

CULTURAL CHANGE IN RURAL SCHOOLS THROUGH ENRICHMENT AND  
INTERVENTION IN A QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

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A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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May 2017

## ABSTRACT

### CULTURAL CHANGE IN RURAL SCHOOL THROUGH ENRICHMENT AND INTERVENTION IN A QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

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A review of the best practices and research literature resulted in the implementation and evaluation of an after-school program for a small rural school in Northern California. The program is designed to overcome some unique challenges for rural schools by offering after school instructional support, homework assistance, and enrichment opportunities that work together to create a rich and successful environment to support student growth. A program evaluation survey measured parents'/guardians' satisfaction with the program demonstrating significant support after two years. Student achievement data as monitored by teachers and administrators, demonstrated the program's academic effectiveness in supporting student growth. The included After School Program Handbook provides detailed descriptions of successful strategies for planning and implementing similar programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Many schools are in the process of reforming the way educators think about the school day. Research suggests that there is insufficient time in the current school day to provide the academic essentials and a breadth of enrichment activities for all students (The CSU and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation 2011, *After School Handbook for School Site Leaders*). This may ring true for most schools, but it is especially relevant to the rural schools of California. The United States Department of Agriculture defines rural in the following way, "Metro/urban areas can be defined using several criteria. Once this is done, nonmetro/rural is then defined by exclusion -- any area that is not metro/urban is nonmetro/rural." (USDA 2014) Throughout the literature, exclusion of the rural population from the metro centric educational system is noted. For the purpose of this study, the term "rural" refers to a population of people excluded from living in a populated metropolitan area.

Rural schools make up about one-third of the approximately 100,000 public schools in the United States. In 2010-11 more schools were located in rural areas (32,000), than in suburbs (27,000), cities (26,000), or towns (14,000). With 5-13% (depending on definition) of California's elementary aged students living in rural areas, California's rural schools are a major part of the California education system. The regular elementary school day currently consists of six hours of academic instruction in all subject areas.

Under the No Child Left Behind legislation, the amount of time devoted to English language arts and mathematics instruction has increased from 41 percent to 58 percent, while time allotted for science and social studies has decreased from 30 percent to 21 percent. Noticeably, instructional time for art, music, and physical education has also decreased from 17 percent to 12 percent (Center on Education Policy, 2008). As a result, students in California do not get educational minutes dispersed evenly among subject matter, but instead most academic time is spent on language arts and math. Given the role of time on learning, focusing on core subjects such as reading and math may help increase test scores. Nationwide, 40 percent of 4th-grade public school students scored at or above the *Proficient* level on the 2011 NAEP mathematics assessment. The percentage of 4th-graders in rural areas scoring at this achievement level (42 percent) was larger than in cities (33 percent) and towns (35 percent) but smaller than in suburban areas (45 percent) (NCES). While statistics show positive gains in math for rural students, the question arises, is this at the cost of enrichment type content and activities?

Students attend school for six hours a day in all areas of California, it is the hours after school gets out that differ for students who live rurally. While urban and suburban students have opportunities for enrichment and academic support outside the context of the school, many rural students rely on school based activities for similar support. In this study, 80% of the student population in the school district attend and rely on after-school programs.

The current study takes place in a small rural town in California. The town has a high percentage of its student population living in poverty (72.1%), many members of the

community are incarcerated and others suffer from homelessness. Many students attending school struggle to have their basic needs met.

With seventy two percent of children in Clearlake Oaks living below the state poverty level, it is easy to conclude that most school aged students do not attend extracurricular classes such as ballet, art, karate, computer classes etc. This is in part due to the lack of resources available for such classes, but also do to the monetary expense extracurricular classes require. As school focus has shifted to language arts and math for the majority of the school day, rural schools and their students have begun to look toward after-school programs for an answer to the lack of enrichment opportunities.

After-school programs in the United States found their footing in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and have played an active role in youth development since then. In the beginning local clubs began providing recreation and learning activities to children. While afterschool programs have evolved in the past century, the core passion for helping guide our children to healthy, safe and successful outcomes remains (Halpern, 2002).

Although the after-school program concept is well established in the US, it is the quality of the after-school program and what it can provide which has seen significant change. By extending the current six-hour school day by two to three more hours through an after-school program, there is time for additional academic instruction, physical fitness activities, and enrichment opportunities for all who attend. Included in this study is a handbook for rural school use to create, run and maintain a quality after-school program that includes opportunities for enrichment and academic growth.

Through quality after-school programs students in rural areas can enhance their academic achievements and benefit from a range of enrichment type activities.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

The literature review evaluates research that explores the claim that, elementary (K-5) student motivation to learn, attitudes toward school, involvement in after school programs, community building and positive relationships can affect rural students' success in schooling in low-income rural schools. This chapter will review the following variables as they relate to the study of low-income rural schooling, rural living, rural students' motivation to learn, rural poverty, homework, rural student access to extracurricular activities, academic success, and relationships with peers, teachers, parents/ guardians.

## RURAL LIVING AND EDUCATION

The United States Department of Agriculture defines rural in the following way, "Metro/urban areas can be defined using several criteria. Once this is done, nonmetro/rural is then defined by exclusion -- any area that is not metro/urban is nonmetro/rural." (USDA 2014) Throughout the literature, exclusion of the rural population from the metro centric educational system is noted. For the purpose of this literature review, the term "rural" refers to a population of people excluded from living in a populated metropolitan area.

Dorell (1993) states that there are unique challenges for education in rural America because the educational opportunities available for the rural student are too often inadequate to meet the needs of the modern world. It is a shared misconception that rural America is, and has been, free from problems that face American society, including the quality of education being provided (Gruenewald, 2003, Mann, 1987, Schorr 1988) . It is too often assumed that crime, drugs, falling test scores, drop-out rates, suicide, teen pregnancy etc., are only problems faced in urban American schools, which is simply not the case. Rural education faces many of the same problems with their students but often have somewhat different underlying roots. High dropout rates, chronic absence from school, and failure to pursue secondary education plague rural schools in California and throughout the country (Lester 2012, Hoppe 1992, Dorell 1993).

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) claim that the notion of living rural is too vague, inconsistent and outdated for this urban-centric and populous state of California.

Perhaps rural/small towns are square pegs trying to fit the round holes of the public urban-based school and university systems. Does this mean rural schools in California have different expectations of students, or that students in rural schools care less about education? The next section of the literature review will explore rural student motivation to learn and their attitudes toward school

### Motivation To Learn And Student Attitudes Toward School

The idea that student motivation to learn differs from one student to the next is not a new concept. However, the evidence suggests that a lack of motivation has plagued rural school children for decades (Kusmin, 2013). American schools often ignore students' individual realities, including the context of the place in which they live, and embrace standardizing policies such as Common Core State Standards and commercial curricula that comply with state and federal policies (Waller & Barrentine, 2015). Embracing a standardizing approach to education can be problematic for all schools, but especially for rural schools. When the unique qualities of community, economy, and natural world are supplanted by "school-centric curriculum" (Gruenewald, 2003, p646) rural students' academic setting can lack curricular connections with place (Waller & Barrentine, 2003). The inability to clearly make connections between what is taught and their lives, homes, self and environment, may explain one significant reason why rural students sometimes lack motivation to learn. This may also affect their attitudes toward school/education and explain why these attitudes differ from their peers who live in populated metropolitan areas. Rather than address the unique challenges facing rural

communities, the mass media tends to situate rural communities in a position of the *other*; in developing educational policies the complexities of rural life are too often ignored and exchanged for a “decontextualized, standardized, mertocentric education” (Corbertt, 2013, p.2).

