



## Bureau Brief

### MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Jim Argue, Chair, Senate Interim Committee on Education  
Representative Joyce Elliott, Chair, House Interim Committee on Education

From: Jerri Derlikowski, Administrator, Bureau of Legislative Research

Date: August 22, 2006

Re: After-School and Summer School Programs

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The summary of after-school and summer school programs provided below is based on a limited review of the literature concerning these programs. Documents published by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), and the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) have been included in the review. The research cited in the report *Recalibrating the Arkansas School Funding Structure* by Odden, et al., 2006 is also considered in the summary below. Additionally, administrators in two school districts have been briefly interviewed concerning their experiences with these programs. This information is prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

### AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

#### **Purpose**

Generally, after-school programs are established as much for safe, accessible, and affordable child-care as for academic purposes. AACF recently released a report calling for after-school programs that would support working families, reduce youth crime and boost achievement. Studies of the effects of academic components of after-school programs on achievement have had mixed results. However, much of the research done on these programs has focused on the child-care aspect of after-school programs, with educational benefits seen as supportive of these programs. Other studies cite some academic benefits that might be considered ancillary to the true purpose of the programs.

The distinction between the two purposes for after-school care is delineated by a recent study in Massachusetts that developed prototypes of two models for after-school programs: school-age child care and academic enrichment models, which have differences in goals, accountability and staffing (Intercultural Center for Research in Education, 2005).

### **Best Practices**

Many of the studies reviewed indicated strengths or best practices of effective after-school programs. These best practices for after-school programs include support for developing the prerequisites for success such as interest in learning, social competence, improved behavior, leadership skills, parental involvement and expectations of success. In a study of high-performing after-school projects funded by The After-School Corporation, five characteristics of high-performing after-school programs were identified.

- A broad array of enrichment opportunities such as arts, crafts, homework help and sports and recreation.
- Opportunities for participant skill-building and mastery.
- Intentional relationship-building with host schools, participants and families.
- A strong, experienced site coordinator who is supported by a trained supervised staff.
- Full administrative, fiscal, and professional development support from the program's sponsoring organization (Birmingham, et al., 2005).

Other best practices include recruiting staff with strong educational backgrounds and appropriate training; providing low staff-to-child ratios, including one-on-one tutoring; and scheduling adequate amounts of time for the activities to be effective (Lauer, et al., 2004).

### **Concerns**

The federal government is spending approximately \$1 billion per year for the 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs which provide after-school care (United States Department of Education, 2005). However, a study conducted by the United States Department of Education (USDOE, 2005, p.xx) concluded that "the program had no impact on reading test scores or grades. For elementary school students who had low grades at baseline, the program had a positive impact on English grades. The difference was about 2 points on a 100-point scale. Middle school students in the treatment group also had lower absenteeism than students in the comparison group."

In a review of numerous studies, Lauer, et al., 2004, indicated the following concerns for after-school programs:

- attendance is voluntary rather than mandatory;
- more motivated students attend school more often, while less motivated students attend less often; and
- there is difficulty recruiting older students into after-school programs.

There is not much research concerning who drops out of these programs or who should be attending. Help with homework is a widely cited function of these programs, but implementation of this function seem to take a variety of forms in different settings, but means a variety of things in the different settings. Program activities tend to be short-term in nature and only minimally related to program goals (Intercultural Center for Research in Education, 2005). Program

duration, cost, and implementation issues, such as staffing and program location, should be considered in the planning process of the start-up of an after-school program (Lauer, et al, 2004).

Several important findings have been reported by the U. S. DOE (2005) in the National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.

"Treatment-group students were more likely than control-and comparison-group students to be supervised by other adults after school, and less likely to be supervised by parents and siblings; there were no differences between the groups in self-care. There were few impacts of the program on academic achievement, and there was no difference between the treatment and control or comparison groups in receiving homework assistance. Elementary students in the treatment group felt safer than elementary students in the control group. There were mixed impacts of the program on developmental outcomes. Treatment-group students were more likely than control-group students to engage in some negative behaviors." (p. xxi).

After-school programs can be structured to provide supplemental services in accordance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines. NCLB gives students who attend Title I schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years the right to receive free supplemental education services, including after-school tutoring.

The Office of Education Policy (2006) reported findings related to supplemental services listed by ADE as service-providers. In 2005-06, 200 schools were required to offer supplemental services, which is up from 70 in 2004-05. However, there is no research available on whether these programs are improving academic achievement. Additionally, little information about the providers is available to parents and districts. There also is no way to know which providers serve which areas, the grade levels served, or subject areas covered.

Furthermore, many provider websites were not working or did not have information about supplemental services, and they did not provide clear indications of service costs. Some services have a required minimum number of students that present serious challenges to small and rural schools. All providers offered after-school tutoring, and some had before-school, weekend and summer support as well. Finally, there is little information on the duration of the services, and a lack of program evaluations, credentials and research-support. Some provider programs don't appear to be academically oriented (Office for Education Policy, 2006).

