and adult supervision at home for economically disadvantaged students. Risk factors for student participating in unstructured extra-curricular activities combined with minimal supervision at home during out-of-school time hours were identified. The risk factors included lack of adult supervision, boredom, engagement in risk taking behaviors which may lead to criminal activities.

Further research by Bodilly and Beckett (2005) identified three categories of literature pertaining to common out-of-school time program elements implemented to produce positive program outcomes: (1) school-age care; (2) youth-development; and (3) education literature. All literature types acknowledge that physically and psychologically safe and well organized environments are an important part of quality in out-of-school time programs. Youth-development and education literatures acknowledge high expectations in the areas of conduct, learning, and achievement as important to the quality out-of-school time program outcomes. School-age care and youth-development literatures acknowledge the need to offer age-appropriate and challenging opportunities for participants to learn a new skill and the importance of implementing sustainable parental, community, and volunteer partnerships to support youth in quality OST outcomes. School-age care and education literatures cite two characteristics relating to quality OST programs: (1) limitations on program and classroom size, and (2) teacher and staff training and the importance of clear program objectives with frequent assessments of whether the program is meeting objectives.

Findings from the study by Bodilly and Beckett (2005) on out-of-school time evaluations focus primarily on academic achievement rather than child-care arrangements. Impacts of OST programs focused on four specific areas: (1) health & safety, (2) attainment measured by grades, (3) social and health behaviors, and (4) social interactions. Bodilly and Beckett (2005) noted the evaluation was program specific and failed to account for the impact of participant involvement and overall participant engagement. The four impacts of out-of-school time programs identified by the researchers were recognized as elements of quality but failed to address participant involvement in relationship to these particular elements of quality.

Similarly, Baker, Speilberger, Lockaby and Guterman (2010) report practitioners and policymakers have recognized three program elements that have the most effects: (1) programs addressing multiple developmental domains; (2) high quality programs, and (3) professional staff successful in sustained engagement of children. Baker et al. (2010) determined the challenges of improving quality revolves around unstable funding and staffing conditions, and the ability to establish realistic program objectives and quality standards for a diverse field of after-school program providers. The field has recently embarked on a mission to create and implement a system of quality standards, supports, and resources for out-of-school time programs that will be effective regardless of program type or location.

Implementing high quality, according to Baker et al. (2010) is more difficult when key program elements supporting quality outcomes are not sustainable such as: (1) inadequate funding; (2) unqualified staff and high staff turnover; and (3) inadequate space. Start-up organizations with low levels of quality have difficulty making quality improvements because there is a perception that program operation is overwhelming and attempts at improvements would be unsustainable.

Collectively, studies show that participation in high quality programs produce positive outcomes. There is no stream-lined formula for success to enhance program quality; however there are common characteristics including: (1) maintaining trained, caring staff; (2) programming that is culturally and developmentally appropriate that addresses youth's interests and needs; (3) facilities that are designed around safety and accessibility with adequate equipment and materials; (4) programs that have attended to health and nutrition needs; (5) programs with strong management and administration with effective community and school

partnerships, and family engagement; and (6) programs with ongoing evaluation, goal setting, and improvement (Children Now, 2001; Eccles & Appleton, 2002; National School-Age Care Alliance, 1998; Peter, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Out-of-school time programs play a vital role in the growth and development of children. The growth and youth development factors are correlated to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs in relationship to the developmental needs of youth in out-of-school time programs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs developed by U.S. Psychologist Abraham Maslow in the latter half of the 20th century describes human behavior in relation to the basic and higher needs people experience in their lives. Similarly, the core commitments of the Arkansas Standards for Quality After-school Programs addressed the critical areas necessary to meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives by taking a positive approach to ensure that all children have access to high-quality development opportunities during out-of-school time (Arkansas Out-of-School-Network, 2009).

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs defines the greatest and lowest needs at the bottom of a pyramid and the highest needs at the top in a given order. The five needs identified by Maslow are physiological, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization. The physiological needs that are most familiar represent the basic needs for survival that include food, clothing, shelter and sexual activity. According to Maslow, these needs must be met in order for the body to function. Therefore, out-of-school time programs address a critical need by providing programs that promote healthy lifestyles and nutrition as a part of the activity schedule.

The safety needs are the second layer of human needs identified by Maslow upon satisfying the physical needs. The safety needs are individualized in relationship to feeling safe and secure within one's environment. Order, consistency, health and well-being are linked to the safety and security needs. The Arkansas Out of School Network (2009) quality standards identified a safe environment with stability and adult supervision as one of the priority needs for youth in a quality program. The youth needs list also includes food, shelter, healthy choices, and health prevention. In contrast, the number one element listed under the quality standards is safe and appropriate program environments and facilities to ensure the safety and welfare of children. The third human need identified by Maslow is the social need which includes friendship, intimacy and a support system. The need to belong and to be accepted or to be a part of a group/team is often fulfilled by the out-of-school time program. The researcher further discussed a lower and a higher version of esteem needs related to the need for recognition in the lower tier and self-respect in the higher tier which is the fourth layer of the hierarchy.

Improving academic attainment is paramount to success throughout the life course of an individual and becomes the highest goal of quality out-of-school time programs. Instilling value of an education and the benefits of postsecondary education changes the outcome of student lives. The potential life impact for a student realizing the goal of academic attainment can be compared to the life impact of an individual reaching their full and true potential in Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of human motivation. The assumption is that educational attainment allows individuals to move up in the hierarchy of society, it is the way out of a life based on struggling to achieve the lower needs of basic physiological and safety needs.

Descriptive elements of program quality. An out-of-school time program measures its success through monitoring and evaluating improvements in academic achievement of participants. Successful programs become sustainable by developing key components of effective leadership, continuous program evaluation, multiple funding sources, and vested student, parent, school, and community stakeholders. Once a program is sustainable, other support structures can be put in place that will produce positive impacts on children and youth through encouraging regular program participation.

Subsequently, Miller (2003) adapts the theory of change to depict effective OST program features and program outputs. External environmental contexts of family, school and community together with internal contextual factors of race and ethnicity, temperament, and personality of students are inputted into program features including: (a) partnerships combining supportive efforts of family, school, and community; (b) appropriate structure and provision for physical and psychological safety needs; (c) opportunities to build and support interpersonal relationships; (d) opportunities to attain sense of belonging, efficacy, and mattering; (e) opportunities to attain new skill sets. The efficacy of program features directly affects students and provides direct program results such as: (1) students benefiting from increased involvement with family; (2) students benefiting from caring adult and mentor relationships; (3) students benefiting from new sense of belonging to a positive peer group; (4) students benefiting from cognitive skills such as reflection, planning, and decision making; (5) students benefiting from a chance to practice skills and accrue new knowledge; and (6) students gaining self-awareness of academic competence.

Direct program results produce positive program outputs such as increased school engagement and therefore, increased school achievement. Increased school engagement includes

the following factors: (a) students are more motivated to do well in school; (b) students have higher attendance; (c) students build better work habits and are more persistent; (d) students behave better in the classroom; and (e) students increase cognitive skills. Increased school engagement sets the stage for increased school achievement in three areas, including: (1) higher test scores and grades; (2) lower incidence of students repeating a grade; and (3) higher graduation rates.

Miller (2003) states program evaluation based on the theory of change form a basis to examine the links between how the program works and how students are affected, but, outcomes cannot be attributed to program participation scientifically. However, on-going studies are examining the potential of theory-based evaluations because they require fewer resources. According to Vandell et al. (2007), theory based evaluation identifies the strengths and weaknesses of a program model and target the focus of the evaluator on the problem areas. The evaluation also looks at the results or expected outcomes based on program participation which may be defined by the funding source or a school district.

States' quality standards. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (2010) there are twenty-nine states that have established or in the process of establishing school-age care program and practitioner quality standards that rise above basic licensing regulations. Seventeen states have developed school-age quality standards for programs addressing curricula, program administration, outreach to parents, and learning environment. Eighteen states have practitioner standards; fifteen states have core competency standards; thirteen states have credentialing standards for school age children. Table 1 list the states with school-age care program and practitioner quality standards. .

Table 1

Quality Standards for School-Age Care by States

School-Age Program Standards	Core Competency Standards	School-Age Credential
California	California	Colorado
Connecticut	Delaware	Delaware
Delaware	Georgia	Indiana
Florida	Indiana	Kentucky
Indiana	Kansas	Massachusetts
Iowa	Massachusetts	Michigan
Kansas	Missouri	Missouri
Maryland	Nebraska	New Hampshire
Minnesota	New Hampshire	New York
Missouri	Ohio	Ohio
New York	Oklahoma	Pennsylvania
North Carolina	Oregon	South Dakota
Ohio	Rhode Island	Wisconsin
Oregon	Vermont	
Rhode Island	Washington	
West Virginia		
Wisconsin		

Existing national and local OST standards raise the following core issues: (1) program management and administration including program organization, policies, planning, fundraising, fiscal management, and supervision; (2) program activity including flexible scheduling to address needs of children and youth that offers security, independence, variety, and stimulation; interpersonal relationships that recognize the nature of interactions among youth, families, staff, other stakeholders, and staff to child ratios; and (3) characteristics of safe indoor and outdoor learning environments with equipment and materials that will engage children and youth; program highlights that address health and nutrition needs of children and youth.

Other quality standards frequently appear in the literature but were not consistent across programs including: (1) youth engagement and leadership; (2) family participation and

engagement; (3) program evaluation criteria; and (4) child and youth development activities (Children Now, 2001; Tolman et al., 2002). Youth engagement and leadership are often neglected in the program development process but will ensure positive program participation and outcome by children and youth and should be implemented into quality standards (Eccles & Appleton, 2002).

Quality standards establish program consistency; enhance program quality, and increase program recognition and potential funding. Harvard Business School assisted the organizations, Rhode Island Kids Count and Community Matters, in reviewing best practices and impacts of quality indicators for OST programs. National, urban, and local OST programs were considered in the findings. Developing OST standards provides a framework for systems of program improvement strategies. Quality standards that include both program standards and practitioner competencies make providers, families, funders, and other stakeholders aware of which strategies promote positive youth outcomes (Community Matters & Breslin, 2003).