While rural schools face unique challenges many of the recommendations for improvement are common to all schools. According to Fuller, VanVoorish and Moore (1993), schools that incorporate the following developmentally appropriate practices may see benefits: (1) multiage grouping, (2) cooperative structures, (3) community groups, (4) full inclusion of children with learning handicaps, (5) integrated curricula with thematic units, (6) individualized whole language-based reading and (7) authentic assessment, including continuous progress monitoring. Additionally, teaching strategies such as acknowledging of students’ personal goals and providing a supportive and encouraging environment have been found to positively influence student engagement in learning activities (Brophy 1987; Pintrich 1993) and beyond. An article written by David Kinney (1995) about urban adolescence motivation to learn states that teachers who create caring, supportive atmospheres for their students, and teachers who allow students to recognize that they care about their lives and their futures can greatly influence student motivation. Students from Kinney’s study stated that:

The teacher asks you like how you doing in other classes, or if you like have a problem, he’s there for you. He makes sure everything is all right. Like, if you need some time to be by yourself, he’ll let you be by yourself. Take care of what you got to take care of first and then, he makes sure that you’re not only passing

his class, but you're doing good in other classes....and like the other kids, they care too, because like... the teamwork, other students show that they care about your grades too cause they're helping you. (as quoted in Kinney 1995, p.8)

When another student was asked, "What kind of classroom environment helps you do your best work?" he responded,

When you have..... students, like friends, that will help you do your work. If you need help they don't just sit there and fuss about it they'll get up and they'll help you. Also when a classroom has teamwork, and a teacher who is helpful. So, that's basically it. Having people there when you need them. (Kinney, 1995, p. 8)

Motivation to learn in rural communities does not necessarily require a different set of tools than urban communities. From the findings in the literature, the motivation to learn is sparked from a connection to place, a caring, supportive school environment, adults who engage students in thoughts about their futures and peers who can connect and share a common interest. It is that these issues present themselves differently in rural communities where opportunities, models, expectations and perceptions of the role of place differ. Addressing the unique needs of rural schools is critical as the future of the nation's education is dependent upon the quality of education provided for all its citizens, not just those who appear capable, motivated and interested in obtaining an education (Dorrell 1993). The National Commission on Children report (1991, p. VI) concludes:

"Too many of today's children and adolescents will reach adulthood unhealthy, illiterate, unemployable, lacking moral direction and a vision of a secure future.

This is a personal tragedy for the young people involved, and a staggering loss for

the nation as a whole. We must begin today to place all children and their families at the top of the national agenda.”

Looking ahead, the literature suggests student motivation to learn is tied to many aspects, both social and academic. With the cry for all children’s futures to be at the top of our national agenda, the following section of the literature review will examine after school programs and their possible benefits for rurally located students.

#### After School Programs; Benefits And Repercussions

Across the country, many of today’s children return to empty homes when the school bell rings at the end of each day. When the school day ends, many parents worry about whether their children are safe, whether they are susceptible to drugs and crime. In response to this concern many communities have created after school programs to keep children and youth out of trouble and engaged in activities that will help them learn (Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson, Weinig, 1998, p. 7). This section of the literature seeks to identify if after school programs can have beneficial effects on low-income rural children.

After-school programs provide a wide array of benefits to children, their families, schools and as well as the whole community. First, after-school programs keep children of all age’s safe and out of trouble. After-school hours are the time when juvenile crime hits its peak, but though attentive, adult supervision, quality after school programs can protect children. After-school programs also can help improve the academic performance of participating children (US Departments of Education and Justice, 1998).

A resounding argument can be made that after-school programs can and do contribute to student safety. About 29 percent of juvenile offenses occur on school days between the hours of 2:00 p.m.-when young people begin to get out of school-and 8:00 p.m. (Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson & Weining, 1998). A study of gang related crimes by juveniles in Orange County, California, shows that these crimes typically occur on school days with their incidences peaking at 3:00 p.m. (Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson & Weining, 1998). Data from the study reflects that 60 percent of all juvenile crime occurs on school days and, like other juvenile crime, it peaks immediately after school dismissal (Snyder & Sickmund, 1997, p.11). When students are provided a platform of rewarding, challenging, age-appropriate activities, in a safe, structured and positive environment, after-school programs can help reduce and prevent juvenile crime, delinquency, and violence. After-school programs give children positive things to say “yes” to (Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson, Weinig, 1998, p. 9).

Some school districts and municipalities have established after-school programs that offer low-income children educational and recreational opportunities that are otherwise unavailable (Posner & Vandell 1994). Living in areas that are rurally located can rob children of experiences and opportunities that their metro-centric counterparts participate in.

While after school programs may play a more limited role in juvenile crime in rural areas, there are still significant benefits. In studies of urban schools, after-school programs provided a prime opportunity to increase student learning, while exposing student’s to extracurricular opportunities. Students who participate in after-school

programs show better achievement in math, reading, and other subjects when compared to past performance and to control groups made up of similar students not involved in programs (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Of the 40 schools involved in the Chicago Lighthouse Program, a citywide after-school program run by the Chicago Public Schools, 30 schools showed achievement gains in average reading scores and 39 schools showed gains in average mathematics scores (Chicago Office of Schools, 1998, p.15). In a study of an after-school program with a predominantly Hispanic, low-income student population, findings showed that high involvement in after school activities has the greatest impact on academic performance (Baker & Witt 1995). According to a UCLA evaluation, students in LA's BEST citywide after-school program made academic gains far beyond those of students in the comparison group (Brooks & Mojica, 1995)

After-school programs that include opportunities for students to practice reading, writing and math to achieve fluency increase their level of academic achievement (Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson, Weinig, 1998,). An evaluation of 92 out-of-school-time programs in Oakland, CA, found that 68 percent of participants reported that their program helped them learn study skills and 85 percent of participants' parents reported seeing improvements in their child's attitude toward school since joining the after-school program. In addition, 87 percent of high school teachers agree that the out-of-school time programs supported improved graduation rates (Afterschool Alliance, 2011).

