

**Increasing Communication between School Staff and
Centers for a New Generation Staff at Edison-Ronald
McNair Academy**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
Research Questions	3
Research Context	4
Site Context.....	7
METHODOLOGY	9
Data Collection Activities Calendar	10
FINDINGS	11
Communication.....	11
Teacher Perception.....	12
Perceived Effects on Student Outcomes	13
KEY THEMES	14
OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS.....	15
Teacher Communication Forms.....	15
Established Communication Channels	15
Clarity of Mission of CNG	16
Mentor Training	16
CONCLUSION.....	17
APPENDIX A: REFERENCES.....	18
APPENDIX B: SELECTED LITERATURE SUMMARIES.....	20
APPENDIX C: McNAIR TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	27
APPENDIX D: CNG MENTOR FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research team's investigation centered on the relationship between the teachers at Edison-McNair School in East Palo Alto and the mentors of the school's Center for a New Generation (CNG) program. The goals were to identify McNair teachers' current attitudes toward CNG, to explore issues impeding effective and constant communication between McNair teachers and CNG mentors, and to provide suggestions for strategies that may help to better unify the curricular goals of McNair teachers and CNG mentors and enable both groups to work more effectively with each other.

Data were collected through an interview with the Site Director of CNG-McNair, a site visit and observation of the CNG-McNair program, focus groups with McNair teachers and CNG-McNair mentors, and a review of relevant literature and program documents provided by the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula. Through analysis of data collected during these activities, the research team identified four main themes:

- CNG staff almost always initiate teacher-mentor communication
- Communication activities are inconsistent and, in most cases, informal
- Relationships between CNG mentors and McNair teachers are not fully developed, leading to the channeling of communication through the CNG-McNair Site Director
- Overall teacher perceptions of CNG-McNair are positive and their support for the program is high

These themes were used to guide a discussion to develop opportunities for next steps at CNG-McNair with the Site Director. ~~Those opportunities are listed below.~~

- Distributing the written teacher communication forms less frequently and incentivizing their completion
- Strongly encouraging mentors to engage in frequent contact to establish relationships with teachers
- Providing a “primer” on the CNG program at the beginning of the school year to all McNair staff
- Scheduling formal training to be completed by all mentors working with students at CNG-McNair

INTRODUCTION

In autumn 2007, the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula (BGCP) chose to continue a partnership with students from the Stanford University School of Education to research various aspects of their programming. BGCP expressed a desire for research on its after-school programs in the Ravenswood Community School District (RCSD), called the Centers for a New Generation (CNG). BGCP currently runs this district-funded after-school program at three sites in the RCSD: James Flood Magnet School in Menlo Park, Edison-Ronald McNair Academy (McNair) in East Palo Alto, and Belle Haven Community School in Menlo Park. The following report summarizes the investigation of the program at McNair Academy (CNG-McNair) by a 3-person research team (the research team) from October to December, 2007.

Research Questions

On the recommendation of the CNG Program Coordinator, Georganne Morin, and the CNG-McNair Site Coordinator, Alara MacGillivray, the research team focused on three key research questions:

- What is the McNair teachers' current level of knowledge about and support for CNG? Based on their current perspectives, what specific strategies could increase teacher knowledge about and support for CNG and their responsiveness to requests from CNG mentors?
- What strategies could be employed to maximize CNG mentor and McNair teacher communication regarding academic standards without significant investments of time and/or resources?
- How can CNG mentors enhance their support of McNair teachers' efforts to improve students' academic and social/emotional outcomes?

To investigate these questions, data analysis was focused in the following three areas:

- Current formal and informal methods of communication currently employed between McNair teachers and CNG mentors
- McNair teachers' impressions of the CNG program, particularly its curricula
- Perceived and anticipated effects of CNG on student outcomes and achievement

Research Context

The research team began its investigation with a review of relevant literature. The research that focused exclusively on strategies for promoting, and outcomes associated with, increased communication between the school day and after-school programs was rather repetitive; therefore, this review focuses on a slightly broader range of research to provide an appropriate context for the study.