Significance

The over-arching purpose of an out-of-school time program is to reduce the barriers to student achievement by providing additional instruction time for struggling students, tutoring, and help with homework in a safe, supervised environment geared for learning enhancement. Barriers of student achievement include generational poverty, low parental and community educational attainment, and lack of employment opportunities.

The 21st Century Learning Centers program has become the largest federal funding source for out-of-school time programs in the United States. This program was a major initiative of the Clinton-Gore Administration to keep children safe and provide meaningful enrichment

during out-of-school time. Former Vice-President Al Gore recognized children were most vulnerable during the time school lets out until parents return home from work because children and youth are most likely to engage in at-risk behavior while unsupervised and may be in unsafe environments.

Out-of-school time programs are important as reflected by the 2008 polling conducted by the Lake Research Partners on out-of-school time programs where nearly nine in ten voters (89%) noted the danger young people face, which further highlighted the significance of after-school programs. The consensus among voters was that out-of-school time programs play an important role in keeping youth in school; provide a safe place and opportunities to learn during the peak hours from 3-6 p.m.

The America After 3 PM (2009) study sponsored by the JC Penney After-school Fund provided current information regarding how America's children spend their afternoon. The national findings of the study reported "children who are unsupervised after-school are not only in danger of becoming victims of crimes or accidents; they are also at risk in other less dramatic but equally troubling ways" (Afterschool Alliance, 2004, p. 1).

In the Arkansas After 3PM (2009) study of 505 households surveyed for the study, 26% (125,025) of Arkansas' K-12 children were unsupervised after-school. The study further report 44% (187,722) of Arkansas parents cited the lack of availability of out-of-school time programs. The children would participate if programs were available regardless of their current care arrangement (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

Baker et al. (2010) reports the after-school field has grown considerably over the past two decades and has acknowledged the existence of achievement gaps between low-income and more

economically advantaged students and has sustained the belief that after-school programming can help reduce these gaps. The achievement gap between white and minority students continues to rank as a high priority in school districts and a major public concern.

Barth and Nitta (2008) suggest providing more instructional time for low-performing students is one of the factors in closing the achievement gap by supplementing the regular school day. The needs and benefits of after-school programs are higher for lower-income students than middle-income children (Miller, 2003).

Summary of Review of Literature

The review of literature provides a synopsis and program evaluation of historical and current research on quality standards and out-of-school time programs for school age youth. Some of the findings were consistent with the researcher's as outlined:

Fashola (2002) concluded as out-of-school time programs work toward their goals, it is critical for programs to track their progress and report results. Program evaluation significantly influences policy, administration, education, and research. Fashola (2002) noted the need for evaluation of these and other current OST programs to produce effective and replicable programs for increasing student achievement and positive outcomes. Clearly more work on the quality front in OST programming is necessary to replicate programs that show evaluative results.

Baker et al. (2010) reported program stakeholders perceived the concept of quality differently because the meaning and importance of quality vary across programs with differing interests and objectives. Thus, the concept of quality is not clearly understood and there is no understanding of how to achieve quality, the benefits quality brings to organizations that attain it, or the necessary program inputs to achieve quality such as funding support and other resources.

Quality standards become a tool to establish common professional terminology used by practitioners in child care and developmental programs for school age children, families, schools, funders, policy makers, and other stakeholders and useful tools for goal setting, program evaluation, and improvement. Evaluating program effectiveness leads to sustainable community partnerships, funding, staff, public recognition, and program participation. Quality standards hold programs accountable for outcomes and shortfalls and provide potential funders a basis for investment in proven practices. Standards are foundational to sustain staff and development efforts by linking quality keys to training and technical assistance. The use of recognized quality standards provide a mechanism to coordinate conflicting methods of assessment used by various funders and policy makers. Quality standards earmark the cost of quality in programming and can guide how program funds are distributed (Hall, 2002; Tolman et al., 2002).

Bodilly and Beckett (2005) call for “more rigorous assessment” to identify OST program components that provide the most benefit to participants, but caution against isolating program features for evaluation because of cost and complexity (p. 74). The literature review led researchers to determine that quality may be engineered into OST programs by designing around program features recognized as elements of quality. Programs demonstrating effectiveness can be closely evaluated to determine how program components relate to overall program quality. A cost analysis of effective programs can identify the right mix of program components that produce desired outcomes.

Further, in reviewing the Bodilly and Beckett (2005) study, it became apparent to this researcher that the literature lacks focus on participant’s voice and choice in quality OST programs and lack of measurement or reporting regarding participant input into quality

programs. A measure of quality in OST programs may be linked to the participant rather than program features.

Also, Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation* briefs summary of ten years of research on after-school programs concluded the increasing growth in funding and participation in after-school programs provoked further discussion related to benefits, outcomes, and accountability. However, the common theme in a series of studies under the Harvard Family Research Project affirms the need for and impact of quality standards in after-school programs regardless of the location and type of program which is supported by Governor Mike Beebe (2008) and the Arkansas Out-of-School Network (2010).

The final report of Beebe's (2008) Task Force for after-school and summer programs defined out-of-school time programs based on a framework of quality standards and best practices that include a comprehensive system approach and accountability to ensure that out-of-school time programs are addressing the needs of participants. The framework for quality standards and the key elements included in the report identified program expansion, evaluation, and training for out-of-school time staff. The expansion process included the utilization of existing agencies by expanding their capacity to promote quality standards and administer programs. The final step required the use of research-based practices to help determine the number of hours and days per week for students to produce positive outcomes. Identifying elements of quality in OST programs is difficult because of the differences in organizations and their program objectives, goals, and desired program outcomes, their populations served, their partners and other stakeholders (Community Matters & Breslin, 2003).

Conclusion

The review of literature did not identify a streamlined formula for creating quality out-of-school time programs or a theoretic model that addresses quality standards for different program types across various geographic locations with the common goal of increasing academic achievement and other positive enrichment and developmental goals for students. The differences of program types and stakeholders make it difficult to align quality elements in out-of-school time programs. Elements of quality were identified in the literature and many successful out-of-school time programs utilize many of these elements. Some programs have implemented all the elements while others overlook key elements that would make their program more sustainable. The overall goal of out-of-school time programs is to create student success whether through academic achievement, personal development, or enrichment activities.

Additional studies also addressed the social barriers and unmet needs defined by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The gaps acknowledged in the research include the following: (1) fewer programs exist for high school students, (2) the percentage of students that are unsupervised during out-of-school time, and (3) students and parents do not want out-of-school time programs to be an extension of the regular school day, but offer a variety of activities based on input from students.

In closing, the review of literature supports the finding that out-of-school time programs are receiving more attention than ever before. Program accountability, evaluation methods, and proper interpretation of program findings are among the major issues in the field (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002). The diversity of organizations housing out-of-school time programs, the population served, and desired program outcome make it difficult to identify a comprehensive set

of key elements to quality programs. Therefore, it is a better practice for out-of-school time programs to develop their own quality standards rather than adopt a broad national standard which may not reflect the complexity and diversity represented in various OST programs (Tolman et al., 2002).

Although the majority of the research supported positive findings regarding after-school programs in relationship to student achievement and behavior, some studies reported negative results which included the United States Department of Education (2003b) that reported poor first year findings of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs. The study “reported minimal or no major impact on academic achievement and other program indicators” (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b, p. xii). This study further fueled the discussion regarding the efficacy of out-of-school time programs and the lack of quality evaluative studies by advocates and opponents of out-of-school time programs.

Research supportive of out-of-school time programs continue to acknowledge the critical role in closing the achievement gap specifically for economically disadvantaged youth by extending the school day and providing enrichment and academic support in a safe environment. However, the mark of success in out-of-time programs continues to be student retention and academic achievement. Finally, instilling the value of an education to all students is paramount to success in school and life.

Future research will address the variables related to the social characteristics and demographics of out-of-school time programs in relation to student achievement and the need for recognized OST quality elements that function across program types and geographical location. The cost of un-funded mandates as they relate to the quality standards will continue to be a

challenge for program providers. Proposals to redirect OST funding which is part of the current education legislation may create a larger problem for providers if school districts are allowed to use the funding during the regular school day. Next, chapter three will provide the methodology, research questions and role of the researcher, data management and the summary.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to describe key elements of quality in out-of-school time (OST) programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants. The study identified the standards for high quality out-of-school time programs that were linked to student achievement and positive outcomes for participants. A 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) OST program for school age children in Southeast Arkansas was selected for this case study. The goal of the primary research questions was to identify quality components of the program studied as they were related to program outcomes measured by the experience of program administrators, staff, and participants.

The case study takes place in a Southeast Arkansas city of 9,146 people and with a forty-mile radius population of 99,000 people (U.S. Census 2000, Economic Development Commission, 2010). According to the city's Economic Development Commission, the area is progressive and considered as the area's retail, recreational, and cultural center with evidence of twenty-five percent growth in retail sales over the past six years. The city is home to a state university and situated in a rural agricultural setting with a water port nearby and Union Pacific rail service. Households and families in the city are best described with U.S. Census (2000a) data.

The city represents 3,592 households of which sixty-four point five (64.5%) percent are family households with thirty-two point five (32.5%) percent family households with their own children under age eighteen present. Female headed households with no husband present represent eighteen point three (18.3%) percent of households and forty-two point five (42.5%)

percent of households represent married couple families. Social characteristics revealed seventy-eight (78%) percent (4,130) of the population age 25 and over are high school graduates or have higher educational attainment; twenty-two point two (22.2%) percent (1,172) have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Two school districts serve the area; one named for the city and one for the county.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) described case study methodology as a means to focus on a program or an organization through the immersion of the researcher in the setting and with the research outcome dependent on the worldview of both the researcher and participants. This researcher applied Brantlinger's (1997) seven crucial assumptions of qualitative methodology as they related to the researcher's role in the case study approach selected for this study: (a) researcher viewed the nature of the research as critical with a political agenda to identify and promote quality OST programming; (b) researcher's position relative to participants was distant and objective as an observer; (c) direction of researcher's gaze was outward toward others, thereby externalizing the research problem; (d) purpose of the research was intended to be useful and informative to participants on site and other OST programs and policy makers; (e) intended audience of the study was the scholarly community, OST programs and policy makers; (f) the research was positioned politically with an agenda to enhance the quality standards of OST programs; and (g) researcher's exercise of agency was a part of OST policy practice.