A parent was telling the teacher that their child was begging to go to school even though she had a fever because she was so excited about what she was doing in the after-school

program (Donovan, 1995, p.16). Parents and voters overwhelmingly support after-school programs and want to see more opportunities for children as well as increased funding for programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

In areas where the YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Club do not exist, some public schools are offering enrichment opportunities in their after-school programs. Kids who are involved in clubs and sports have the opportunity spend extra hours each week with an adult, such as role a drama teacher or a football coach. Extracurricular activities also make school more palatable for students who otherwise find it bleak and unsatisfying. Grades improve not because of what students are learning in the video club but because the video club is making them enjoy school more, so they show up more often, find a circle of like-minded friends and become more engaged in school (Kronholz, 2012, p.11). Christopher Gdowski, Academic Value of Non-Academics, stated:

“For some meaningful number of kids, those activities, are what bring them to school, that’s the hook” (p. 11)

No evidence was found to suggest that rural students would not get the same academic benefits from an after-school program. However, in rural, low-income areas where scouts, dance gymnastics etc. are not accessible or available for students, after school activities have become the public school districts’ responsibility to provide enrichment opportunities for its students. While many urban and rural school districts are facing cutbacks for sports teams, technology, drama clubs, music and art, in urban areas volunteers are stepping in to fill some of the gaps. The YMCA approached a Denver principal about taking over some of the sports teams, even offering to buy the used school

uniforms and licensing agreements to the school mascots. However, some rural areas have trouble finding volunteers due to the lack of population base, sponsors due to typically low income status of communities, and sufficient numbers of students to sustain programs due to small rural schools. One principal also adds that teacher union contracts may preclude others from turning to the community for advisors (Kronholz, 2012).

Budgetary concerns always play a role in our nation's education system, and one has to wonder how long extracurricular activities in after-school programs will be able to sustain. There is no ready estimate of how much districts spend on extracurricular activities. Districts account differently for teachers after-school pay, if and how they charge students who participate, whether they use federal Title I funds for afterschool enrichment, and so on. Districts are increasingly depending on students and their parents to fund extracurricular activities (Kronholz, 2012, pg. 13). In poverty stricken areas having to pay for an extracurricular activity can lead to less participation.

The following section of the literature review will scrutinize the effects of poverty on rural students and the impact it has on their ability to participate in enrichment activities.

#### Poverty: Impacting Opportunities Of Rural Students

For this study, poverty will be defined as, "the amount of income received to acquire a basic level of human consumption or welfare, and one's state of positive well-being" (Wagle, 2002, p. 4). The federal definition of poverty according to the US Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition

to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). Impoverished populations and schools in rural areas face special challenges that are different from other settings. Among these are the distances from social services, the sparse availability of assistance programs, and the shortage of resources to support educational programs and student learning (Howard, 2009). A lack of sufficient income and resources can provide a constant challenge to those who live in low-income rural America. Registering for the local ballet class may not seem like a unique opportunity to many children, but for low-income families it is an opportunity many with go without. Many rural families cannot financially afford to send children to enrichment type classes and many times, enrichment style classes are not offered in rurally isolated communities. Human services may be limited with agency and support services sparse compared to their suburban or urban counterparts. Accessing the limited existing resources may require hours of transportation. As a result, some families have difficulty meeting the child's most basic needs (Kirby, 2009). When a trip to the doctor is a financial burden, a ballet class is a dream for children living in poverty, not a reality.

High poverty rural schools spend less, per pupil, on average, than low poverty rural schools and less, per pupil, on average, than either their urban counterparts or low

poverty rural schools, even after adjustments are made “to reflect geographic differences.” Distinguishing the level of funding for poor rural districts is important to note because the averaged expenditures of rural districts are higher than other districts (Lambert, 2007).

Much education finance literature suggests that rural districts face specific challenges—not necessarily faced by their non-rural counterparts—that are believed to affect expenditures. Referred to as cost factors, these challenges include higher costs per student due to the comparatively small scale of operation, higher levels of student need, and difficulty hiring qualified and specialized staff (Duncombe & Yinger 2008). In 2005/2006, rural school districts accounted for 43 percent of all districts in the U.S. and served 6 percent of the student population in the West Region (Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah). Compared with districts in non-rural locales, districts in rural locales spent more per student, hired more staff (especially teachers) per 100 students, and had higher overhead ratios of district-to-school-level spending (Blankenship, Chambers, Levin Manship, Johnson, 2011). As the finding in the literature demonstrate, underfunding rural low income schools is not the only reason impoverished students struggle to emulate their financially sound peers. Poverty affects the lives of students regardless of the funding provided by the government.

Concern about school quality is highest in chronically poor rural places where education levels are lowest. Respondents from chronically poor places have the lowest education levels, and they are the most likely to perceive the school quality in their community as the problem. The literature suggests, educational patterns within poor

rural communities suffer from persistent poverty, high unemployment, long-term underinvestment in their educational systems, infrastructure and civic institutions (Ulrich, 2011). There was a time, even a generation ago, when a strong back and good work ethic could mean a decent job and a good life in rural America (Dreier, Mollenkopf, Swanstrom, 2004). Unfortunately, for impoverished rural children, this is no longer a safe bet.

In today's increasingly competitive and changing economy, rural Americans need increasingly higher levels of education or specialized technical skills as their urban counterparts to obtain even low-paying jobs. When those in poor communities lag so dramatically behind others in educational achievement, their future opportunities are dim (Ulrich, 2011). However, poverty in rural schools does not only lead to failure. According to the findings of Howard Johnston, 2009, rural schools in America are contributing to the positive growth of their students:

- Despite high rates of poverty, students in remote rural schools scored higher than students in cities on most of the tests in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- Rural teachers report fewer discipline problems of all kids and express more satisfaction with teaching conditions than teachers in other locales.
- Rural schools, on average, have lower student to teacher ratios and lower ratios to instructional computers with more internet access than other locales.

- Remote rural schools are smaller, on average, than other schools. This structure offers more possibilities for individual attention and for student and parent participation.

Access to educational resources is often limited for impoverished rural students. For many students and rural families, schools may provide the only supplementary resources available to poor students, so after-school programs and other learning experiences become especially important (Johnston, 2009). The following section will explore concepts of how homework completion, parent participation and community support, can affect impoverished, rurally located students.

#### Homework, Parent Participation And Community Building

Homework has been a controversial issue for over 100 years, and still remains that way today. US educators have continued to debate the importance of homework and the amount of homework students should be assigned. In the early 1900s, many school districts banned homework, especially at the elementary level, in an effort to discourage rote learning. In the 1950s, the cold war and Russia's launch of the Sputnik satellite increased homework loads as the country responded to fears of a technological gap. In the late 1960s and throughout the 70s homework assignments again declined, but fears about the country's economic competitiveness created pressure on educators to assign more homework. During the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of the public supported homework. Currently, the debate continues about the value of homework and how much to assign (Center for Public Education, 2007; Blazer 2009).

Homework has been defined simply as “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 1989, p. 1). In a world where family dynamics often do not support student’s academic education outside the classroom, assigning homework can appear futile. Homework provides few, if any, academic benefits to students who do not possess the skills needed to complete the assignment. Conversely, students who have already mastered the skills derive little or no benefit from completing the assignment (Kohn, 2006; Moorman & Haller, 2006). If students do not understand how to complete the homework assigned, and if they do not have proper adult support to help, there is little chance of the homework being done.

In days past children may have been able to rely on parent help with homework. Today, in our ever-busy world, parent help in rural and non-rural living is not always readily available. In communities where parents have little to no education themselves, helping their child with homework can be a daunting task. Parent education is important because the educational attainment of children is often closely related to that of their parents (Bankston & Caldas, 2005). According to Johnston’s study, 2009, almost one-third (30 percent) of fathers from chronically poor places completed only the eighth grade or less. Similarly, 21 percent of mothers from chronically poor places completed only eighth grade or less. The low educational level of parents in chronically poor rural areas underscores the lack of educational opportunities that have persisted for generations (Blau & Duncan, 1976). The percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree is lower in rural areas nationally (Howard, 2009). Therefore, students in chronically poor, rural areas are at a disadvantage when being assigned homework to complete. As the literature demonstrates,

homework is a part of our national education pedagogy. For those living in rural, disadvantaged areas, students mastering homework may have to rely on other sources beyond the family.