## **SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

### **Purpose**

Summer school programs in the past have been primarily utilized to help students receive credit for grades or courses that they may have failed during the regular school year. Educators are now beginning to utilize summer school for the reinforcement of academic skills in struggling students, for remediation of academic shortfalls and for academic enrichment in at-risk students. The purpose of summer programs ranges from ensuring literacy and competence in mathematics and science to preparing high school students for graduation exit exams or for preparing high school graduates for postsecondary education. With AYP, states are implementing new remediation policies for students who are not proficient in one or more subject areas, and for entire schools and districts that are failing to make AYP (Zinth, 2006).

**State Policies**

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2002, p.3) published a study that states, "Some schools or school systems offer it; some don't. Some do it well; some don't. Nobody really knows much about what happens in summer school because most states collect little or no information about it and few provide meaningful guidance on how summer programs should operate." Summer school may be offered after every grade or only after selected grades. Policies on summer programs are not fully developed in most SREB states. Louisiana requires all school districts to offer summer school as an extension of the instructional schedule for the school district. Louisiana requires no more than 15 students per faculty member and must offer a specified number of hours of instruction per subject or credit.

In the Spring of 2000, Delaware required districts to offer summer school for failing students. There is little guidance on the structure or schedule but state funding is provided. Summer school is optional in the other 14 SREB states. In Virginia, public summer schools programs receive enrollment-based funding from the state. (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002).

According to Zinth (2006), at the Education Commission for the States:

- 35 states and the D.C. have remediation policies in their statutory compilation of administrative code;
- 18 states have multiple policies;
- 12 states have programs designed exclusively for reading at proficient levels;
- 13 states explicitly include both mathematics and science;
- 7 other states include mathematics;
- 10 states have policies that are targeted towards districts or schools, or students in specific districts or schools;
- 9 states operate programs explicitly designed to assist high school students meet graduation requirements; and
- 2 states have policies to remediate high school graduates who will attend college.

**Best Practices**

SREB (2002, p.1) reports that, "States... should ensure that summer school is an integral part of a year-round program of extra time and extra help; is available to all failing students at no cost to parents; meets clear standards for quality, program length and scheduling of classes; responds to individual needs through the use of innovative and creative teaching strategies; puts priority on student mastery of reading and math skills; employs teachers who have special training or proven ability to help struggling students; and rigorously evaluates teaching strategies and student achievement."

"Research consistently identifies five factors that make a summer program effective: high-quality teachers; adequate, reliable funding; and emphasis on reading and math; a climate of innovation and creativity; and a comprehensive plan for research and evaluation of program results." (p.9) (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002).

SREB goes on to provide "Recommendations for State Policies

1. Any state that is serious about ending social promotion and reducing retention rates should ensure that effective summer programs are available to all failing students.

2. Summer school should not be something that is added on at the end of the school year to help struggling students. Summer school should be a required part of a year-round program of extra time and special help for struggling students. Information on students' performance in summer school should be used in planning continued support for them during the next school year. These students should be monitored continually throughout their school careers so that new or recurring problems can be detected and dealt with as early as possible.
3. To ensure consistency in availability and quality, summer school for struggling students should be funded as an integral part of the academic program. Families should not be required to pay for children to participate in this type of summer program.
4. States should provide clear, reasonable standards for the length of summer programs and scheduling of classes but should allow enough flexibility for innovation, creativity and responsiveness to community needs.
5. All summer programs for struggling students should focus on responding to individual students' particular needs through the use of instructional materials and strategies that are different from those that have failed during the school year. Especially in the elementary and middle grades, summer schools should emphasize student's mastery of basic skills in reading, writing and math.
6. Every effort, including financial incentives, should be made to recruit summer-school teachers who have demonstrated that they can be successful with struggling students.
7. All summer-school programs should include rigorous evaluation of teaching strategies and student achievement in order to ensure that the programs meet student needs and to identify which practices work for different children." (p. 18). (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002).

### **Recalibrating the Arkansas School Funding Structure**

The following information has been provided by Odden, Picus, and Goetz (2006) in the draft recalibration report.

...these studies documented positive causal effects on the academic performance of students in select after-school programs, but the evidence is mixed both because of research methods (few randomized trials) and poor program quality and implementation...

These researchers identified several structural and institutional supports necessary for effective after-school programs including:

- Staff qualifications and support (staff training in child or adolescent development, after-school programming, elementary or secondary education, and content areas offered in the program, staff expertise; staff stability/turnover; compensation; institutional supports)
- Program/group size (enrollment size, ages served, group size, age groupings, child-staff ratio)
- Financial resources and budget (dedicated space and facilities that support skill development and mastery, equipment and materials to promote skill

development and mastery; curricular resources in content areas; location accessible to youth and families)

- Program partnerships and connections (with schools to connect administrators, teachers and programs; with larger networks of programs, with parents and community)
- Program sustainability strategies (institutional partners, networks, linkages; community linkages that support enhanced services; long term alliances to ensure long term funding). (p.51).