Participation of school-aged children in after-school programs such as CNG was studied by the America After 3PM survey, conducted by the Afterschool Alliance. This survey found the highest program participation rates in African-American and Asian/Pacific Islander children, with these rates gradually decreasing as students progress through school (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). Further research showed positive effects for students participating in these programs in self-reported academic motivation (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, & Valsiner, 2007*) as well as skill development, including improved reading skills (Little & Hines, 2006*) and development of critical thinking, leadership, and interpersonal relationship skills (Afterschool Alliance, 2007*). A report from the Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force (2007) further highlights the ability of after-school programs to contribute to such “work-ready” skills as team work, problem-solving, oral communication, and civic engagement. Research also indicates positive results for students designated as at-risk for school failure, both in terms of improved

standardized test scores in reading and math (Lauer et al, 2006) and in improved social and emotional adjustment (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

The completion of homework in after-school programs was studied extensively by the C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice (2005). The Committee's interest in that particular area comes from its belief that support in developing skills that enable successful homework completion contributes to the academic and social/emotional successes desired from after-school programs. Specifically, the researchers found strong support for the use of homework logs in tracking student homework completion, both for timeliness in completing, and quality of, work. Further findings indicated that access to additional reference resources and the readiness of after-school tutors to answer questions increased participants' focus on and ability to complete their assignments and produce quality work.

Researchers have linked the presence of and participation in structured activities in after-school programs to achievement of the positive outcomes noted above. These outcomes are not observed in unstructured programs that simply provide students with a safe place to play (Rothstein, 2006). Research also indicates that providing an intentional learning environment with clear, consistent structures and goals is key to achieving student academic improvement (Perry, Teague, & Frey, 2002*). One study further found that devoting a dedicated period in the after school hours to reading (while concurrently avoiding watching excessive television) was a strong predictor of academic success (Shumow, 2001*).

Other research emphasizes the importance of strong adult leadership in out-of-school programs. Grossman, Campbell and Raley (2007) stress the need for effective group management. Such behavior can take many forms, including setting reasonable ground rules, providing ongoing positive reinforcement for participants, demonstrating consistency and fairness in reinforcing expectations, and “holding the line” in enforcing the rules when they are broken. In addition, positive relationships with adults, such as those developed between the students and mentors in CNG, create a sense of belonging and contribute to positive social development (Wentzel, 1998).

Research has shown that to ensure maximum success of after-school programs like CNG, continuity must exist between activities conducted during the school day and those conducted after school. This research also strongly emphasizes communication between the school and the after-school program. A report commissioned by the US Department of Education underscores the importance of strong coordination between the school day and after-school programs through regular communication between teachers and after-school service providers (Chung, 2000*). A study in Massachusetts measured the relationship between communication levels of after-school programs and student outcomes from the program. The researchers found that programs reporting the strongest relationships with school day teachers reported higher student improvement in four of the five areas that were examined (homework completion and effort, taking initiative, behavior in the program, and relations with their peers) in comparison with their counterparts (Miller, 2005).

Several experts offer suggestions for increasing linkages between classroom and after-school learning. The NGA Center for Best Practices, for example, emphasizes the need for after-school

academic activities to complement, but not duplicate, lessons taught in the classroom. The researchers further suggest that after-school programs employ a staff member whose sole responsibility is the coordination of linkages between the program and classroom teachers; that is, to “facilitate critical connections” (Closing the Achievement Gap, 2007). Researchers from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) recommend more formal communication, such as monthly meetings and/or newsletters, as a way to facilitate such connections (Schwendiman & Fager, 1999). Regardless of the strategy employed, these researchers all agreed that communication across the two parties was more likely to yield positive results in the way of student outcomes than if the two operate as separate entities.¹

Site Context

Opened in 1998, Edison-Ronald McNair Academy (McNair) is a charter school located in East Palo Alto, California that serves 411 students in grades 5-8. McNair operates under the umbrella of Edison Schools, which was founded in 1992 and is estimated to be serving 58,000 students at 97 school sites².

Established to increase graduation rates in the RCSD, the CNG program was adopted by BGCP in 1997 after showing success in operation at the James Flood Magnet School in Menlo Park, CA. Established at McNair during the 2005-06 school year, CNG-McNair is currently in its third year of operation. The CNG-McNair Site Director has held her position since the program was established there. Additional staff at CNG-McNair includes one part-time Administrative

¹ Short summaries of the resources noted with an asterisk (*) above and in the reference list located in Appendix A may be found in Appendix B.