Building what is commonly defined as “community of learners” is an educational model that is being applied in many schools across our nation. The goal of a community of learners is to create a learning environment that takes advantage of and encourages distributed expertise within the community (Brown, Campione & McGilly, 1994). Communities of learners can be created anywhere, given the appropriate tools for success. Conant and Engle, 2010, suggest that productive learning communities can be fostered by designing learning environments that support a) problematizing subject matter, b) giving students authority to address such problems, c) holding students accountable to others and to shared disciplinary norms, and d) providing students with relevant resources (p.6)

If one determines that homework can be an effective tool to improve student learning, the establishment of a community of learners improves the chance for homework completion, parent participation, and student success, regardless of geographic location or socio-economic status.

In addition to the community of learners approach, researchers have suggested several strategies that may help to increase homework completion rates (Bafile, 2005, Simplicio, 2005, Kralove & Buell, 2001).

After-School homework centers. After-school homework centers provide students with an environment conducive to study, access to qualified staff and technological resources, and the opportunity to develop good study habits.

They also remove the burden on parents to supervise. After-school homework centers appear especially beneficial in communities with high levels of poverty.

Organizational tools. Most studies have indicated that some organizational tools help to increase homework completion rates. Notebooks, homework contracts, after school study sessions, homework planners, homework calendars, and communication with parents are some of these tools.

Homework web sites. Some schools have developed homework assistance web sites. The sites include a list of homework assignments, describe the grading system used to assess homework, explain connections between homework assignments, provide on-line resources, and allow students to questions and receive live help.

Peer support programs. Peer support programs have been used in many schools to increase homework completion rates and help build community. Teachers pair up students who are at similar achievement levels or ask more advanced students to provide assistance to lower-performing students.

There is a general consensus that parental participation can significantly effect student outcomes. However, increasing parent participation levels in schools has been a challenge faced in countless schools, not just those that are rural:

“The ability of schools to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with parents is widely accepted as sound educational practice” (Pushor, 2010, Tollefson, 2008).

There is an extensive body of research dedicated to understanding why parents become involved and how schools can facilitate that involvement (Blatz, Elbaum & Rodriguez 2014). There is also a significant difference in the orientation of blue collar and white collar families to after school requirements (Lareau, 2013). Parent involvement in their student's education involves more than their ability to help with homework. Participation in school wide events, helping in the classroom, or being a presence at the school can also contribute to student success. There are unique barriers to parental participation associates with sparsely populated rural areas in which schools may be located a long distance from home, a lack of community building due to the lack of social interaction around the school, and the blue-collar culture of work in rural communities.

The literature suggests that, for children growing up in rural, chronically poor areas the importance of appropriate homework assistance and a strong supportive community of learners can overcome the lack of parent involvement. The final section of this literature review will consider student teacher relationships, peer relationships and the future of students living in chronically poor rural California.

#### Relationships And The Future Of The Chronically Poor In Rural California

It is hard to imagine a job that has more influence or impact on the life of another than that of a teacher. In some cases, teachers see students for more hours a day than their parents; teachers spend 9 out of 12 months each year with students. Teachers are often privy to issues in the home in addition to the academic needs of their students. Rural teachers who believe they had a significant influence on the lives of their students used

words such as, unconditional love and forgiveness, extremely supportive, calm, understanding, kind, hard-working, compassionate, sincere, humorous and intelligent (Cotnoir, Paton, Peters, Pretorius & Smale, 2014) suggesting a much larger role than simply communication and assessing academic content.

There is a strong connection between student achievement and teachers who develop personal relationships with their students; some students are inspired to work hard to achieve excellence as a direct result of the support from a teacher (Smith & Schmidt, 2012).

The best teachers are not always those with the most content knowledge, but rather those who are willing to risk themselves and care about the whole child (Cotnoir, Paton, Peters & Smale 2014). Fortunately, for many children more and more teachers are willing to take risks themselves, become involved within the lives of the marginalized, and thus attempt to rescue them from a world of failure and self-doubt (Dorell, 1993). The future for rural, economically challenged students can be promising by building of strong relationships with teachers and peers.

Another important component of success involves a feeling of connection between students. Students who work together in teams rather than competing against each other develop a shared sense of purpose and learn to value each others individual strengths (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995). Students who experience a sense of teamwork, who are encouraged to help each other and who work together add to the comfort level and community atmosphere in the classroom. A sense of fun in the

classroom is also important, as reported by a student in the study conducted by Kinney (1995).

He doesn't only teach, he makes it a fun class and on top of that he make sure all of us get together and work together and he brings us all together. That is what I like about his class, everybody knows each other and is nice to each other and we're friends (p. 11).

Peer relationships and support offer students another type of academic sustenance. When students feel they can rely on relationships for added academic and social support, their futures tend to appear more optimistic (Kinney, 1995).

“You can't look forward to tomorrow, while holding on to yesterday”, the Oak Ridge boys song lyrics ring true for American education and may be of greater importance for rural educators and the communities they serve. Often those who live and work in rural communities feel a great connection to the past and the way things were and how they might prefer such conditions to continue (Dorell, 1995). With our world growing and changing, however, rural America too must grow and change.

## SUMMARY

This literature review focused on the impact of living in a rural, economically challenged location in California and the effects it has on elementary aged students, academically and socially. The literature review includes, research previously conducted, and findings that reveal and discuss the claim that student motivation to learn, attitudes toward school, involvement in after school programs, community building and positive relationships can create higher success rates in student's academics, relationships and attitudes toward school in low-income rural schools.

Students living in rural, chronically poor areas face challenges that may not be reflected in their metro-centric counterparts. As the literature states, rural location and economic challenges can cause both negative and positive results in today's youth. When providing students the proper resources, motivation to learn, support and guidance all hope is not lost.

In summary, while the bulk of the literature about the rural poor is vast, the results are inconclusive as to the future of rural California students; much of their future must be decided by themselves.

## METHODS

This investigation examines the criteria that is used to create a successful after school programs in rural elementary schools. The study goes beyond the information found in current handbook models to include the best staffing sources, intervention strategies for academic achievement improvements and enrichment-based activities for communities where resources for such are limited. Rural school students are often left out of enrichment types of activities due to their locations and cost. Similarly, academic achievement in rural schools is not equivalent to that in suburban locations (Center on Education Policy, 2008). These notions of “less”, less available resources and less success academically led to the creation of an after-school program and the subsequent handbook.

In endeavoring to create a successful program and a useful handbook, I used the education literature to explore what has been learned about the variables which create a quality after school program in a rural school setting. Data bases such as ERIC and Google scholar were used to find key journal articles and literature concerning after school programs in the United States, rural education, poverty and its effects on children, children of poverty, rural poverty, rural living and lack of opportunity, parent satisfaction with after-school programs, and utilizing after school programs as an extension of the school day.