Creswell (2007) identified three types of case studies including a single instrumental case study, collective or multiple case studies, and an intrinsic case study. This research takes the form of an intrinsic case study that focused on the case itself which for this study was the entire OST program at a middle school in Southeast Arkansas. Stake (1995) noted that intrinsic case

studies were used to evaluate program elements. The focus of the case study under investigation was the program elements of quality and the impacts and perceptions of program quality for participants. The intrinsic case study resembled narrative research following a prescription of analytic procedures that required detailed description of the case study set within contextual boundaries of its physical surroundings.

Research Questions

The following two key research questions guided the study:

1. What are the elements of quality out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants?
2. What is the impact of quality as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in out-of-school time programs?

Research design. According to Firebaugh (2008), the case study method best documents characteristics of program outcome and quality elements that may not become as evident with other research designs that do not allow for deep description of complexities. Qualitative research methods allow “thick description” (p. 26) and strategic data collection and can often extend or correct quantitative research findings. Coding textual data transforms interviews, field notes, and other documents into nominal variables which were, in essence, what statisticians mean by the phrase qualitative data (Bernard, 2000). The variables in this study revolved around quality elements of OST programs.

The research for this study was conducted in four phases: (1) semi-structured interviews with 21st CCLC personnel (administrators and site supervisor); (2) the collection of observational data (students/ students relate to staff; staff relating to parents); and (3) review of program

artifacts and documents from multiple sources. Each phase was intended to answer research questions and/or support overall findings. Findings were analyzed in phase four (4) through open coding of data for the purpose of identifying major themes.

The data collection process began with semi-structured interviews with participants, administrators and teachers. Marshall and Rossman (2006) define qualitative in-depth interviews as conversation-like with predetermined response categories to explore the participant's views while respecting how participant framed responses. It was important to identify the perspective of administrators and the site supervisor regarding quality programming. The goal of the interview was to establish the program's funding source(s) and role of parent and community partners in the program. Further, the interview design seeks to establish elements of quality in the program and how quality is organized in the program's design. The interview design also identified elements of quality in the program and explored whether improving academic achievement and/or meeting or improving students' developmental needs were among expected program outcomes. In this study, informal, semi-structured interviews were defined as interviews conducted in a relaxed, non-formal setting focused on gaining an overview of the program to be studied from program administrators and the site coordinator. Interview questions were listed in Table 2 as outlined:

Table 2

Sample Interview Questions

 Questions for OST Personnel

1. What is the operational design of your OST- program?
 2. How are elements of quality (best practices) organized in your program's design?
 3. What are the funding sources for your program?
 4. What are the desired outcomes of your program?
 5. How do these outcomes manifest in your program?
 6. Are your program outcomes measurable?
 7. What are the ultimate goals of your program?
 8. Is academic achievement a goal of your program?
 9. Does your program meet developmental needs of students?
 10. Who are your community partners?
 11. How do you utilize your community partners?
 12. How do you utilize parents as program partners?
-

The second phase of the conceptual design focused on observational data collection regarding the role teachers and program staff played during implementation and delivery of quality OST programming. Teachers were observed in the program setting while interacting with students and parents. The field note guide used for observation of teachers and program staff in Table 3 presented the theoretical framework for elements to quality OST programs developed by this researcher based on the Arkansas Governors' Task Force on Best Practices for Afterschool and Summer Programs (Beebe, 2008) and Maslow's (1954) Theory of Human Motivation. The perspective of teachers was particularly important to this researcher because they were on the front-line delivering quality programming to students.

Table 3

Field Note Guide

OST Program Observation

1. Observe how safety is designed in facilities and learning environments.
 2. Observe ways students demonstrate the feeling of safety in program environment.
 3. Observe instances of staff building trust with students.
 4. Observe instances of staff building relationships with parents.
 5. Characterize through observation staff interpersonal interactions with students.
 6. Characterize through observation staff interpersonal interactions with parents.
 7. Observe instances of program design or staff meeting developmental needs of students.
 8. Characterize through observation evidence of student educational achievements.
 9. Characterize through observation how staff recognizes student's developmental achievements.
 10. Characterize how the program impacts students.
-

Observational data were collected by observing the program in action. Particularly, how students engaged in program activities and student's interaction with teachers and staff was of particular interest to this researcher. Students' interaction with teachers and program staff was monitored and documented through comprehensive field notes. Similarly, teachers and program staff interaction with parents were monitored and documented through the collection of field notes. Field notes were reviewed, documented, and transcribed into qualitative data ready for open-coding for the identification of major theme which formed the basis for the codebook and outlined the guiding principles. Field notes collection was used for observation of teachers and program staff in the OST program under investigation. The third phase of the research design played a supportive role.

In the third phase, the investigation of program artifacts and documents from multiple sources were used to support major themes appearing in interview and observational data. All data pertaining to the program in print and on the Internet were analyzed for congruency with

qualitative data pertaining to the program operation. The operation of the program was revealed through interviews with the administrators, site coordinator, teachers, and staff and through observation of students and their interactions with the program and staff. Elements of quality found in the program operation compared to what the program promises to deliver in various documents were noted.

The following documents were analyzed: OST program web-based data for Arkansas 21st CLCC which was designed and maintained by MGT of America, Inc., including: (a) site profile; (b) student enrollment; (c) weekly activity log; (d) program reporting information; and (e) report data. Qualitative data compiled throughout the case study were open-coded to search for major themes and to identify elements of program quality.

In phase four, interview and observational data written from field notes were open-coded to identify themes present in the data and elements of program quality. A hierarchy was constructed to depict the findings of the elements of quality. Phase four also included an additional search of the literature to find a basis for comparison between the literature and the findings of this study.

The city's middle school was the host school of the OST program under investigation, and published the following mission statement:

[Our school] is committed to providing all students a challenging curriculum, quality instruction, and varied assessment aligned with Arkansas frameworks and standards. The school creates a learning environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development. The [school] faculty, staff, and administration actively

collaborate with family and community to help insure that students succeed in meeting goals and acquiring skills needed to be successful in high school.

The out-of-school time program purpose and goals were aligned with the mission statement of the school district. The OST program provided opportunities for academic remediation and enrichment activities that addressed the needs of the students. However, the priority was student achievement and performance on standardized test.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics' public school data for the 2008-2009 school years, the host middle school housed grades six through eight grade students and thirty-seven (37) classroom teachers with a student/teacher ratio of twelve point six (12.6). The Arkansas School Performance Report (2009) reported forty-seven percent of students qualified for free/reduced price meals. Table 4 highlighted the targeted school enrollment for 2008-2009.

Table 4

2008-2009 Middle School Enrollment

Enrollment		Race/Ethnicity		Sex		Subsidized Meals	
6 th Grade	168	White	320	Male	216	Reduced Lunch	26
7 th Grade	152	Black	139	Female	249	Free Lunch	219
8 th Grade	145	Hispanic	5				
Total	465	Asian/ Pacific Islander	1				

The Arkansas School Performance Report (2009) disclosed No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data and reported the school achieved standards in 2008/2009 and had met standards in mathematics, literacy, and attendance during 2009. The African-American subgroup met the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) in mathematics: sixty-seven

point one (67.1%) proficient status and seventy point seven (70.7%) percent proficient growth; met AMO in literacy: achieved sixty-three point seven (63.7%) percent proficient status and sixty-six point seven (66.7%) percent proficient growth. Economically disadvantaged students met AMO in mathematics: seventy-three point five (73.5%) percent proficient status and seventy-six point three (76.3 %) proficient growth; met AMO in literacy: achieved sixty-five point four (65.4%) percent proficient status and sixty-seven point eight (67.8%) proficient growth.

The school report card for the host school revealed the majority of students were performing at the proficient and advanced level. Table 5 depicted performance levels for the host school students.

Table 5

Annual Performance Report 2009

Population	Below Basic %	Basic %	Proficient %	Advanced %	Proficient & Above %
Combined	1.8	13.5	46.0	38.7	84.7
African-American	3.4	23.7	42.4	30.5	72.9
Caucasian	1.0	7.8	47.6	43.7	91.3
Economic Disadvantaged	3.8	22.8	48.1	25.3	73.4
Female		8.0	44.3	47.7	92.0
Male	4.0	20.0	48.0	28.0	76.0

The purposeful selection of subjects for this study reflected the rational choice of the researcher to engage respondents with the deepest knowledge of program design, quality elements, and program outcomes. Participants were identified through researching the job descriptions and professional development information of administrative staff, teachers and

program staff to select the most knowledgeable interview subjects. The program itself was a pool of potential participants during the observation phase of this research project. Interactions of staff with students and staff with parents were the subject of observation, field notes, and later documentation of data and data coding.

Rationale for selecting school/program was two-fold: (a) the even distribution of demographic variables such as grade level, race, and socioeconomic status (whether students were from advantaged or disadvantaged backgrounds); (b) the program has been recognized for best practice. However a deeper investigation as to perceptions of program quality was necessary to determine the impact of quality on participants.

A broader inspection of the host school's performance report for 2009 revealed an increase in students performing below basic and basic in the African-American sub-population for seventh grade mathematics, seventh grade science, eighth grade literacy, and eighth grade mathematics. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of African-American students in each performance level for each subtest.