² Numbers as of 2006-07 school year, as reported on <http://www.edisonschools.com/edison-schools/about-us>.

Assistant, one part-time Assistant Director also serving as a mentor, and seven additional part-time mentors, with two mentors assigned to each grade level.

The CNG program is funded through Proposition 49, a California proposition passed in 2002 that provides state monies to after-school programs. The program's capacity is 160 students and the current enrollment is 146 students with waiting lists in two grade levels.

METHODOLOGY

The research team conducted multiple data collection efforts to address the research questions. Qualitative research activities included: preliminary and follow-up interviews with the Site Director; a site visit and tour of CNG-McNair; four focus groups with McNair teachers in grade-level teams; one focus group with the CNG mentors; and a review of relevant documents, including public records and documents provided by BGCP.

Data collection activities began with an interview with the BGCP-CNG Director and the CNG-McNair Site Director to share ideas on topics to be explored through this research project. Soon after, a site visit was conducted at which members of the research team observed the CNG-McNair program in operation and gathered further information from the Site Director, including a brief history and background of the program. During this visit, members of the research team also briefly met the teacher acting as the grade-level chairperson for each of the four grades at McNair and arranged times to meet, in focus groups, with all the teachers in each grade level.

Over a period of four weeks, the research team met with almost every teacher at McNair (one teacher was absent on the day her grade level had their focus group and was thus not included in the data collection) in groups of two to four teachers. These focus groups were conducted primarily during after school hours (though one was held during the faculty lunch period), and were guided by questions from the McNair Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Appendix C). The research team then conducted a focus group with many of the CNG mentors, though due to its occurrence immediately prior to the beginning of the mentors' duties with CNG there was

limited participation from a few mentors who arrived late. This focus group was guided by questions from the CNG Mentor Focus Group Protocol (Appendix D).

The research team conducted a qualitative analysis of all data collected ~~during a team meeting~~ following the conclusion of data collection. The three group members analyzed salient themes that emerged from the data to inform the findings section (below). The research team concluded data analysis with a follow-up interview with the CNG-McNair Site Director, which facilitated the development of the list of opportunities and next steps following thereafter. A table detailing the timeline of conducting these data collection activities is included below. Throughout the conducting of these activities, the research team thoroughly reviewed the available literature on CNG-McNair.

Data Collection Activities Calendar

Thursday, October 4, 2007	Interview with BGCP-CNG Director and CNG-McNair Site Director
Tuesday, October 9, 2007	CNG-McNair site visit
Tuesday, October 16, 2007	6 th and 7 th grade teacher focus groups
Wednesday, October 17, 2007	5 th grade teacher focus group
Tuesday, October 23, 2007	8 th grade teacher focus group
Tuesday, November 6, 2007	CNG mentor focus group
Friday, November 30, 2007	Follow-up interview with CNG-McNair Site Director

FINDINGS

Following is a summary of the findings relevant to addressing the research questions from the data collected at CNG-McNair. The research team also reviewed the findings of the study conducted in 2006 at CNG-McNair to identify reoccurring topics. Three areas of findings are discussed below.

Communication

Communication between the CNG staff and the McNair teachers was a common topic of discussion. Data presented in the 2006 report indicated that most communication occurred informally and was channeled through the Site Director, rather than directed to individual mentors. While in some cases teachers described knowing the mentors serving their students, in many cases these relationships had not yet been formed, which may be partially attributed to the relative newness of many CNG mentors at McNair (most are in their first year with the program). Both the Site Director and one of the more senior mentors, however, have strong relationships with teachers due to the longer duration of their presence at CNG-McNair.

The introduction of the teacher communication form this school year represents the first effort toward formalizing communication. Data indicated that, overall, teachers face limitations in completing these forms, which were emphasized as a major means of communication to the CNG mentors about what is being conducted in the teachers' classes. Teachers commented that they viewed the forms as just another task they had to complete, with one teacher noting, "We don't need another job." Several teachers further noted that sharing the requested information verbally would be easier and more effective. When asked about their communication with the CNG staff, teachers echoed last year's comments in stating that they primarily have contact with

the Site Director; few described regular communication with the mentors. Overall, teachers described communication as “really haphazard.”