Once the key issues had been identified through the academic literature, an action research survey was developed to determine to what extent families at one small rural

school supported key elements of ASPs and supported the idea of an ongoing afternoon program. The data from the literature and the locally developed survey were used to design the program presented in the handbook.

### Method

To investigate my research question, a mixed methods approach was used, utilizing a Likert type survey instrument to collect comparative data and open ended questions to gather additional information about local variants on key issues. A parent satisfaction survey was modified from the *Governor's parental satisfaction survey of 2012*, additional questions directly related to after-school programs were developed and the survey was handed out to parents of students who participated in the after-school program. The survey was checked for validity by current administration of the school as well as by a college professor.

### Sample

The survey was distributed to all one hundred and ten families at the school. All surveys returned by parents had students currently enrolled in the after-school program. Ninety five percent of children attending the school participated in the after-school program. The age range of participants varied from 20-65 years of age. The survey was conducted on paper and was given to students to take home for parents to answer. A total of 87 respondents, representing a response rate of 79%, completed and returned the anonymous survey. An incentive of a certificate for each student spendable at the student

store was offered to encourage response. Students were reminded each morning at the student assembly over one weeks-time to bring completed surveys to turn in. Surveys were passed out and collected in a week, five days.

## INSTRUMENTS

The survey was based on a modified version of The Parent Satisfaction Questionnaire (Parental Satisfaction Questionnaire, May, 2012) to address specific qualities of the after-school program. The survey contained 10 items, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale format. The students guardian of the family was asked to rate their satisfaction (Likert scale 1 highly agree- 5 Not Applicable) of the quality of the enrichment activities, quality of the academic intervention activities and usefulness of the after-school program. Open ended questions such as, how effective is the after-school program staff, how engaging are after-school program activities, how useful is the after-school program to you, etc. were used to explore areas that were not sufficiently well understood to create quantitative scales.

## ANALYSIS

Data suggests that the majority parents surveyed felt the staff of the after-school program were highly effective based on the Likert scale of 1-highly agree. 81 of 87 families surveyed selected highly agree to the effectiveness of the staff with the remaining data listing staff at a Likert scale 2-agree. Analysis of the data suggested that parents agreed that the quality of the enrichment activities and academic intervention were high with 98% of parents surveyed answering “1- highly agree”. As to usefulness of the after-school program, data and parent commentary suggest that 90% of families surveyed selected 1-highly agree on the Likert scale. The surveys collected present data that led to a few major correlations. From the Parent Satisfaction Questionnaire Survey, evidence suggests that parents were highly satisfied with the staff, as well as the enrichment and academic intervention being utilized in the after-school program. Data from state standardized tests suggests the same with test scores in math and reading improving for students enrolled in the after-school program. Evidence through written parent commentary also suggests that having an after-school program located in rural schools is important for the adults as well. Written commentary suggests that after-school programs allow parents to get or maintain employment, as well as have support/assistance with their student’s homework.

*“Without the after-school program, I wasn’t able to work, the kids got out of school at 2, and I didn’t have anything to do with them. I didn’t have anyone to watch them, I couldn’t afford the cost of extra care. Now that the school is offering the after-school*

*program both my husband and I can work. They get their homework done too, by the time we pick them up and get home, we can spend time together as a family.”*

Written response to questions on the survey occurred on 26 of the 87 surveys returned for a response rate of 23%.

## IMPLICATIONS

This study produced evidence that a quality after-school program can lead to an overall increased feeling of parent satisfaction with the school, by including enrichment opportunities and academic intervention support for students who attend. Among the surveys variables, “Quality of staff” and “Opportunities offered for students” Showed the highest scores and as the most important to parents. This finding is in line with previous research, showing that after-school programs have a relevant part in the planning of the school day (*The CSU and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, 2011, After School Handbook for School Site Leaders*).

## RESULTS

See Appendices

## DISCUSSION

This study provides evidence that a quality after-school program can increase student motivation to learn, positive attitudes toward school, community building and positive relationships in small rural schools.

Access to after-school programs and knowledgeable staff are essential to a quality after-school programs. After-school programs with quality enrichment and intervention curriculum can help students succeed academically and socially in small rural communities. The value of these programs in rural communities may be particularly important as previous research has demonstrated that educational opportunities available for the rural student are too often limited and inadequate to meet the needs of the modern world. (Gruenewald, 2003, Mann, 1987, Schoor 1988).

The after-school program described in this paper was created based on an obvious need identified by teachers at the pilot school. Currently, 95% percent of the school's k-5 student population attend the program on any given day. Parent feedback was positive, with the unanticipated finding that many state that the creation of the after-school program has allowed for them to return to work outside the home. Parents also stated that the enrichment and academic intervention opportunities were a crucial part of their student's success and well-being. Many parents felt the after-school program offered not only opportunities for growth, but also for safety. In an analysis of juvenile crime, Bobo et al. (1998) found that approximately 29 percent of juvenile offenses occur on school days between the hours of 2:00 p.m., when young people get out of school, and 8 p.m.

(Bobo, de Kanter, Noeth, Pederson & Weining, 1998). Students who remain in the after-school program are supervised until 6 p.m., and are provided with productive motivating tasks thereby cutting back on opportunities to participate in undesirable or unsafe activities.

School site and district administrators also provided positive feedback stating that test scores and attendance rates in the normal school day increased after the founding of the after-school program.

## CONCLUSION

Quality after-school programs that deliver both enrichment and academic intervention opportunities for their students can provide improvement socially and academically in rural school environments. Implementing a quality after-school program can lead to school climate improvement as well as increased student achievement level (Posner & Vandell 1994). In rural areas, a quality after-school program can also allow parents to work longer hours, and keep students safe and monitored in a healthy environment. As this work demonstrates, when the inclusion of enrichment, academic intervention and qualified staff come together to create a quality after-school program, many successes can be achieved.

## LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that the small sample may limit the generalizability of this project. An additional limitation is that committed, highly-trained staff members may be hard to recruit without proper funding. This study was conducted at one small rural school, more research could be carried out with a larger school population and variety of school cultures.

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## APPENDICES

Using Enrichment and  
Academic Intervention to  
Create Successful After-  
School Programs in Rural  
School Settings

A handbook for implementation

Written by Kimberly Stepp

## Introduction

Through my work as a classroom teacher at an economically challenged small rural school in northern California, it became apparent that my students needed more opportunities for enrichment and academic tutoring. Living and growing up in rural communities can provide challenges that are unlike those in urban or suburban communities. In most rural areas, money to pay for extracurricular activities is limited. It was through this realization that the creation of an after-school program idea was fostered, created and then acted upon.

For fourteen years, the school had released its students in grades K-8 at 2pm. Students would ride buses home to unheated houses, to empty houses, to houses without food for them to eat. Little to no homework would be done and students often ended up wandering the local streets or returning to the school campus in search of something to do. Test scores in all subject areas were low, there were no clubs to join, no sports teams to be a part of. In 2014 the need for a change was recognized and a quality, successful, after-school program was created.

This handbook is the author's vision who, with the commitment of the school staff, and administration changed the shape of after school hours in a small rural community. This handbook is intended for working educators and assumes familiarity with current terms and definitions common to the field.