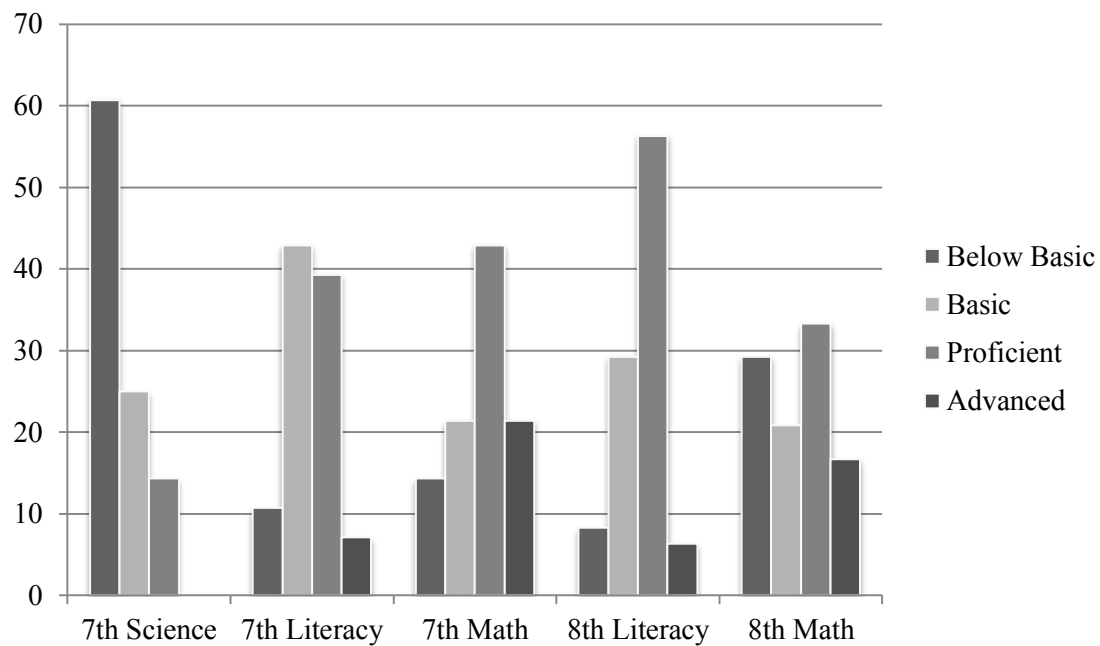


Figure 2. African-American performance indicators in science, literacy, and mathematics

Figure 3 represented a comparison between two sub-populations: African-Americans and economically disadvantaged middle school students. By the eighth grade, a dramatic increase was noted in poor mathematic performance. However, economically disadvantaged students were slightly behind African-American students in poorer performance indicators.

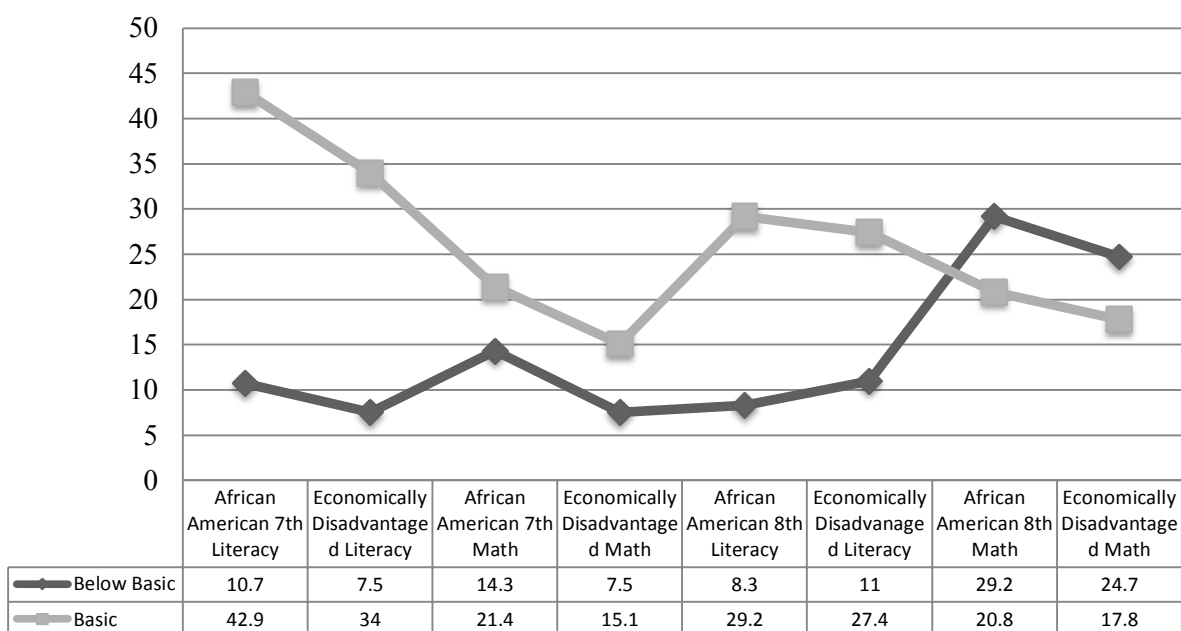


Figure 3. Comparison: African-American vs. economically disadvantaged middle school students

Researcher's Role

This case study examines a 21st Century Community Learning Center out-of-school time (OST) program which complements the professional background of the researcher. This researcher possesses over ten years' professional experience as a service provider and administrator of out-of-school time programs. Other applicable experience in the field included fund development demonstrated by successfully writing and administering three 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grants for a primary and elementary school in Southwest Arkansas and co-chairing the Arkansas Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After-school and Summer Programs.

This researcher is experienced in policy recommendations that support programs in a wide-range of settings, including, but not limited to school districts and community and faith-

based organizations, by providing opportunities for children and youth to engage in quality out-of-school time and summer programs across the state of Arkansas. As a professional providing service for school age children, the benefits of OST programs were evident and can make a difference by providing quality, accessible out-of-school time programs that keep children safe, help working parents, and improve academic performance.

Historical studies also provided an opportunity for the researcher to analyze and evaluate a vast amount of research. Identifying important elements in the literature relating to significance for this case study continued to be a challenge throughout the study. As a result of an ongoing review of best practices and quality standards on the state and national level, this study provided an opportunity for the researcher to examine the standards currently in place for 21st CLCC out-of-school time programs in relationship to the Arkansas State Standards.

Data Management

This case study was conducted during the 2010-2011 school year. During the summer of 2010, the researcher began literature search and review. The fall of 2010, the researcher began documentation collection with approval of the school district and Institutional Review Board (IRB). The spring of 2011 interviews were conducted, data analyzed, and the findings will be presented upon committee approval.

All data gathered in this case study were regarded as confidential. All documents were secured in a protected setting in an effort to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Supporting documents were date stamped, coded by categories, and filed during the data analysis process. Program artifacts and documents were used to validate the study. Artifacts and documents were procured by submitting written request to program administrators and the site coordinator.

The data management process streamlined the data collection and analysis process. Data were analyzed as collected and sorted into themes through open-coding facilitated by the use of a code book developed from interview questions. Interviews were coded from interview sheets and field notes were coded using the field note guide. Descriptive coding was used to analyze and summarize the primary topics pertinent to the study. Data were assembled and electronically stored by emerging theme for collective analysis as the study progressed.

Data collection. Marshall and Rossman (2006) presented positionality guidelines as a method to disclose researcher participation while conducting observations. This researcher established the following planned extent of participation while at the research site: (a) the researcher was a passive participant in program activities; (b) the study's purpose was not fully disclosed to people in the setting; (c) the researcher was presented as a program observer; (d) the researcher's participation focused on observation during the collection period; (e) ethical dilemmas pertaining to quality program objective disclosure was managed through Institutional Review Board (IRB); and (f) collection of observational data answered the research questions through identifying elements of quality as perceived by participants and recording participant's perceived impact of quality programs.

The following process was used to conduct interviews and observations. An observational protocol based on Creswell (2009) outlined how observational data were collected. Field notes were gathered by conducting observation as an observer. Field notes were divided into two columns: (1) the right hand side column was reserved for descriptive notes including character sketches of participants, dialogue reconstruction, description of the setting, and accounts of program activities and events; (2) the left hand side column was reserved for reflective notes

which may contain the researcher's thought responses regarding what was being observed, and demographic information including time, place, and date in which the observation occurred.

Creswell (2009) recommended adoption of an interview protocol—this study used the protocol to ask interview questions and record responses: (a) interviews were documented on a prepared interview sheet with a heading disclosing date, place, interviewer, and interviewee; (b) interview procedures were standardized with interviewer instructions included on each sheet; (c) interview questions were supplemented with opening and closing questions: (ice breaker question and a follow up question); (d) Probes were inserted for each question in case participant elaboration or explanation required prompting; (e) Space was provided for interviewer to record responses; and (f) a thank you statement appeared at the end of the interview form to acknowledge participant's investment of time.

The concept of saturation was used as a research strategy in data collection to ensure credibility of the study. Phase one and two of the research study was on-going until data saturation occurred. Data were analyzed as phase one and two progressed for the purpose of discovering patterns that related specifically to the research questions. Interviews and observations were discontinued after consistent patterns in the data were documented and no new patterns or themes emerged from the data. Triangulation analysis to validate emerging themes in the data were used and once completed signaled to the researcher that data saturation had occurred. When data saturation occurred, the research study progressed toward completion of findings in Chapter Four.

Data analysis. The goal of data analysis was to arrive at themes relating to program quality. The data analysis process included open-coding. Open coding involved reading the

transcripts, identifying, labeling and categorizing related and recurring themes. Open coding is appropriate for this case study because the process included descriptive note taking from observation, interviews and collecting pertinent documents that were coded and labeled.

Creswell (2009) recognized qualitative data analysis as a progression through interrelated steps. This study adopted an interactive approach to data analysis: (1) data were organized and prepared for analysis by transcribing interviews, documenting field notes, and sorting data types; (2) data were assimilated by the researcher by reading thoroughly and reflecting on overall meaning and making comprehensive notes; (3) items will be coded into general category themes specified in a booklet relating to elements of program quality and codes that were surprising, unusual, or that represented a theoretical perspective in the research; (4) the coding process included a description of the setting, participants, and themes for analysis; (5) description and themes were represented in narrative form; and (6) an interpretation of data produced a wider meaning including lessons learned, comparison of findings in literature and theories, and future research questions for investigation.

The distribution of themes listed in Table 6 reveals a consistency of comments of all staff interviewed regarding perceptions of students. The participant's code (numbers) at the top of the table identifies each participant. All interviews except one certified teacher made references to the program. Interview content from all interviews except one certified teacher made references to grades. Interviews demonstrated recognition of the program focus through references of student achievement, high-stakes testing, and homework. Interviews reveal an understanding of program strengths, funding, and program sustainability and outcomes.