The mentors expressed few, if any, issues with regard to their communication with McNair teachers. When asked to elaborate on this issue, the Site Director suggested that this might be due to the less-established expectations of the mentors. She further attributed this dichotomy to the mentors’ relative lack of experience; for many of them, CNG is their first job in a structured education environment.

Teacher Perception

Previous data showed that McNair teachers hold an overall positive perception of CNG.

However, many of the teachers reported perceiving CNG as a program devoted almost entirely to homework completion. Both sentiments were echoed in data collected for this report. Other data collected from both teachers and mentors indicated their beliefs that the students best served by CNG are those who are motivated and doing fairly well in school anyway. Several teachers suggested that some of the students who could most benefit from CNG are not motivated to go. Data further indicated that some of the students who participate in CNG do so at the direction of their parents, who work late and want somewhere safe for them to be after school; these students were reported as having a lower level of personal investment in the program. Further, many teachers see CNG as a fairly unstructured program without a strong focus on specific activities. Some teachers expressed concerns regarding unruly behavior displayed by students while attending CNG. Several teachers did note the value of certain extracurricular activities provided through CNG, such as knitting and hip-hop. Finally, teachers described a variety of both

academic and extracurricular skills that they thought CNG could help develop and strengthen. Writing, math, art, and structured physical education were specifically cited.

Perceived Effects on Student Outcomes

Teachers reported several ways in which they saw CNG impacting students' academic and social outcomes. The program's work with ESL students was noted as a strength, with one teacher approvingly commenting on his observation that a Spanish-speaking tutor was brought in especially to work with these students. However, there was some concern expressed by teachers concerning the level of academic assistance provided by mentors. Additionally, the teachers had divided feelings about the social/emotional support provided by the program – it was reported as fairly strong, but some teachers described concerns that students with really serious needs can “get lost in the shuffle”. One teacher commented that he wouldn't mind seeing “a couple things more in the way of counseling”. Similar desires for a greater focus on counseling were also mentioned in the 2006 CNG McNair report. Limitations in terms of both academic and social support could be attributed partially to the fact that some of the mentors, by their own admission, began their work with CNG quickly after their hiring and without completing any formal training.

KEY THEMES

The findings discussed above, along with the literature and documents the research teams reviewed for this project, have yielded the following four themes:

- Communication between CNG staff and McNair teachers is almost always initiated by CNG (either by the Site Director or the mentors). One 5th grade teacher admitted this fact, saying, “It’s like the tail wagging the dog, and we’ll keep being the dog.”
- Whether formal or informal, communication between CNG staff and McNair teachers does not occur consistently. Teachers acknowledge that they often do not have time to complete the teacher communication forms. Another 5th grade teacher explained that they saw verbal communication as easier and more time effective, saying, “I have no problem giving them information on the fly”.
- Relationships between CNG mentors and McNair teachers are not fully developed, contributing to a tendency for communication to be channeled through the CNG Site Director. One CNG mentor took responsibility for this lack of familiarity, saying, “I need to work on [my teacher relationship]...I should talk more to the teacher. They just have a million things to do.”
- The overall teacher perception of CNG-McNair is positive, with one 6th grade teacher stating that “it gives good things to many kids”. While some lack of clarity remains regarding the exact goals of CNG, teachers expressed a willingness to participate in and support the program as best as possible given their limited time.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

As described above in the discussion on methodology, the research team and the CNG-McNair Site Director worked together on the final stage of data analysis to gain a shared understanding of the themes observed through the research project and to identify strategies for responding to those themes. The CNG-McNair Site Director was specifically attuned to identifying tasks that she considered feasible given the current organization of CNG at McNair. The results of this discussion are summarized below.