## **The After-School Program Handbook for School Site Leaders**

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#### **Section 1:** Benefits and Opportunities After-School Programs Provide

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- 1.3 Enrichment Opportunities
- 1.4 Sight Leaders
- 1.5 Teachers and staff

#### **Section 2:** The role of schools in the delivery of After-School programs

- 2.1 Establishing the Vision for an After-School Program
- 2.2 Developing a Plan for Implementing the Vision
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#### **Section 3:** Strategies to help increase student knowledge in the After-School Program

- 3.1 Interconnected learning, academic intervention
- 3.2 Student buy-in

## **Section 4:** Planning for Effective After-School Programs

- 4.1 Benefits of effective after-school programing
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## **Section 5:** Recruitment/Retention of qualified staff

- 5.1 Recruitment/Retention of staff
- 5.2 Checklist for Creating Effective After-School Programming

## **Section 6:** Putting ideas into action, a *How to* Section

- 6.1 How to create Homework Assistance in an ASP
- 6.2 How to Facilitate Intervention for Math and Language Arts
- 6.3 How to Facilitate Enrichment activities
- 6.4 How to Create a Vision for an ASP

## **Section 1: Benefits and Opportunities After-School Programs Provide**

Key Question: What benefits and opportunities do quality after school programs provide?

In this section the reader will find an outline of things needed to create a quality after school program (ASP) including academic support and enrichment opportunities that are key elements for success!

### **1.1 Benefits and Opportunities Provided by After-School Programs**

According to the 2011 *After School Handbook for School Site Leaders* developed by the CSU and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Afterschool programs vary greatly in their design, their implementation, and their influence on students' learning.

A growing body of research, including a decade of studies reviewed by the Harvard Family Research Project, indicates that after-school programs can have a powerful, positive influence on students when key elements are used to better attitudes toward school, higher attendance, fewer disciplinary actions, higher academic performance (as measured both by grades and standardized tests scores), and deeper student engagement in learning activities.

### **1.2 Academic Supports**

- Homework help/assistance
- Interventions for Math and Reading
- Educational goals setting by students
- Teacher involvement and progress monitoring

### 1.3 Enrichment Opportunities

What does quality enrichment in an ASP look like?

- Successful after-school programs offer extensive opportunities for students to develop their talents, build bonds with positive role models, and improve their academic performance. The most effective programs use the expertise of their teaching staff and employ teachers for additional hours and additional pay.
- Seek out teacher expertise/subject preference and allow teachers to teach something enriching they are excited about.
- Social skills development
- Hands on Science and Math activities
- Visual and performing arts
- Cooking, technology, gaming (video and board) strategies

### 1.4 Site Leaders

- It is the Site leaders' job to help the ASP prepare all students with 21st century skills. To do so, it is critical that site leaders ***develop a vision*** for their after-school programs as it is integral to the success of students both academically and socially. (See the *how to* section for assistance with creating a vision.)

## 1.5 Teachers and Staff

- Utilize teachers and staff from the school Site as often as possible, let teachers use their talents and hobbies to benefit students.
- Students have relationships and rapport established with the adults that work on their school campus, these relationships result in greater buy-in and higher attendance by students will occur.

## SECTION 2: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN THE DELIVERY OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Key Question: What should students experience during these extra hours?

### 2.1 Establishing the Vision for and After School Learning Program

Insufficient time during the current school day has left schools looking for reform and has created a change in the way educators think about the school day. The apparent correlation of time and achievement reinforces a common assumption when it comes to time in education, more is better (Aronson, Zimmerman, Carlos, 1999).

Extending the current six-hour school day by two to three more hours into the After-School Program will provide time for additional academic instruction/intervention, physical fitness activities, and enrichment opportunities.

A vision for a successful, quality after-school program should include:

- Flexibility in learning, opportunities for academic intervention;
- Effective utilization of technology;
- Extension and expansion of regular or early day classroom learning;
- Incorporation of the Common Core Standards; and  
collaboration among teachers, principals, after-school directors, staff, parents and community members.

## **2.2 Developing a Plan for Implementing the visions**

To implement a clear, understandable, compelling vision several key elements are essential:

- Establish a site administrator accountability system for the success of the entire learning day. Site administrator should use data to inform instructional decisions for academic interventions and support.
- Merge the instructional staff and teachers into the after-school program:
  - Expect the after-school staff to extend and expand upon classroom curriculum.
  - Align expectations of the ASP with the whole schools' learning vision/mission.
  - Provide support for ASP staff to attend professional development.
- Use a clear communication plan:
  - Use school communication tools, newsletters, websites email to encourage student involvement in after-school learning.
  - Measure and report student and system success through a series of criteria related to district/school strategic plan, i.e., participation, test scores, budget.
- Establish critical components of the after-school program that address:
  - Appropriate length of learning day.
  - Some level of student choice.

- The role of the arts and mind-body learning in traditional academic areas.
- Focused club learning.
- Quality teaching and supervision
- Academic support/intervention in mathematics, reading, language arts, writing, science, and social science;
- Enrichment in key areas
- Expansion of learning opportunities in technology, science and logic.
- The mind-body connection through physical and nutritional activities.

### **2.3 After-School Program Enrichment/Intervention, A year at a glance:**

#### *Enrichment Focus*

#### After School Program Aug-Dec

Getting student buy-in...

- Students enroll in ASP; Site leader creates small group learning cohorts of mixed age's k-5.
- Students participate in scheduled classes beginning with snack, homework club and then enrichment activities.
- Students are placed by Site leader in a rotating schedule of enrichment based activities with learning cohort group.
- Groups may change as often as school site leader or staff feel necessary to aid in student relationship building.
- Students spend the first portion of the program experiencing all classes that are being offered. This scheduling allows for students to learn/experience ALL the activities offered as well as establish meaningful relationships with staff members.

### After School Program Jan-Feb

#### *Math Focus (Intervention)*

- Students remain in mixed age learning cohorts for homework portion of program.
- Students begin Math centered activities in place of enrichment activities.
- Students are grouped through assessments by ability level, for math focus areas. (Data from teachers, and standardized test used to create groupings.)

### Math Skill Building...

- Students spend 45 min blocks of time focused on building math skills that will help improve ability levels, confidence and student success rates.
- Teachers utilize a variety of learning strategies to increase student growth and ability.
- Students and teachers monitor growth through assessments and student progress graphing. Assessments are given three times, at the beginning, middle and end of math focused intervention. Data collected is used to inform regular day classroom instruction.

### After School Program March-June

#### *Reading Focus (placement/ time period of reading intervention based on assisting score enhancement for state testing)*

- Students remain in mixed age learning cohorts for homework portion of program.
- Students begin Reading centered activities in place of enrichment activities.
- Students are grouped through assessments by ability level, for reading improvement focus areas. (data from teacher assessments, and standardized test used to create groupings)

### Reading Skill Building

- Students spend 45 min blocks of time focused on building reading skills that will help improve ability levels and student success rates.
- Teachers utilize a variety of learning strategies to increase student growth and ability.
- Students and teachers monitor growth through assessments and student progress graphing.

## Section 3: Strategies that will increase student knowledge and development in an after-school program.

*Aligning school day learning with afterschool programming exemplifies the concept of using our knowledge of how children learn best by integrating proven strategies to acquiring and reinforcing knowledge.*

SOURCE: NAESP & NAA, 2010

Key question: What are the strategies that will increase student knowledge in and after-school program?