Table 6

Distribution of Categories & Themes

Participant Codes	0101	0102	0103	0104	0105	0106	0107	0108
Categories								
Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Relationships			X	X	X			
Student Achievement		X	X			X	X	X
Program Sustainability/Outcomes		X	X		X	X		
Themes								
Safety			X	X		X		
Structure		X		X	X			
Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Caring		X			X			X
Strong	X			X	X	X		
Expectations					X	X	X	
Grades	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Homework		X	X		X	X		X
Choices	X		X					
Funding			X	X		X	X	
High-Stakes Testing			X	X		X	X	X
Partners				X			X	X

Trustworthiness and credibility. The credibility of findings was addressed by ensuring findings were based on reliable information from credible respondents and informants, prolonged and persistent engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and the establishment of an audit trail. Undue researcher bias was avoided by making data available for peer review by three faculty members in the Educational Leadership Program from the local university early in the study and continually as the study progressed.

Prolonged engagement. The data collection process was completed over a period of five months. The researcher has over a decade of professional expertise in OST programs which allowed for thorough data collection in a compressed time period. Findings were validated through the various phases of the research design.

Persistent engagement. Persistent engagement was accomplished through the re-interview process utilized to check the data for inconsistencies. Data inconsistencies were verified through supplemental interviews and member checks. The respondent's perspective of the program, knowledge of best practices and quality elements, professional development, program design, proposed program outcomes and actual program outcomes were considered in the evaluation of inconsistencies in responses to interview questions.

Triangulation. The primary source of data utilized in this study were interviews. Conversational and semi-structured interviews were conducted at the host school site. Program artifacts and documents from the host school, state department, briefs, and the school district's website were collected and utilized to provide additional data. Through the use of multiple sources of data, the researcher was able to complete the triangulation process for this study which increases the credibility and validity of the results.

Member checks. Interviews and other qualitative data were documented and shared confidentially with key respondents for their reaction to the interview. These respondents were invited to expand, clarify, or correct responses to interview questions. In some cases, follow-up interviews were completed to address or clarify potentially incongruent data before member checks were completed.

Audit trail. An audit trail was established as a means to confirm data. Data were securely stored electronically and on a computer USB storage device. All aspects of data for this study were secured including (a) recordings of interviews; (b) interview transcripts; (c) interview questions; (d) collected documents and artifacts; (e) field notes; (f) results of data analysis; and (g) results of document analysis.

Summary

The qualitative research study provided an extensive and comprehensive process of data collection and analysis. Triangulation methods and qualitative data coding techniques to identify major themes were the foundation for the interpretation of findings. The interview questions reflected the theoretical framework for quality OST programs and guided the research in an effort to answer the research questions. The research design of this study, data collection and analyzing techniques, followed by findings, discussion and conclusions of this study were executed to clearly answer the research questions as further outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and management process, research questions, elements of quality, description and distribution of themes and categories and summary of data.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to describe the key elements of quality in out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants. The goal of the study was the identification of standards for high quality out-of-school time programs that are linked to student achievement and positive outcomes for participants in a 21st Century Community Learning Center. The intent of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (NCLB, 2002) is for all students to become proficient by 2013-2014 on standardized tests by holding schools accountable for student performance including subgroups within a school district.

This chapter includes a review and discussion of key findings correlated to the research questions. The researcher interviewed key participants of the target group for the study. Program artifacts, documents, personnel interviews, and observational data were used to address the research questions.

The following research questions were addressed:

Research Question:

1. What are the elements of quality out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants?
2. What is the impact of quality as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in out-of-school time programs?

Description of Participants

The participants selected for this case study included middle school students, site coordinator, administrator, certified teachers and college students. Participants self-reported information regarding qualifications, background and experience including national board certification. This information was documented and maintained in a separate file to maintain confidentiality. Eight certified teachers, a site coordinator, a program administrator, and two college students were interviewed for the study. Ten middle school students were interviewed; however, due to limited content responses from the students, responses were summarized. Of the eight certified teachers, one teacher reported being national board certified and another teacher reported enrollment in the doctoral program at the local university. The site coordinator reported eleven years of employment in the out-of-school time program.

Additional information obtained through school records and personnel included the student enrollment numbers that were listed as 2,082. There were 480 students enrolled in the middle school. The composition of the student body was 35% Black and 65% White, less than 1% other. The makeup of the faculty in the out-of-school time program was predominantly white and black females, the males present were college students. Table 7 listed below provided a description of the program participants which included faculty and students of the host school.

Table 7

Description of Participants: Faculty (F) and Students (S)

Sex	Participants	Race
Females (F)	7	White
Females (F)	3	Black
Male (F)	1	White
Males (F)	1	Black
Females (S)	2	White
Females (S)	3	Black
Males (S)	1	White
Males (S)	4	Black

Data Management

The data collection techniques included the written approval of the Superintendent to conduct the study in the school district. Parental consent forms for students and permission forms for personnel were completed and approved in the entrance phase of study. Initial visits were conducted to become familiar with the school district, personnel, students and the operation of the out-of-school time program. Access to documents including demographics, policies and procedures pertaining to the out-of-school time program, test scores, and the Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) was granted to the researcher by school personnel. Strategic locations were identified for conducting the interviews and observations.

The researcher manually completed the data analysis process. Data were analyzed as collected and sorted into themes through open-coding facilitated by the utilization of the code book and the field note guide. Interviews and field notes were coded from interview sheets and field note guide.

Descriptive coding was used to analyze and summarize the primary topics pertinent to the study. The process included reading the interviews and field notes multiple times. The next

phase included identification of patterns, major and recurring themes, and examination of documents that identified elements of quality in programming and outcomes. Data were coded into general category themes specified in the code book relating to elements of program quality. Supporting documents were date stamped, coded and filed during the data analysis process. The participants were listed and identified by the coding system. Audit trail notations were used for certified teachers which were identified as CT followed by a numeral code of 01, 02, and 03. College students were identified as CS and followed the same pattern with numerical codes of 09 and 010. Direct quotes from participants are also included in this chapter and are identified by numerals and letters. The interview questions are identified by numbers and letters that indicate the response from the interviews. Table 8 provides an illustration of the register of audit trail notations for participants.

Table 8

Audit Trail Notations

Notation	Participants	Questions	Codes
PM	Project Manager	District	0104
SC	Site Coordinator	MMS	0103
CT	Teacher	MMS	0101
CT	Teacher	MMS	0102
CT	Teacher	MMS	0105
LB	Librarian	MMS	0107
CT	Teacher	MMS	0106
CT	Teacher	MMS	0108
CS	College Student	MMS	0109
CS	College Student	MMS	0110

The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed electronically.

Triangulation analysis was used to validate and complete emerging themes in the data until data

saturation occurred. According to Merriman (2009), triangulation involves the use of multiple sources of data that includes cross-checking data that were collected through observations at different times and places or interview data collected from different people with various perspectives or from follow-up interviews.

Interviews and other qualitative data were shared confidentially with key participants for their responses to the interview. Participants were invited to review, clarify or correct responses to interview questions. To protect the anonymity of participants, parenthesis () were used by the researcher.

Research Question One

The first research question was addressed through a semi-structured interview process that included conversational and open-ended interviews with the site coordinator and middle school teachers at the selected location. The initial conversational interview was conducted with the administrator. The administrator provided general program information regarding the out-of-school time program that included the hours of operation and the quality of the certified staff and college students that worked with the students. Additional information was provided by the Project Manager in a conversational and semi-structured interview format. The Project Manager described the out-of-school time program as an extended program focused on student achievement.

The students needing help in literacy to meet the Accelerated Reading Program goals were referred to the out-of-school time program and placed on an academic improvement plan. However, some students attended for homework completion and to participate in the enrichment activities which included Archery and Fitness. The overall goal of the interviews was to identify

the perspective of the personnel related to quality programming in the out-of-school time program.

Elements of quality. The following categories define the elements of quality identified by participants in the out-of-school time programs. The categories were students (participants), student achievement, program sustainability/outcomes, and relationships. The emerging themes listed under the category of students included safety, structure and program. The second category was student achievement and the emerging themes were grades, homework, high stake testing and choices.

The third category identified was program sustainability/outcomes and the emerging themes were funding, support and partners. Relationship was the fourth category and the themes included caring, strong and expectations. There were a number of similarities in the program operation and sequence of activities correlated to the emerging themes. Listed in Table 9 are the categories and themes related to program quality in a 21st Century out-of-school time program.

Table 9

Elements of Quality

Categories	Participants	Student Achievement	Program Sustainability/Outcomes	Relationships
Themes	Safety	Grades	Funding	Caring
	Structure	Homework	Support	Strong
	Program	Choices	Partners	Expectations

Description of Categories and Themes

The themes emerging from the data were linked by categories as determined by the data analysis process. Three emerging themes were listed under each category. Interview content regarding student achievement was found to be the richest category with related themes of grades and homework. Interviews related shared themes regarding the program for the participants' category. Key elements of quality identified in the relationship category were demonstrated by staff and student interactions and during interviews process. Program sustainability was a major concern for staff and the future of the program. Key elements described by staff included the need for financial support, resources and community partners.

Student Participants

The first major category related to program quality was student participation in the out-of-school time program. The participants included a diverse population from various socioeconomic backgrounds that were enrolled in the program because of basic or below basic scores on the benchmark examination. Students were provided an array of enrichment opportunities within a safe and structured environment. Similar activities were not available to

students outside this program. One teacher's description of why students attended the out-of-school time program:

Several factors may influence why students attended the out-of-school time program. One major factor was the benchmark scores. If students scored basic or below basic on the benchmark, they were assigned either 30 or 45 days in the out-of-school time program. If students scored basic or below basic in Math, the students were assigned 30 days. If students score basic or below basic in Math and English, they are assigned 45 days. So that will be one factor and then too, we have a lot of kids that like to come for Encore classes outside the day school which is a chance for them to do something different. For example, Archery and Project Alert, a self-esteem building program, social type things. There are many different reasons, quite a few come because they have to, but we do have students that do not have to attend, that do come. (CT-0101)

The students enjoyed a variety of activities offered in the out-of-school time program. Some of the activities include Project Alert which is an enrichment activity. The Writing Workshop was offered to students and provided an opportunity for students to integrate technology through the use of flash drives, digital cameras, and lap top computers. Students were introduced to a variety of science projects and they were encouraged to do experiments. Students were taught how to set up an experiment and write reports. Through the science activities, students were introduced to new concepts that stimulate the imagination. Online activities were also included as a part of science and the integration of technology.