Teacher Communication Forms

Two solutions allowing for easier relay and acquisition of the information from the teacher communication forms were suggested. The first idea was distributing the forms less frequently, perhaps once a month, while providing greater emphasis on completing and returning them. The CNG Site Director was receptive to the idea of a process of “incentivizing” completion of the forms in some way, such as by offering a chance at receiving a \$10 gift certificate to the local classroom supply store. Second, encouraging the CNG-McNair Site Director and another senior CNG mentor to develop a regular practice of visiting with teachers during breaks in instruction was recommended. This would allow for regular opportunities to discuss student or curriculum issues, or to assist with completing the teacher communication forms. This practice could partially alleviate the time constraint that prevents some teachers from completing the forms.

Established Communication Channels

Methods for establishing more regular, but less time-consuming, communication between CNG mentors and McNair teachers were discussed. Encouraging CNG mentors to conduct brief and frequent verbal check-ins with teachers, which would allow time for addressing emerging

student issues, curricular alignment, and other relevant topics, was one idea. A time period for conducting this activity might be during the first 15-30 minutes of CNG, in which the students have snacks. In addition, the team discussed recommending placing questions requiring only a brief response concerning CNG students or curricula in teachers' boxes. For instance, "Just wanted to check and see if you were still on track to work on order of operations this week – circle yes or no." Teachers could then provide the requested answer, elaborate if they have time, and return the note to the CNG-McNair Site Director's box.

Clarity of Mission of CNG

Providing a short "primer" for McNair teachers on the structure and goals of the CNG program was also discussed between the research team and the CNG Site Director. This information could take the form of: a handout or email distributed early in the school year; a brief session conducted during a teacher training, in-service, or other meeting; an oral overview delivered during teachers' lunch periods; or an invitation to observe the CNG program in action one day after school. In upcoming school years, such information could be provided to new teachers near the beginning of the year. Given the amount of information that teachers receive early in the school year, following up on this introduction to CNG with additional sessions or individual check-ins with teachers seems to be a worthwhile step.

Mentor Training

Development of a process to allow mentors opportunities to participate in formal training was also discussed. This includes providing such training to incoming mentors and allowing existing mentors who have not done so to attend additional/makeup training.

CONCLUSION

The research team observed high levels of dedication and commitment on the part of both McNair and CNG staff to working together toward their goal of creating successful outcomes for their students. The opportunities described above were considered in light of their potential to yield increased teacher-mentor communication and relationships without presenting a significant commitment in terms of time or effort. In order to best achieve their goals, each group would benefit greatly from the support and input of the other. The research team hopes that this report provides a springboard for further supporting and improving the CNG-McNair program.

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APPENDIX B: SELECTED LITERATURE SUMMARIES

Chung, A. (2000). *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*. Report No. ED-00-PO-1711. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education.

The author discusses the creation by many communities of after-school programs to keep children and youth out of trouble and engaged in activities that help them learn. Almost 100 percent of people polled in a recent survey agreed that it is important for children to have an after-school program that helps them develop academic and social skills in a safe and caring environment. One recent study found that twice as many elementary and middle school parents wanted after-school programs as were currently available. After-school programs provide a wide array of benefits to children, their families, schools, and the whole community. This report, jointly authored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, focuses exclusively on the benefits children receive in terms of increased safety, reduced risk-taking, and improved learning.

The author notes positive outcomes associated with children's participation in after-school programs in four major areas:

1. Reduced participation in crime and risk for violence
2. Improved academic achievement
3. Improved development of social skills for children and improved relationships between children and both adults and their peers
4. Strengthened ties between the children and their families with the school and the greater community

The report contends that "effective programs combine academic, enrichment, cultural, and recreational activities to guide learning and engage children and youth in wholesome activities" (p. 9). Toward this end, it identifies several necessary elements to creating a quality after-school program:

1. A clear focus on meeting the established goals of the program, including ensuring proper management, accounting, and legal processes
2. A quality staff that includes a capable and effective program manager, high-quality employees, and appropriate utilization of volunteers
3. Safe, accessible facilities that includes adequate space for children to participate in program activities and providing of nutritious snacks when necessary
4. Development and maintenance of relationships with key stakeholders in the community and appropriate utilization of resources available in that community.
 - a. The author provides a step-by-step process for developing these community relationships which seems especially relevant: (from p. 11-12):
 - Build consensus and partnerships among key stakeholders
 - Assess school/community needs and resources
 - Provide opportunities for both children and families within the school and the community
 - Address logistical issues
 - Obtain qualified staff and clearly define their roles and responsibilities