### **3.1 Seamless flow of interconnected learning**

- Merge after-school learning with regular day academics:
  - Include learning in the overall fabric of the after-school program.
  - Work to provide optimal opportunities for academic, interest and talent enhancement for all students.
  - Use student data such as SBAC, CELT, and local benchmark scores to inform program sessions, design and refinement.
  - Support and enhance school goals in the after-school program.
  - Provide assistance with homework.

- All academic progress is monitored, analyzed and discussed frequently among staff to be able to adjust to student needs.
- Enrich student learning through a broad range of activities in the arts, sciences and technology.

### **3.2 Student buy-in**

- Create student buy-in!
  - Student Self Progress Monitoring is a key factor to student buy-in.
  - Successful After-School Programs utilize student progress monitoring and establish goals that all students work to achieve.
  - Students receive consistent feedback about growth/progress made.
  - Students graph growth on a visual easy to read bar graph.
  - Support and enhance school goals in the after-school program.
  - Students are aware of growth bench marks (established by ASP leader, teachers and staff) and the incentives that match each stage of growth.
  - Students receive timely, appropriate feedback and incentives for academic achievements and growth.

## **Section 4: Planning for effective, quality After School Programs**

Key Question: What is the structure that promotes positive outcomes for students in an after-school program?

### **4.1 Benefits of Effective After-School Programming**

Findings from research and evaluation studies conducted during the past 10 years indicate that well planned, well-structured, and well-implemented after-

school programs promote positive academic and social-emotional development, prevent high-risk behaviors, and promote wellness outcomes for youth. Such programs present multiple opportunities to reduce academic achievement gaps among subgroups of students and can lessen at-risk behavior including gang involvement, substance abuse, sexual activity, and other conduct that frequently leads to school disengagement and/or drop-out. (*The CSU and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation 2011, After School Handbook for School Site Leaders*)

- Effective planning consists of:
  - A strong commitment from school site administrators, teachers and staff to create and sustain a high-quality after-school program and a willingness to make it part of their overall instructional program at their school.
  - Recruitment and retention of quality staff, including classroom teachers and para educators, who are well trained to support both academic and enrichment education.
  - Collaboration between regular day staff and after school staff so that learning goals can be recognized and aligned with regular day curriculum.
  - Training site leaders and staff to utilize data to inform intervention instruction for all students.

#### **4.2 Examples of Activities Found in Effective After-School Programs**

- Well-structured use of time that addresses the developmental needs of different youth populations through enrichment based activities.
- Intensive academic support that includes one-to-one tutorial, small group instruction, group learning games, and other activities that complement instruction provided during the regular school day.
- Intervention plans for math and reading focused on building additional skills based on local benchmarks and state testing data.

- Engaging enrichment activities that include (for example) inquiry-based science, digital media arts projects, foreign language instruction, nutrition education, and fine arts instruction (including instrumental music, choral singing, dance, and performing and visual arts).
- Age-appropriate sports and games that promote physical fitness such as aerobics, martial arts, yoga and multicultural games and dances.
- Innovative nutrition programs, cooking lessons, that teach healthy eating habits and provide nutritious snacks from a variety of different cultures.
- Intentional social-emotional activities that stress positive communication skills, improved peer relationships, conflict resolution, and confidence-building skills.

## **SECTION 5: PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION OF AFTER-SCHOOL STAFF**

Key Question: What are the strategies for identifying, recruiting and retaining quality staff for an after-school program?

### **5.1 Recruitment/Retention of Qualified Staff**

- Utilizing teachers, current staff members, and members of the local community at school sites is essential to program success.

- Recruitment, hiring, and retention of quality staff are essential building blocks of coherent, standards-based after school programming for students.
- Professional development for those already in professional positions can include all staff who work with students.
- Expertise across roles can strengthen all staff through sharing skills and taking leadership within and across schools and agencies.

*Who will the most effective staff be?*

An array of studies has concluded that the amount students learn can be traced to aspects of teachers and teaching. That is, teacher's ability and relationships with students substantially impacts student learning (Palardy, Rumberger, 2008).

- Begin by recognizing the talents of the teachers/staff already employed by the site.
- Share the vision of the ASP with current teachers/staff and ask them to join you.
- Recruit employees through additional pay, as well as offering opportunities to teach subjects of the teacher's choice whether mathematics or cooking.

*Why are they most effective?*

- Students are invested in the knowledge of the individuals at their school site.
- Prior relationships have been established and there is no need for students to build a "new start" with a new individual.
- Current teachers and staff have student skills and assessments at their fingertips to utilize in progress/growth monitoring.

*How does retention of employees happen?*

- Ask staff to help create vision, mission and goals for the ASP. People are more likely to continue to participate if they have an investment from the very beginning.
- Strengthen staffing at each level through appropriate, targeted training, provide professional development opportunities based on enrichment and targeted academic areas.
- Emphasize staff recruitment that focuses on understanding youths' interests, talents, life experience, and development.
- Offer compensation appropriate to teacher/staff pay scale for additional duties.
- Offer pay incentives (when possible) to teachers/staff who have shown student improvement in academic areas of growth.

## **5.2 Check list for Creating effective after-school Programs:**

- Secure a commitment from school site administrator to create a high-quality after school program.
- Establish a clear vision and create expected outcomes for the program in consultation with the school site staff.
- Recruit, train and retain high-quality staff. Begin with the teachers and staff already working on school site campus.
- Establish both academic intervention goals and enrichment goals for the program, align these goals with regular day curriculum and the common core state standards.
- Plan the after-school programs school year. Make sure to divide time into blocks for enrichment based activities, as well as time for academic interventions.

- Create student cohort groups for homework assistance, as well as for math and reading interventions. Student groups may be homogenous or heterogeneous, groupings should be based upon current activity focus.
- Create student buy-in and participation through student progress monitoring, feedback and relevant incentives.
- Let students be involved in setting and monitoring their learning goals.
- Provide academic support for homework.
- Provide engaging enrichment activities.
- Provide intensive academic intervention support for students in math and reading. Be sure support compliments instruction provided during the regular day.
- Design activities that promote social-emotional development and curb at-risk behaviors.
- Foster positive relationships, student-teacher, parent-teacher through communication, such as a newsletter or website, about events and activities taking place during ASP.

## **SECTION 6: A how to guide for homework assistance, intervention, enrichment and vision statements**

Key Question: How does this all work? What does it look like?