Based on research on summer schools, Odden, et al., (2006) concluded,

Though learning at a similar rate during the regular school year, low income and many minority children experience academic learning losses over the summer, with the losses accumulating every summer leading to larger and larger achievement gaps. A summer school program that focused on improving mathematics and reading achievement, and courses failed in high school, would help curtail the growth of the achievement loss and help these students learn to state performance standards over time. Ascher (1988), Austin et al., (1972) and Hens (1978) identified several programmatic characteristics that undercut program impacts and thus produced the modest effects research has documented so far. They include short program duration (sometimes a result of funding delays and late program start dates), loose organization, little time for advanced planning, low *academic* expectations for either mathematics or reading, discontinuity between the summer curriculum and the regular-school-year curriculum, teacher fatigue, and poor student attendance. In their meta-analysis of summer-program effects, Cooper et al. (2000) noted several program components that are related to improved achievement effects for summer program attendees.

These are supported by the recommendations in the most recent book on summer school and how to enhance its impacts (Barman & Belay, 2004):

- Early intervention during elementary school
- A full 6-8 week summer program
- A clear focus on mathematics and reading achievement, or failed courses for high school students
- Small-group or individualized instruction
- Parent involvement and participation
- Careful scrutiny for treatment fidelity, including monitoring to ensure good instruction in reading and mathematics is being delivered
- Monitoring student attendance.

Summer programs that include these elements hold promise for improving the achievement of at-risk students and closing the achievement gap. (pp. 54-55).

## ARKANSAS EXPERIENCES

### Hot Springs School District

Mr. Roy Rowe, Superintendent of the Hot Springs School District, was interviewed and provided the following information concerning the after-school and summer school programs at his district. Ms. Barbara Smitherman, Federal Programs Coordinator, also provided information about the programs. Both felt strongly that the programs were resulting in academic improvement. Their FOCUS teachers, or teacher coaches, provide information concerning testing results and other data analysis to direct the after-school and summer school activities. The after-school program is voluntary but students are requested to attend and strongly encouraged. There is some concern that a few students who would benefit are not attending. The after-school program is operated for elementary and middle-school students for two hours after school, Monday through Thursday, throughout the school year. The program for high school students had been tried in the past but didn't work. The after-school program provides some recreation and snacks but is primarily academically directed. The after-school and summer program is funded primarily through a U.S. DOE grant from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and a GEAR UP grant with additional funding from Title I and NSLA. Certified teachers conduct the programs and are assisted by aides. The summer school program is all academic improvement and credit recovery. The summer school program is encouraged but not required for elementary students. It is required, however, for some middle and high school students. The district provides busing for the summer program. They have approximately 30 eighth-graders participating in an Algebra I preparation course.

They have approximately 500 students overall in both the after-school and summer school programs. The district also has a before-school reading program around the library where students can come in and do research or read prior to school starting.

### Camden School District

Dr. Jerry Guess, Superintendent, and Mr. Robert Davis, Assistant Superintendent, were interviewed concerning after-school and summer school programs in the district. They operate two separate after-school programs. One is provided through GEAR UP grant funding. It is optional and provides homework assistance and enrichment activities. The program that is used for remediation purposes is mandatory and can be attended either after-school or at Saturday school. It is required for any student who does not score proficient on the preceding year's benchmark exams. The after-school program is two days per week for one and one-half hours each day. The program is developed based on skill reports from the tests. An Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) is developed for each student in the program and that plan directs the instruction. The after-school program has approximately 400-500 students elementary, middle and high school. Some transportation is provided and will be increased this year. One of the difficulties is recruiting teachers for this program. They have been able so far to get the staffing they need. There is also assistance from aides. Another challenge is student attendance. Although the program is mandatory, attendance is difficult to enforce. Additionally, parental involvement is promoted but is difficult. Camden partially credited these programs for the success of two schools released from AYP status recently. They reported that they have so many programs in place to assist struggling students that it would be difficult to credit any particular program with the success. They also operate a summer program with approximately 300 students. The high school program is a traditional credit recovery program, while the elementary and middle school program is for struggling students. Parents are told that it is mandatory but the district has little

recourse if the student does not attend. Transportation is also provided for the summer school program as well as meals. The program lasts 15 days for five hours per day. The same difficulties occur in this program as in the after-school program such as attendance and recruiting teachers.

Both Mr. Rowe and Dr. Guess cautioned that if the state makes after-school or summer school a requirement, then the districts will no longer be able to use Title I funding for the program(s).

### **Conclusion**

In a 2005 publication, the Council of Chief State School Officers provided a listing of best practices for summer programs. These practices reflect and summarize those listed in this report for both summer and after-school programs. The best practices include general guidelines related to district leadership, professional development, parent, student and community involvement, and integration with overall district goals. These are practices relevant to all types of school programs. More specifically, in after-school and summer programs in high poverty areas, district and school resources including funding should be targeted first to at-risk student populations. Programs could be further targeted to students failing to score proficient on tests. The summer and after-school programs should integrate the school-year standards and goals. The focus should be academic rather than recreational. Instructional methods should differ from those that have been unsuccessful in the traditional classroom setting and program design should be individualized based on the analysis of student performance data.



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