5. Strong involvement from families both in the program's planning stages and day-to-day operations
6. Strong focus on enriching academic activities that corresponds with lessons from the regular school day and also perhaps provides additional curriculum options not available during school hours (i.e. art, sports, or music)
7. Coordinated planning between school teachers and program mentors to maximize effectiveness of both components
8. Continuous evaluation of success and available avenues for adjusting program activities based on results from those evaluations

Examples of programs the report deems to have successfully implemented these components across the country were included. Programs operating in the same general region as CNG at McNair were structured similarly as well:

Lake County Teen Connection
After-School Program, 21st CCLC
Upper Lake, California

The after-school program runs until 6:00 PM, Mondays-Thursdays and is overseen by two site staff members and two volunteer tutors. Its daily activity schedule is similar to the CNG at McNair, beginning after school with an hour of homework and academic enrichment activities, followed by an hour of participation in "club" activities (i.e. cooking, science, crafts), except for Thursdays, when students participate in community service projects. Evaluation data after one year of students participating in the program indicated increases in academic achievement and decreases in disciplinary issues, as well as increases in interest from the school day teachers in becoming involved in the program.

Proyecto Sano y Salvo (Project Safe and Sound), 21st CCLC
Tucson, Arizona

The after-school program was designed in-house to offer enriching academic opportunities that complement the lessons taught during the school day. The program operates five days a week until 6:30 PM and at least one Saturday a month. During a typical afternoon period, students may choose their academic focus from a variety of options, designed from national research-based models in conjunction with faculty from two nearby IHEs. Early evaluation data indicated improvements in school attendance and behavior of students participating in the program.

Shumow, L. (2001). *Academic Effects of After-School Programs*. ERIC Digest No. ED458010. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education.

After-school programs may have a variety of foci, including recreation, academic tutoring, enrichment, or any combination of these and other activities. Research shows that in general children's participation in formal after-school programs declines as they age in favor of lessons and self-supervision. Differences were seen across race, with black children showing increases in participation in formal after-school activities between third and fifth grades while white children showed a decline. While children from families with higher incomes and education levels are more likely to participate in enrichment activities because they have more resources to provide for it, data suggest greater gains for children from low income families than their middle class counterparts. Resources tend to be shorter in very urban and rural areas, where low income families particularly struggle to provide these options for their children.

A variety of figures on after-school programs was provided. A list with these points discussed briefly is below:

- Children attending after-school programs even for very short periods each week showed lower discipline referrals and better display of social skills
- Children identified as academically at-risk spending greater time in after-school programs had better attendance, work habits, and conflict resolution strategies than their counterparts attending less often.
- Boys attending after-school programs allowing an element of choice in activity was correlated with better social skills display in the classroom.
- Programs with desirable features, such as low adult-child ratios and higher levels of staff education were associated with greater student desire for participation and, in turn, more positive interactions, less negativity, and more flexible and age-appropriate activities in after-school programs.
- Dedicating after school time to read (and avoiding watching excessive television) the best predictor of academic success
- Low income and working class children attending after-school programs in third through fifth grades had higher rates of participation in extracurricular activities other than sports and in academic activities specifically. (This in turn was correlated with better emotional adjustment, grades, and school work habits.)

“The research indicates that children from high-risk backgrounds have both the most to gain from after-school programs in terms of educational opportunity and the least access to after-school programs.” (p. 4)

Several recommendations for designing programs with greatest potential for success:

1. Programs should include a positive emotional climate and represent a place children want to be
2. Programs should take into account the changing needs and interests of older elementary school children
3. Programs cannot merely be extensions of the school day , and should preferably include activity choices, enrichment activities, and opportunities to socialize

Little, C.A., & Hines, A.H. (2006). Time to Read: Advancing Reading Achievement after School. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 18(1), 8-33.

This article is a report on a study conducted on the effects of an after-school reading program on reading fluency in 3rd through 6th graders. The study gave special attention to the results of the students who scored above the 90th percentile of the national average on the pretest and students from a lower socio-economic background. The program, Expanding Horizons, was taught twice a week after school over a twelve-week period

Questions: The study had four main questions.