Safety. The first theme identified by administrators and teachers under the participant's category was the safety factors related to the out-of-school time program. According to the

district's handbook, the middle school campus is a closed campus which encompasses the out-of-school time program. Students must remain on campus and leave only with permission of the administrator and the parents. Visitors must report to the office. Students are monitored by video and a camera system. Violations of school regulations and policies may result in detention or suspension depending on the severity of the infraction which is applicable to out-of-school time program participants. The importance of providing a safe environment and security for students and faculty was evidenced by the school policies and the freedom of movement of the students and staff. Nutritious snacks were provided for each student and physical activities through a Fitness Program incorporated into the enrichment activities to address the health needs of students.

Several teachers reported the out-of school time program followed the same policies and procedures as the regular school day in regard to safety. The Student/Parent Handbook outlined the responsibility of the school district:

maintain discipline, protect the safety, security, and welfare of its students, staff, and visitors while at the same time safeguarding facilities, vehicles, and equipment.

Video/audio surveillance cameras are used in school facilities/grounds and school buses.

Students are held responsible for violations of school discipline rules caught by the cameras. (p. 60)

Also, an emergency drill was conducted monthly which included fire drills and tornado drills during the months of September, October, January, and February. An emergency evacuation drill was conducted twice a year for bus riders. Other emergency drills included

lock-downs, acts of terrorism and chemical spills. The emergency drill and procedure was in compliance with the school district policies.

The safety elements of the out-of-school program related to quality were consistently identified by the teachers in multiple interviews. The teachers linked the school policies and procedures to the out-of-school time program design. One teacher's description of quality related to safety included the criminal background checks required by the school district for staff and a system of checking students in and out of the programs by teachers and parents. Further comments by a teacher included her opinion that the "out-of-school time program was a very safe place for students and the quality of the program was good." (CT-0101) Several teachers indicated they wanted the program to be safe and make a difference. Also, school personnel related even though it was an out-school time program, they were in compliance with program standards and followed the school district policies and procedures.

Since the classes and enrichment activities were located on the middle school campus, the building security system was operational during the out-of-school time program. The custodial staff provided additional assistance with building supervision after students leave for the regular day. There was a sign in/out system in place for the parents to check students out through the office. The students riding the bus were checked out by the staff before leaving the program.

Program structure. The overall structure and purpose of the out-of-school time program as it related to program quality was defined within the district's Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan (ACSIP). The plan required by the Department of Education identified the priorities for the school district. The school district linked the academic goals for the out-of-school time programs in the plan. According to the plan, the middle school students

must meet the proficient level of performance in literacy and mathematics by the end of the 2013-2014 school years. The school must also make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting that goal. Failure to meet these standards resulted in the school district being placed on the School Improvement list if less than 95 percent of eligible students were tested or the school does not meet the secondary indicator (school attendance).

According to the site coordinator, the program was originally designed with input from the team which included the principal, staff, teachers, and counselors. Surveys were also used to determine the needs of the students. The need and desires of the students and parents were meshed with the goals of teachers and the quality assessment goals. The goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Center funding were linked and addressed in the program objectives.

Further information on the structure and program design related to quality was provided by an administrator. According to the teaching staff, the site coordinator provided the directives for the program and maintained records of student progress while serving as a resource person to the out-of-school time staff. One teacher described the structure of the program:

We can do things in afterschool that we can't do in day school. They can get up and run around outside with 8 to 10 students that you can't do with 20-25 kids in a classroom.

The strategy that we use, we target students that are below proficient, we mandate students that are below proficient, it is part of our ASCIP, 30 days if they score basic, 45 days, if they score below basic. We see after-school as a tool to help them improve their performance on the benchmark and other high stake exams. (SC-0103)

The out-of-school time program is supervised by certified teachers assigned a 30 minute block for a particular subject area. The enrichment activities were coordinated by the certified teachers and college students.

Out-of-school time program. According to the teachers, the out-of-school time program environment provided the support and resources the students needed to be successful in the regular day classroom. Assistance was available for homework completion and supplies were provided through the library to help student's complete special projects. The Behavior Intervention teacher provided extra support and supervision for teachers during the out-of-school time program by working one-on-one with students that were challenging and may have special needs.

The Librarian was on duty to assist students with reading materials and the computers were available for students. The students had choices and options in the out-of-school program that provided an opportunity for students to give their ideas and suggestions to the teachers regarding the type of enrichment activities they would like to see incorporated into the program.

The school district's facility provided the space, equipment and resources needed to operate an effective and quality out-of-school time program. The program environment allowed freedom of movement for students and staff without safety concerns due to the security system and the monitoring of the students by personnel.

Additional information obtained from the *Parent/Student Handbook* described the out-of school time program as a program that started the first week in September and ends the last week in April. The out-of-school program included a remediation and enrichment component that is provided Monday-Thursday. Students were transported by parents or the school bus.

Several teachers described the composition of the out-of-school time program as four thirty- minute blocks Monday through Thursday from 3:20 p.m. – 5:20 p.m. The classes included the core subjects and the enrichment classes. The classes were Math & Science Workshops, Writers & Nutrition Workshop, Library, Homework, Archery and Physical Education. Behavior Intervention was provided by the Special Education teacher for students with challenging behaviors or students that needed help working through personal problems that were related to school or home. Teachers also related that the block schedule allowed students that needed extra help with a certain subject or extra homework time the flexibility to remain in one area without rotating to another class. The students were also allowed a choice of enrichment activities.

Student Achievement

The second major category related to program quality identified by the administrative and program personnel was student achievement. The major goal of the out-of-school time program was to improve student performance on the local, state and national assessments. One teacher's assessment of the out-of-school time program as related to student achievement:

I think it started with the regular school day where everything is focused on student performance and students meeting the AR goals. Students wanting to participate in the out-of-school time program may choose to do so. However, it is placed on the students' academic improvement plan. The research shows even enrichment activities leads to academic performance. (PM-0104)

The site coordinator acknowledged “every student is not advanced and not every child is an A student in every subject area. However, by helping every child meet his or her potential, it will

help the school stay in the forefront of success.” The 21st Century Community Learning Center OST program may provide additional resources to help students that may not be available during the regular school day.

Student grades/test scores. The first theme under the category of student achievement was identified as grades/test scores. Several teachers identified the strategies used in the out-of-school program to target students. According to the teachers:

The students are targeted that are below proficient, we mandate students that are below proficient, it is part of our AIP, 30 days if they score basic, 45 days, if they score below basic. We see after-school as a tool to help them improve their performance on the benchmark and other high stake exams. As a teacher, the focus is getting the students at this age to buy in that it is their job, their responsibility to learn and we will do anything we can to help them. (SC-0103)

Several teachers related that positive high-stake testing outcome as a core program goal during the interview process. One teacher opinion of the benchmark exams:

The students come to the out-of-school time program because of the benchmark examination. If students do not do well on the benchmark, they are mandated to come. For some students, it is homework; the parents want them to get their homework completed before they get home because they may not be able to help them. (CT-0105)

Another teacher stated, “most of the students attend for benchmark remediation; they are required to attend a certain number of days if they didn’t score proficient or advance on their benchmark examination.” (CT-0108) Additional interviews provided some rich descriptions of activities that were centered on high-stake testing in the out-school time program:

Even though we are a block schedule, the students get Math every day; it is double blocked 90 minutes. We use to have seven periods during the regular day which really turned us around. We use ARA reading everyday to support literacy especially the reading component. We do reading and math interventions. We pull out the bubble students and target them. We have through the curriculum developed tons of writing activities. Even in Health and P.E., everyone has tried to support the writing. The ASCIP plan is tied to the out-of-school time program. If a child is below proficient, they are assigned 30 days for basic and 45 days below basic. If they don't come, they are mandated to summer school. (SC-0103)

The teachers further discussed the importance of helping those students that scored basic or below basic with various teaching strategies to become advanced or proficient. A certified teacher description of the program outcomes:

I think our program outcomes are measurable. One thing I know is our site coordinator looked at test scores before the students started afterschool for improvement or growth in afterschool. We track attendance, and we let the students know every nine weeks how many days they have attended, you can see the difference in their day school scores and attitude. (CT-0106)

Multiple teachers discussed the Benchmark examination during the interview process and the impact of the test scores on the school district related to meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). If a school fails to meet AYP for two consecutive years, the school is listed as in need of improvement Year 1 and must offer public school choice according to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002).

Homework assignments. The second theme under the category of student achievement is home work. The out-of-school time program provided an opportunity for students to complete their homework and receive additional help and support if needed from certified teachers. The Librarian was on duty until 5:20 p.m. to assist students with materials and the use of equipment for special projects. Computers were also available for student use. College students were available to provide tutoring and extra support to students that may be struggling in certain subject areas. According to the staff, the goal was to help students complete their homework assignments, stay on track in the regular classroom and improve their performance on the benchmark and other high stake exams.

Imbedded choices. The third theme under the category of student achievement was choices. According to the teachers, choices are imbedded in the out-of-school time program through the enrichment activities that are provided for students. The activities may include the writing program, Archery, Nutrition, and Physical Fitness. The programs were mentioned by several teachers. These programs are designed to be Monday through Thursday programs, three hours a day, snack, and transportation if needed. Students are divided by grade levels. They have choices and options which was one the quality assessment goals to give the student choices; therefore, there are embedded choice programs. All students have a structured rotation program. If the students elect not to participate in one of the optional programs; they are scheduled for a 30 minute block that included a variety of classes. Usually, the students were divided into very small groups by group levels, exception fitness, where the students are all together. Overall, the objective was to rotate every 30 minutes to give every student the option and choice to participate in a variety of activities.

Program Sustainability/Outcomes

The third major category related to program quality identified by the program staff and classified as critical to the overall success of the out-of-school program was program sustainability and measurable outcomes. The majority of the teachers referred to the Site Coordinator when questions were asked relating to program sustainability. The Site Coordinator described the district's position regarding sustaining the out-of-school time program when the 21st Century Community Learning Center funding end as having no way to sustain the program. The Site Coordinator further indicated the parents cannot afford to pay and there was no industry in the city, however, the majority of the parents were employed. The Site Coordinator felt it was unrealistic to think that the district would be able to sustain the program. However, after providing program data, the district determined the benefit of the out-of-school time program in relationship to student achievement was significant, the district agreed to pick up the transportation cost.