### **6.1 How to create Homework Assistance in an ASP:**

### Creating Homework Assistance in an ASP-

- Mix students enrolled in the ASP up into mixed age groups of no more than 20 students. This allows for peer assistance, peer mentoring, peer tutoring during homework time. Allow students who finish their own homework to assist other/younger students in homework completion.
- Use school site classrooms to allow students to complete homework. One mixed age group per classroom allows for enough space and adult assistance. Class sizes should range from 12-20 to maximize teacher assistance.
- Utilize teachers/staff to monitor and assist in homework completion. Peers are also resources for helping students.
- Allow students choice of seating arrangements when possible. This helps students feel a sense of ownership.
- Set up systems for communication between afterschool instructors and school-day teachers that keep everyone up to date. Make sure teachers who are not involved in the ASP understand the process of doing and turning in homework assignments. Do the same with families.
- In schools where returning homework is a problem, allow students to turn homework in at the end of the allotted homework time to insure it gets to classroom teacher for credit. Many students who take home completed homework assignments do not successfully return the assignment the following day to their classroom teachers.
- Set up a location and a place for homework to be turned in. Label boxes with teachers' last name, create permanent location for the box.
- Choose students from each class to pick up homework boxes from the given location and bring to classroom teachers each morning. Communicate with all teachers who the student is and make sure the student and the classroom teacher are aware of the responsibility.
- Allow for fluidity with homework groups, changing and shifting of groups can help students with peer level learning partners and create fresh outlooks on old routines.
- Build in opportunities for student choice. Allow students to choose assignments they wish to start on.

- Offer opportunities to listen to music when appropriate, or use of headphones when possible.
- Provide motivational activities for when homework is complete, board games, educational computer web-sites, brain-teasers are all time fillers with educational enrichment built in.

## 6.2 How to Facilitate Intervention for Math and Language Arts:

### Facilitating Intervention for Math and Language Arts-

In school environments where the academic achievement gap is great, using the extra hour(s) in an after-school program can help to reduce the gap.

Intervention is used in addition to homework assistance and is exchanged with enrichment activities in the after-school program throughout the school year.

- Begin by grouping students enrolled in ASP in homogeneous groups based on grade and/or skill level.
  - During intervention, homogeneous groups allow teachers/staff to address the needs of the group without need for differentiation.
  - For students with similar skill sets homogenous groups allow students to gain knowledge at a similar level and pace as most the group.
- Speak with current employed staff about where they feel they could be the most help in the intervention curriculum
- **Ask teachers/ staff....**

**What are you best at helping to facilitate in this subject matter (math, language arts)?** Allowing staff to choose topic of interest/expertise will create teacher/staff buy-in.

- Allow teachers/staff to select area of focus from lists of activities that cover basic skill levels from K-5. The following activities are ones the current literature suggests are most successful in math and language arts skill remediation:

### **Math**

Addition/subtraction fact practice  
memorization/practice

Number recognition

Counting and one-to-one correspondence  
practice

Time, money, measurement  
workshop/writing practice

Fractions

Multiplication fact practice

Order of Operations  
instruction/practice

### **Language Arts**

Sight word

Fluency practice

Comprehension

Writers

Guided reading

Readers Theater

Phonics

- Have students take pre-and post-assessments at start and finish of each intervention session.
- Set benchmarks for academic achievement growth that allow students and teachers/staff to watch progress being made in real time.
- Student self-progress monitoring is a great buy-in for students. Use bar graphs or other types of visual aids to allow students to track and monitor their own progress.
- Create a schedule for given intervention activities.

- Rotate homogenous groups of students through activities that will provide the appropriate remediation/recovery skills needed to help students perform at grade level.
- Have site leader analyze pre-and post-assessments to check for student growth.

### Resources:

#### Language Arts:

<http://www.readwritethink.org>

<http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200668041005.pdf>

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Heinemann, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912.

Reitsma, P. (1988). Reading practice for beginners: Effects of guided reading, reading-while-listening, and independent reading with computer-based speech feedback. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 219-235.

Au, K. H., Carroll, J. H., & Scheu, J. A. (2001). *Balanced literacy instruction: A teacher's resource book*. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 1502 Providence Highway, Suite 12, Norwood, MA 02062.

Rowe, D. W., Fitch, J. M., & Bass, A. S. (2001). Power, identity, and instructional stance in writers' workshop. *Language Arts*, 78(5), 426-434.

Rinehart, S. D. (1999). "DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT I'M GETTING UP THERE": OPPORTUNITIES FOR READERS' THEATER IN A TUTORIAL FOR CHILDREN WITH READING PROBLEMS. *Reading Psychology*, 20(1), 71-89.

#### Math:

[http://www.mathgoodies.com/articles/math\\_foundation.html](http://www.mathgoodies.com/articles/math_foundation.html)

<http://www.dreambox.com/blog/math-interventions-that-help-build-foundational-skills>

Maloney, E. A., & Beilock, S. L. (2012). Math anxiety: Who has it, why it develops, and how to guard against it. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 16(8), 404-406.

Ukai, N. (1994). The Kumon approach to teaching and learning. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 20(1), 87-113.

Weischadle, D. E. (2002). Extended learning opportunities: Some lessons from the field. *Education*, 123(1), 73-83.

### **6.3 How to Facilitate Enrichment activities:**

#### Facilitating Enrichment Activities

Opportunities for extracurricular enrichment activities such as dance class, martial arts programs, scouts etc. are limited in rural communities. Many rural public school districts are offering enrichment opportunities to their students during after-school programs. Enrichment classes are traded with academic interventions throughout the school year to provide a well-balanced after-school program that meets both academic and student interest needs.

- Start by speaking with staff members who are employed in the ASP. Ask what their hobbies, passions and interest are outside the classroom.
- Use staff interest and hobbies to help generate ideas for enrichment classes for students.
- Staff interest is crucial to student excitement and to the knowledge/skills needed for the enrichment class.
- Create list of classes for students to select from.
- Allow student choice in enrichment class selection.
- Classes can heterogeneous, mixed age groups and mixed ability levels. .

- Rotate enrichment class enrollment at least once every month to allow students to experience as many opportunities and possible.
- Collect student feedback through written response or conversation about their likes, dislikes and take a ways from each enrichment class.
- Enrichment classes should aim to expose students to new skills, concepts and ideas.

#### Resources

<https://www.ptoday.com/pto-today-articles/article/9-36-ideas-for-arts-and-science-enrichment>

<https://www.reference.com/education/examples-enrichment-activities-f19d99959b9c214b>

Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *The schoolwide enrichment model: A how-to guide for educational excellence*. Creative Learning Press, Inc., PO Box 320, Mansfield, CT 06250.

## 6.4 How to Create a Vision for an ASP:

### Facilitating a Vision Statement

A vision statement is the guiding force that drives the intentions of the program. It is a clear, well thought out, simple idea that aligns with the values and intentions of the school and district.

To create a vision statement there are some basic procedures to follow:

1. It should be **short** –five sentences at an absolute maximum. It's fine to expand on your vision statement with more detail, but you need a version that is punchy and easily memorable by students so they too are aware of the ASP's intentions.
2. It needs to be **specific to your school** and describe a unique outcome that only you can provide.
3. Keep it **simple** enough for people both students, parents, teachers and staff in your organization to understand and make sure the intention of the program is clear.

4. It should be **ambitious** enough to be exciting, but not too ambitious that it seems unachievable.
5. It needs to **align to the values** that you want your students, parents, teachers and staff to exhibit as they participate in the program.

Examples of a Vision statements:

Every student, every day.

Preparing All Students for Success in A Global Economy P.A.S.S.A.G.E.

School isn't over at the bell, we have ASP.

#### Resources

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main>

Huffman, J. (2003). The role of shared values and vision in creating professional learning communities. *Nasip Bulletin*, 87(637), 21-34.

Lucas, J. R. (1998). Anatomy of a vision statement. *Management Review*, 87(2), 22.