1. Do students who participate in the after-school program demonstrate gains in reading fluency from pretest to posttest?
2. Do fluency gains for students in the program exceed expected fluency gains over the same period as determined by national norms on the fluency measure?
3. Do fluency gains differ from various demographic groups within the program?
4. Are there differences in fluency gain scores between students whose pretest scores exceeded the 90th percentile (relative to national norms) and those whose score did not?

Methods:

The sample consisted of 155 students in grades 3-6 from three different school districts. The district ranged from having 65% of students receive free or reduced lunch to 10% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The after-school program was optional, so the students were self-selected to participate. Each student took a pretest on reading fluency. The groups then met twice a week for 12 weeks for 90 minutes in classes that ranged in size from 14-24 students. Students were then given a posttest at the same grade level as the pretest.

Results:

The results for question 1 showed statistically significant gains for students at every grade level from 3-6. Students in grades 3 and 5 also showed statistically significant differences between the study groups and the national norm groups on rate of improvement. Students in grades 4 and 6 did not have a significantly different rate of improvement from the national norm. The results across gender and different demographic groups were similar. Finally, students with the highest level of reading fluency at the beginning of the study showed similar gains to their peers.

Implications:

This study finds that additional support in reading, given only twice a week, can have a positive result on the students' growth as a reader. It also shows that this growth is not dependent on gender, demographic group or previous level of reading ability. There were several limitations in this study, including the size of the study and the volunteer nature of the students who participated, so further studies will be needed to confirm these results.

Afterschool Alliance (2007). *Afterschool programs: Helping kids compete in tomorrow's workforce*. Afterschool Alert Issue Brief No. 25/ERIC Article No. ED498170. Retrieved October 14, 2007 from: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/33/2e/d2.pdf.

This article took a market-based approach to the need for after-school programs. The after-school programs provide time and flexibility to engage the students in lessons that teach the skills needed to be successful in the workforce. There are five core competencies and a three-part foundation that is needed to be successful. The core competencies are:

- Resources,
- Interpersonal Skills,
- Information,
- Systems, and
- Technology.

The core set of skills is:

- Basic Skills,
- Thinking Skills, and
- Personal Qualities.

After-school programs can work in a number of these areas that school do not work on during a normal school day. Many programs are already working in these areas. Some of the activities that are important to this growth are working in small and large groups, exposure to new experiences, practicing verbal and self-expression skills, learning experiences that emphasize reasoning and problem solving skills, and utilizing informational resources and technology to complete projects.

After-school programs have already shown results in improving students performance in academics. In select after-school programs in 2003-2004, 45 percent of program participants improved their reading grades and 41 percent improved their math grades. Similarly, students in a statewide after-school program in California improved their standardized test scores in both reading and math by percentages almost twice of that of other students. After-school programs have also proven to nurture critical thinking, leadership development and future job success. After-school programs fill many needs, not the least of which is helping to keep America competitive in a global economy.

Perry, M., Teague, J., & Frey, S. (2002) *Expansion of Out-of-School Programs Aims at Improving Student Achievement*. Palo Alto, CA: EdSource.

Abstract:

This report focuses on the expanding prevalence of after-school programs of many types in California, and profiles their nature and the demands that they face. Funding has been increased for such programs to help them provide academically focused and enriching experiences for students. School and community partnerships are essential in making out-of-school programs effective in raising academic achievement. Evaluation of program efficacy is still in its infancy as data are just starting to become available from student test scores and the knowledge and experience provided by community-based organizations. To make programs effective, they must have clear and consistent structures and goals, appropriately trained staff and management, ongoing evaluation, good leadership, and stable, adequate funding. Evidence exists that well-implemented after-school programs positively affect student achievement.