Academics were driving the out-of-school time program with the overall goal to improve test scores. The program outcome related by one teacher was stated as follows in response to the interview question: 'I hope students were able to make better scores on the benchmark examination; I hope they become better-rounded students. I just hope they have gained, that the biggest things, they are better off at the end, than when they started.'" (CT-0101) Teachers were held accountable for the performance of the students on the benchmark exams and expressed the critical role OST played in helping students improve test scores and become well-round students. The improvement in test scores and letter grades in the regular classroom continued to provide evidence of the value and contribution of the out-school-time program.

Federally funded. The first theme listed under the category of program sustainability/outcomes was funding. The major funding source for the out-of-school time program was the 21st Century Community Learning Center funds which supported the school and community based programs. The funding provided the budget for the school district to employ certified teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals to work in the program. Supplies, equipment and some of the food cost were covered with the 21st Century Community Learning Center funding.

The school district provided in-kind contributions consisting of accounting, janitorial, building space, utilities, equipment, playground, library and transportation. Since it is a school based out-of-school time program, the school district provided a safe environment that included a security system along with support personnel to monitor the building. Technology and food service support was also provided through the district.

Support/partners. The second and third themes listed under program sustainability/outcomes were support and partners. The school district is a key partner in providing an out-of-school time program for struggling students. The support of the school district manifests itself through qualified personnel and the overall administrative support of the district. The project manager's description of the involvement of the district: "The buy in of the administration was as strong as indicated by the manager. Even though we had different principals on board, the principal makes all the difference in the world." (PM-0104) The support of all the staff was noted as critical. Multiple teachers mentioned community service opportunities and volunteers from the football team and Greek organizations. Parent volunteers were also recruited to read with students, particularly the reluctant or struggling readers. The teachers related the students

realized they can learn from reading and enjoy reading books, magazine and other printed materials.

The partnerships as indicated by teachers included a community outreach with the focus of getting the community involved in the enrichment activities of the out-of-school time program. A successful collaboration of African-American churches supported by 21st Century funding has helped by working with the churches and parents to understand what the students are facing on high stake testing and the impact of test scores on the academic success of the students. Finally, the impact of quality as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in the out-of-school time program was related to program sustainability and academic achievement. The main goal related by multiple teachers was to improve the student performance on state, national and local assessments.

Relationships

The fourth major category related to program quality identified by the out-of-school staff was the importance of positive relationships with the students. According to the administrative support staff, out-of-school time staff was able to build unique relationships with the middle school students. The Site Coordinator expressed a concern regarding the composition of the staff being primarily white females. Therefore, the use of the university football players enabled communication with the male students and encouraged completion of homework in a manner different from the traditional staff. “The student came in today and said, ‘I know my paper is right,’ a football player sat beside me for 45 minutes and if I made a mistake all he said was, ‘no man that’s not right.’” (SC-0103)

The homework completion time block provided an opportunity for the students to receive

assistance and the use of computers and other materials which may not be available in the home. The majority of the parents are working according to staff and really appreciated and requested the completion of homework assignments.

Caring. The first theme under the category of relationship was caring. Staff demonstrated positive interactions and respect for the students while engaging in activities. One teacher's description of the interaction between staff and students:

The buy in from staff in getting the students to realize that we aren't here just because we draw a paycheck was huge. We are here because we care about you and we want you to do well, so the follow-up, the mentoring our staff gives the students. I will help you study for the test, but you must tell me how you did on the test. I am invested in you, how did you do? There are tangibles like stickers, suckers, or mom coming in saying this child is failing in everything, he is sitting there faking you out. Kids put more time into faking than they do actual work. We work with our students on positive intervention, teaching them how to study, how to organize their binders or making positive academic interventions. (SC-0103)

The instructional activities were age-appropriate and addressed the individual needs of students. positive interactions with staff. The group size was small which enhanced the amount of time teachers spent with each student. The relationship between the staff and students included not only a high level of respect, but strong evidence of trust and a sincere desire to see that the students were successful in school.

Strong program. The second theme under the category of relationship was strong program. According to the staff, the strength of the program centered on being student focused and the importance of the students recognizing the staff cared about their welfare and the success

of the program. The staff formed relationships with students through positive roles and recruited college students they could relate to which enhanced the program. Several teachers indicated the need for the out-of-school time program to make a difference and be a strong program. One OST teacher further described her program method:

The program is not all about academics, it includes some social things, life skills and things that are motivating to the students. The students are encouraged to think long term instead of short term. Middle school students are so short term; it is difficult to get the students to see the bigger picture. It helps to not constantly pound academic, but try to incorporate life skills and show the students how things relate outside the school building.
(CT-0101)

Other teachers discussed the importance of providing a well-rounded program which included academics and enrichment, however, the program must be more than just academics to keep the students involved and engaged.

High expectations. The third theme under the category of relationship was expectation. The importance of helping students to build their self-esteem was repeated by several teachers. Examples were given by teachers of teaching the students the concept of “paying it forward” which meant after the students received help in the out-of-school program, they are encouraged to help someone else become a better student. A career teacher described her classroom incentive program for students as follows:

Mostly, it was just praise; they don’t get enough attention, giving the students positive praise, I give a lot of little prizes; I had some little key chains, they love those. I had some little toys I had saved from cereal boxes, I am a pack rat and I save everything. I

had some little race cars, the boys loved them. They like being recognized. They want to read, they volunteer to read. When we are writing about our experiences, they wanted to read. I was really impressed with one group of boys they were so unruly, I thought, “oh my gosh,” but they wrote the best stories and they all wanted to read them in front of the class which is improving their self esteem. That is the most important thing when working with the students to build their self-esteem. (CT-0102)

Teachers used various forms of incentives to recognize students and their accomplishment in the program.

Research Question Two

The second phase of the research design focused on observational data collection regarding the role of the teachers and program staff in the delivery of the program elements. Teachers were observed in the program setting while interacting with students and parents. The focus of the observation process was centered on the purpose of the study, theoretical framework and research questions. The researcher observed specific events and behaviors that occurred in the classroom setting, library, gym, and hallways that involved out-of-school time program students and staff. Students’ interaction with teachers and program staff were monitored and documented through comprehensive field notes.

Observation notes were recorded on a code sheet that included the frequency of specific events and the physical setting or location. The interactions and conversation including nonverbal behavior between the staff and the students were also observed and recorded. “Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event or situation can be observed firsthand,” according to Merriman (2009, p. 117). The researcher’s role was strictly as an

observer from a distance to avoid any intrusive contact with the students or staff during planned and unplanned activities.

The participants entered the out-of-school time program location in an orderly manner and sat at various tables after the school bell rang for dismissal of the regular school day. Conversations between respondents were in a low tone of voice and smiles were exchanged as respondents removed their books from the backpacks and began working on assignments. Some students started reading books and others asked for assistance. The staff provided requested materials to the students while engaging in a conversation with a smile and playful interaction with the participants. Respondents moved to and from different classrooms in a 30 minute block rotation and some respondent remained in the initial location. The following field note from observation in a writing class:

The students (10) completed a writing assignment. The students used writing prompts and the teacher provided prompts as she walked around the classroom. The majority of the students present were males. The classroom bulletin boards contained information about writing skills which the teacher directed the students to read and follow the instructions. There was a mobile lab in the classroom the teacher used to assist students in various writing activities. The mobile lab contained lap top computers the students could use or if they were more comfortable writing with a pen, it was their choice. However, some of the writing activities required research for background information. Upon completion of the writing assignments, the students were required to print the assignment out or turn in a handwritten copy to the teacher.

Overall, the observation time periods provided an opportunity for the researcher to view the out-of-school time program firsthand as well as staff. Observations were recorded which included the classroom setting, participants' role, activities and interactions. Conversations were summarized and paraphrased to describe the content of the conversation. Codes were utilized to record events, behaviors and participants.

The review of program documents related to the out-of-school time program were categorized to include records, test documents, test scores, ACSIP Plan, Policies & Procedures, Professional Development & Training records, 21st Century Community Learning Center grant application, OST student rosters/schedules, School Report Card and the OST Handbook.

Summary of Data

The researcher presented the major categories and themes that were identified through the data management process in Chapter 4. The major categories developed from the interviews were: students, relationships, and student achievement and program sustainability/outcomes. The themes under the four major categories were outlined in Table 6. The data management process was organized and coded according to the two research questions. Chapter Five will present the introduction, summary, research questions, interpretation of data, field and program recommendations, recommendations for future research and the conclusion.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to describe the key elements of quality in out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants. The process included interviews, observational data, collection of documents and program artifacts. This chapter will include findings related to the data, conclusions and recommendations for current and future studies that have implications for educators and policy makers.

Summary

Improving student achievement and promoting the growth and development of youth are two of the major goals of out-of-school time (OST) programs. However, the growing population in the United States expands the problem facing parents, educators, and policymakers of how to manage children's out-of-school time. The 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funding for OST programs remains the major source of funding if not the sole source of program funding. Total reliance on 21st CCLC funding is problematic for two reasons. First, programs will not be sustainable over the long-term with a single funding stream. Out-of-school time programs need multiple streams of funding to survive and thrive as community supports for children, youth, and families. Second, changes in the 21st CCLC funding program will spell disaster for dependent OST programs.

Recently, the Arkansas Department of Education began considering plans to allow school districts to divert 21st CCLC funds to sustain programs other than before and after school programs. This proposed change would jeopardize 120 out-of-school time programs in Arkansas serving 17,000 children and youth. The culprit is the way federal waivers for No Child Left

Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) is presented to state departments of education. Departments of Education at the state level have the ability to choose the option for more flexible funding of existing 21st CCLC funds which would allow diversion of funds to individual school district programs of choice.

The risk is 21st CCLC funds would be diverted to athletics or other mainstream programs at the discretion of school districts. The burgeoning after-school movement could not sustain itself under the impact of lost federal funding through 21st CCLC. Threats to funding must be dealt with by building strong and sustainable community partnerships with a recognizable core of dedicated school and community volunteers and by acquiring and maintaining long term relationships with funders. Multiple streams of funding ensure the long term viability of OST programs (21st CCLC, 2011).