Summary:

- Both the government and private funders began investing more in after-school programs after research emerged indicating that these programs could have real effects on student achievement.
- There is an increasing push to integrate community development with improving academic achievement; “especially in those communities with the neediest children,” basic needs must be taken care of first. (p. 4)
- After-school programs represent a unique opportunity to teach children with more creative and motivational learning strategies that they may not experience regularly.
- There are many models for school-community partnerships (community development, school reform, youth development), each with the same goal: improving students’ academic achievement.
- Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco: Treasure Island is used as an example of such a beneficial after-school program; behavioral problems in the school in which the program is based have dropped since it began.
- It appears that all successful after-school programs share the characteristics of intentional learning environments; have clear, consistent structures and goals; and have well-trained and committed staff members.
- Strong and consistent leadership, sustained funding, and the challenges of working in the neediest/most difficult locations are three areas that need to be addressed as after-school programs continue to develop.
- As an out-of-school program, the BGCP’s CNG sites could compare themselves to the programs described in the article, and use the takeaways about leadership, community integration, etc. to improve their function.

Grolnick, W.S., Farkas, M.S., Sohmer, R., Michaels, S. & Valsiner, J. (2007) Facilitating motivation in young adolescents: Effects of an after-school program. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 28(4), 332-344.

This study examined the effects of a motivationally facilitative after-school program on 7th grade students' autonomous motivation, learning goals, school engagement, and performance in science class. Pairs of students were individually matched on a number of variables and each member was randomly assigned to either the after-school program or a control group. Students completed questionnaires regarding their motivation and engagement before and after the program. Teachers rated students' levels of classroom engagement. Students participating in the program increased in learning goals, engagement in school and in science class, and science grades, and decreased in performance goals relative to the controls.

- Issue: school achievement and engagement are crucial, particularly in middle school students/adolescents, to success and motivation. How best to facilitate this attitude in students is still up for debate.
- Research Questions: “How effective is Investigators’ Club in facilitating positive motivational orientations toward school and achievement in science? ... Do effects of the intervention occur in relation to science class only, other classes, or school in general? Finally, given that drop-out from programs for at-risk populations is a major concern in intervention research (Gross et al., 2001 and Weisman and Gottfredson, 2001), what factors predict who drops-out of this after-school program?” (p. 333)
- Methods: intervention study. Researchers designed Investigator’s Club, a 15-week after-school science program intended both to boost science achievement and facilitate experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness. At the beginning and end of the program, researchers administered a self-regulation questionnaire, a perceived competence scale for children, and several other metrics to the students and to their schoolteachers to measure changes in the students.
- Findings: students identified themselves as having more motivation regarding school after the program, but teachers saw no changes in motivation in the students. All of the effects were “buffering” effects – preventing expected decreases in motivations – rather than “enhancement” effects – increasing motivation. The effects that were observed are attributed to the intentional facilitation of independent, student-driven learning experiences that made the students feel more capable and autonomous in the classroom.
- Implications: provides some positive results and identifies some challenges of using after-school programs to facilitate motivation in at-risk students.
- CNG: in our focus groups, student motivation was one of the themes that came up: some students were highly motivated and did well in the program, while others felt no investment in the program and made minimal effort. Perhaps a curriculum that intentionally created opportunities for independent learning and creative problem solving would better serve the needs of the latter group of students.

APPENDIX C: McNAIR TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. From your perspective, what are the goals of CNG?
2. How would you describe the traits of students best served by CNG? (Probe: remedial vs. enrichment)
3. What is your level of communication with mentors from CNG?
 - a. How often do you receive/fill out and submit the CNG teacher communication form?
 - b. Are you involved in any informal communications? If so, describe.
4. From your perspective, what strategies could be implemented to increase this communication?
5. Are you familiar with the curricular/lesson plans CNG uses?
 - a. If so, how do you feel about it as an academic tool – does it meet the needs of your students, align with your curriculum, etc.)?
 - b. If not, what sort of program do you think would best supplement what you are trying to teach?
6. How aligned would you say CNG curricula is with the standards you are teaching?
7. How do you see CNG affecting other outcomes for your students? (i.e. social/emotional outcomes)
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your perspectives on CNG?

APPENDIX D: CNG MENTOR FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. How do you feel the training you received from CNG prepared you for the work you are doing at McNair?
2. Is there additional training that you feel would have been helpful?
3. What strategies do you use to communicate with McNair teachers about:
 - a. The curriculum they are teaching in the classrooms?
 - b. Issues related to individual students?
4. How effective are these strategies? Why? (Probe: specific ideas about facilitators and barriers?)
5. What recommendations do you have to improve this communication?
6. Is there any other information you would like to share with us regarding CNG?