Research question one. The first research question, what are the elements of quality out-of-school time programs for school age youth as perceived by the participants? The consensus of the staff is the focus of the OST program is on student achievement, homework completion and enrichment activities. The elements of quality identified by the participants include: (1) targeted middle school students; (2) caring relationships between OST staff and students; (3) mentor relationships between students and volunteers; (4) improved student expectations in educational outcomes; (5) student achievement demonstrated by grades, test scores and homework; and (6) program sustainability and outcomes.

Academics were the driving force of the program based on the interviews, observational data and program documents. The OST program is designed to be a Monday through Thursday program operating three hours a day with a snack and transportation provided after the regular

school day. This is supported by information obtained from the Student/Parent Handbook.

Research question two. The second research question, what is the impact of quality as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in out-of-school time programs?

Teachers expressed a need for more one-on-one time with targeted students. The Site Coordinator stated, “Giving students feedback and that pat on the back or college and high school students helping with that test or homework makes a difference.” (SC-0103) The consensus of the staff is the district cannot financially support the program. The staff was unable to identify any plan for sustainability. The teachers expressed in the interviews the parents were working as a reason for the limited amount of parental involvement in the program.

The school district has made an investment for over 11 years in this program and has the data to support the need to ensure the longevity of the program. Data were supported by student growth and achievement. The program had a strong buy-in from the administration and the parents. The majority of the students were mandated because of benchmark scores. There are other students that participated in the program for enrichment activities. One of the favorite activities noted by several teachers was Archery which is made possible by a strong sustainable community partnership.

The Site Coordinator addressed program sustainability in the following manner:

We asked the district to pick up the transportation cost after providing the data that it was worth it. There is no way the district can sustain the whole program. I do think we have the support of the district and anyway they can, they will kick in what they can.

However, it is unrealistic to think the district can. Our parents can't afford to pay; we don't have any industry here. My hope is to keep finding funding out there whether it is

21 Century or other sources. The transportation piece was big. We run three buses; intermediate, middle, and high school. We service the city whereas the other district services the county. As you look at the AYP scores, it has been a lot of hard work and a lot of knowledge. (SC-0103)

During the interview process the Site Coordinator expressed a major concern regarding the scope and depth of the program because of perceived funding restrictions and lack of community financial support.

Interpretation of Data

Patterns and relationships of data emerged. According to Miller (2003) out-of-school time programs play a vital role in identifying and addressing the needs of students and parents. However, the structure, personnel, program and funding are critical to high quality out-of-school time programs and must be more than an extension of the school day.

Therefore, a thorough analysis of data collected and further evaluation of documents, observation and interviews, the perspective of the participants are summarized in three key areas: First, the students' perceptions or understandings of the program were linked to completion of homework assignments, studying for tests, and participating in enrichment activities. Second, staff perceptions of program outcomes from the interviews were supported by student attendance, student participation, test scores and grades. Third, staff perceptions of program funding were supported by documentation of the funding cycle linked to program sustainability and the future of the out-of-school time program within the school district.

Positive gains were evident in the student's benchmark scores, yet the social and behavior outcomes could only be evaluated by observation of students and their level of engagement in

activities of interest and involvement with peers and staff. The examination of student attendance records provided evidence of attendance and suggested a relationship between attendance and student achievement outcomes. Enrichment activities that build the self-esteem of students were difficult to evaluate based on the time period for program observation and the individual characteristics of the students.

Themes for each major category materialized during the process of analyzing interview data. The student category themes included the elements of safety, structure, and program. The student achievement category themes included grades, homework, and choices. The program sustainability and outcome category themes include elements of funding, support, and partners. For the relationship category, themes included the elements of caring and strength identified by the recurring key words strong and expectations.

The impact of quality was minimal on parental involvement in the out-of-school time program. Teachers reported parents were working which limited their involvement in the program. However, teachers felt that parents understand the benefits of the out-of-school program in relationship to home work help and test scores.

The review of literature did not identify a model or streamline formula for creating quality out-of-school time programs due to the various types and location. Elements of quality were identified in the target program of the study as described in the themes. The majority of the programs discussed in the review of literature had implemented some of the key quality elements and address the goal of creating student success through enrichment activities, academic achievement and personal development.

Program Recommendations

Program recommendations are four fold: (1) develop a sustainability plan to include employers, federal funds, community and faith-based organizations; (2) conduct student surveys to determine the perspective and interest of the students; (3) evaluate program models based on the needs of the students; and (4) empower the students to become advocates for the program through the use of technology and social media.

The sustainability plan includes the identification of employers, foundations or corporate offices that provide grant funds or volunteer hours/resources. The second part of the plan includes staff training on researching community, state and national funding sources and grant-writing techniques. Although, the faith-based organizations were involved, the partnership needs to be expanded to reach the sustainability goals. One African-American church in particular became the catalyst for this OST program because of their involvement in tutoring African-American students for the benchmark. More importantly, the OST program is a part of the school district's Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) which is administered by the school district's federal program staff. The structure and allocation of federal funds may need to be realigned to include the OST program. The district reaps the benefits of the OST program as students become proficient with the assistance of the OST staff. As a result, the school district remains off the School Improvement List.

Out-of-school programs must address the needs of the whole child by using a program model that helps staff identify the needs of the students and establish a framework for the program and the student. The integration of technology into the program through service learning projects may provide meaningful and real-life experiences for the students. The

students must also be empowered to accept responsibility and ownership for the program which may be a shift in roles for the staff.

Recommendations to the Field

For OST programs to become quality and sustainable within school districts and community organizations, (1) the role of OST programs may need redefining to address the needs of today's children and families, (2) community colleges and universities need to become more involved in shaping the role of out-of-school time programs, (3) the continuation of the advocacy work for legislation that support the need for out-of-school time programs and program expansion in highly populated areas of the state or areas with limited resources, and (4) the implementation of quality standards in out-of-school time programs must be a funded mandate regardless of the type of out-of-school time program or the location.

Employing quality elements for OST programs work on multiple levels. Building a strong foundation through multiple funding sources to sustain programming is essential to OST. Programmers should access private funding to build stronger programs. Creating cooperative community relationships bridge the gap between staff capability and program needs by bringing in volunteers. Volunteers can be identified through community partners or parents showing interest in program goals. Children and youth flourish in environments conducive to learning. The environment should feel safe to participants and be safe for participants.

The perception of safety by participants is as important as having planned evacuation routes and attendance tracking systems. Once participants feel safe they can begin to engage in programming and start building positive interpersonal relationships with staff and volunteers. The interactions between participants and staff are essentially where program goals and

objectives are addressed. These interactions provide essential moments for mentoring, coaching, and teaching. The establishment of interpersonal relationships between participants and staff builds trust. Once trust is established, participants can reveal needs to staff and volunteers that can be addressed through the program. Trust also makes it easier to address developmental needs in a less threatening environment.

Having basic needs met frees participants to aspire to academic attainment and other personal goals. The perception of participants the program has developed specially to meet their needs allows participants to have ownership of the program. The perception of safety allows participants to build trust and form vital relationships which will meet needs. Meeting developmental needs leads to academic improvement which over time can spell success for the student both in and out of school.

Recommendations for Further Research

Ongoing studies are needed to examine the use of theory-based evaluations in out-of-school time programs. Theory-based evaluation identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the program model and the evaluator targets the problem areas and program results or outcomes. Second, additional work is needed regarding the quality elements in OST program that can be replicated and show evaluative outcomes. The importance of evaluating program effectiveness is critical to sustainable out-of-school time programs, particularly 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs and other programs that are receiving federal funds. Third, additional research is needed to determine the number of hours and days that are most beneficial to program participants in out-of-school time programs. Last, one of the common threads in the review of literature is centered on the question of how to create and implement a system of quality

standards, supports, and resources for sustainable out-of-school time programs that will be effective regardless of program type or location.

Conclusion

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) mandates school accountability in the classroom and the out-of-school time programs, particularly those that are federally funded. Historically, out-of-school time programs were started to provide a safe place for children while parents worked. Quality out-of-school time programs continue to play a critical role in closing the achievement gap specifically for economically disadvantaged youth by extending the school day and providing enrichment and academic support in a safe environment. However, the mark of success in out-of-school time programs continues to be student retention and academic achievement. Elements of quality for OST programs begin with multiple funding sources and parent and community partners. The highest goal of quality OST programs is educational attainment which is paramount to success in life. Improvement in student performance in benchmark examinations and individual educational achievement is the mark of OST program success.

Some OST programs in school districts have seen the value and benefit of these programs and others must recognize quality programs are needed to improve academic success and should consider the allocation of federal or other discretionary funding for out-of-school time programs. Out-of-school time programs help to keep children safe by reducing the temptation to engage in risk-taking behaviors, criminal activities, and the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Out-of-school time programs address the critical need for helping working parents and providing

academic and enrichment activities to promote the social, emotional and physical development of children.

Student achievement was identified as the richest category with related themes of grades and homework. Interview data revealed shared themes regarding the program for the participants' category. The case study identified elements of quality that support student achievement outcomes for school based programs including positive program perceptions, sustainable funding, and building strong interpersonal relationships. The findings suggest key elements of quality were present and may contribute to positive outcomes for students. Program sustainability was a major concern for staff and the future of the OST program. This study contributes to the data needed to identify OST quality elements across program types and geographical locations.

The data from interviews and documents supported academic achievement and the participation of students in enrichment activities. Interview results from the staff indicated the importance of strong interpersonal relationships between staff and students. OST programs in a similar context can benefit from this finding because often students are reached by people they have come to know and trust. Teaching, mentoring, and coaching can be accomplished while students learn archery, journal writing, and mathematic remediation. Application of key elements to build a quality framework for OST programs are suggested within the interview data.

OST programs offer important partnerships with colleges and universities that provide struggling students with caring and supportive mentoring relationships. Strong programs emerge through hybrid programs utilizing a combination of faith-based and school-based programming efforts. This case study had a faith-based partnership at its point of origin that set the stage for

school-based programming focused on increasing benchmark scores. This elemental focus on academic achievement suggested increased test scores. The case study shows the program may be stifled through the lack of vision toward expansion of faith-based and community partnerships that could increase sustainability and funding. Overall, without the 21st Century Community Learning Center funding, the site coordinator indicated the program would have to close its doors. The study identified key elements that build upon each other to create programming that effectively address student achievement.

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