

**INTEGRATING EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT IN AFTER SCHOOL
AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING RESEARCH**

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Gareth J. Jones
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Examining Committee Members:

Aubrey Kent, Advisory Chair, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management

Brianna S. Clark, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
Kathleen Muller, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, National After School
Matters/National Institute on Out-of-School Time Practitioner Fellowship

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a review of after school research with a special focus on selected research methods. It identifies several important methodological issues in the literature which have contributed to a sometimes confusing body of research for after school program coordinators and service staff to interpret. The potential utility of evaluability assessment (EA) in the field of after school program research is discussed, and EA is proposed as a pre-evaluation method to be adapted as the first step in the scientific process for subsequent evaluative research. EA techniques are then applied in the initial phase of a partnership with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation's after school program. Structural and theoretical recommendations are provided, and specific topics for future research initiatives are identified. The incorporation of a specified EA criteria into the evaluative process is recommended, so as to provide timely, relevant, and useful information for both practitioners and academics. This thesis aims to further reduce the disconnect between research and practice in the field of after school, out-of-school-time, and youth recreation research.

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INTRODUCTION

The demand for after school programming in the United States was initially spearheaded by concerned parents who sought support on behalf of their respective communities. During the early 1990's traditional caregivers were entering and staying in the labor force at increasing numbers, and the aging population (85 and older) required even more concentrated care (Wagner & Neal, 1994). The combination of these social developments created a period of time between the end of school and the end of the traditional workday during which a growing proportion of children were left unsupervised. Published reports established a connection between a lack of adult supervision during this time period, and the increased likelihood of risk-taking behaviors, victimization, and poor academic performance (Dwyer et al., 1990; Richardson et al., 1989). Similarly, adult supervision was linked directly with lower levels of delinquent behavior, substance use, and high-risk sexual behavior (Biglan et al., 1990; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991). Naturally, parents sought help in caring for their children during this critical time (Kane, 2004). Their lobbying efforts led to increased private and public funding, and the decision by Congress to fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program in 1994 (Dynarski et al., 2003). This provided an unprecedented amount of financial support and resources to implement and evaluate after school programs nationwide.

Since the enactment of the CCLC program, researchers continued to find relationships between a lack of after school supervision and delinquent behavior (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). As a result, funding for both public and private programs increased markedly, from \$40 million in 1998 to approximately \$1 billion in 2002

(Dynarski et al., 2004). In 2010, the federal appropriation was over \$1 billion and helped serve 10,339 centers nationwide (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Despite expanded budgets, subsequent studies have provided mixed results regarding the efficacy, productivity, and outcomes of after school programs.

Some studies, including an assessment of the CCLC program, found few statistically significant positive outcomes related to participation in after school programs, and in certain cases even revealed negative associations (Bissel et al., 2002; James-Burdumy et al., 2007). Not surprisingly, these findings contributed to drastic reductions in the levels of federal financial support for after school programs (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Mahoney & Zigler, 2006). There was also a concern that after school programs were failing to reach the audiences they target. According to the Afterschool Alliance (2004), approximately 6.5 million children were in after school programs in 2004, yet parents of over 15 million children who didn't participate said they would have if a program was available (p. 3). Need was particularly strong amongst middle school students, with only 6% enrolled in after school programs, and 34% left unsupervised in the afternoons (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

In contrast, a majority of research has identified positive effects related to after school programs, including improved academic performance, social competence, test grades, school attendance, and youth development measures (George, Cusick, Wasserman, & Gladden, 2007; Little & Harris, 2003; Shernoff, 2010). Certain intrinsic benefits have also been identified, such as exposure to caring adults, a strong sense of belonging, challenging experiences, and the development of peer partnerships and teamwork (Casey, Ripke, & Huston, 2004). Some research suggests these benefits of

programming are highly correlated to the frequency with which participants attend after-school activities (Holstead & King, 2011; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005). Sustained engagement is shown to lead to more positive outcomes than transient or irregular participation (Little & Harris, 2003; Weiss et al., 2005), particularly when related to academic benefits (Lauver, 2002). According to Holstead and King (2011), this finding has been corroborated in the evaluations of after-school programs across the country, including North Carolina's Support Our Students programs, California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, Los Angeles Unified School District's LA's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (BEST) program, and programs in New York supported by The After School Corporation (Department of Education, University of California Irvine, 2001; Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000; Johnson & Jenkins, 2000; Welsh et al., 2002).

The wide range of results on the effects of after school programs – from significantly positive through no effect to significantly negative - have been attributed more to key methodological issues (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Kane, 2004; Mahoney & Zigler, 2006) than major program differences. Unfortunately, many issues arise from the nature of the after school programming environment. Voluntary participation, differences in program quality and sporadic attendance rates are inherent characteristics of the after school setting that are extremely difficult to control for in experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Furthermore, they lead to methodological challenges such as selection bias (Apsler, 2009), lack of baseline equivalence and control groups (Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010), and assumed program homogeneity (Granger, 2008; Trevisan & Huang, 2003).

Another cause of methodological issues is the assumption that all programs are “evaluable”, which presumes: (a) extensive measurable objectives exist; (b) key stakeholders share the measurable objectives; (c) there is reasonable program structure and sufficient resources to obtain the objectives; and (d) program managers will use findings from evaluations of the program (Trevison, 2007). Given the inconsistent size, structure, and organization of both public and private programs, these assumptions seem questionable in the field of after school research. Data collected from an “unevaluable” program may lead to causal links between participation and apparent outcomes (i.e. academic or social/behavioral growth), when in reality such effects may be muddled by misinterpretations of program logic (Wholey, 1979). In order to ensure the integrity of causal links, one must be certain programs are implemented correctly from management through frontline staff, and reaching the populations they purportedly target. Pre-evaluation, or evaluability assessment, provides a framework for achieving this objective, and produces ancillary benefits that are beneficial for practitioners (Thurston, Graham, & Hatfield, 2003; Trevison, 2007; Trevison & Huang, 2003; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2004).

The Philadelphia Parks and Recreation After School Program, along with agencies in many other cities, have struggled to keep their programs operating efficiently in a tough economic climate. Even Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, a nationally recognized pioneer in his advocacy of municipal parks and recreation (Beard, 2012), has been forced to cut a total of \$43 million from what was originally promised to the Department of Parks and Recreation in the FY 2009-2013 Five Year Plan (Greco, 2012). With after school budget cuts at the state and local level, and reductions in foundation

support and private donations (McCombs, Kirby, & Cordes, 2012), it is not only scientifically prudent, but fiscally responsible to consider EA as the first step in any research initiative.

This collaborative study between Temple University and the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation will contribute to the existing knowledge base by serving as a catalyst for future after school research design, and establishing a specified EA criteria that will lead to more relevant, feasible, conclusive, timely, and useful research (Wholey et al., 2004). Furthermore, by involving stakeholders in the research process, this partnership will contribute to the ongoing effort to narrow the gap between research and practice in the field of youth sport and recreation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Children who regularly spend part of their day unsupervised while parents are at work are commonly referred to as latch key children, a name which was introduced in the 1800's to identify kids who carried the key to their house on a string around their neck (Belsie, 2000). During the second World War, most fathers had joined the army, and mothers were entering the labor force in record numbers to provide supplies for the military (Alston, 2007). Consequently, children were left unsupervised for extended periods of time during the morning, afternoon, and night. According to Alston (2007), the government responded by setting up child-care programs in factories, schools, and community centers which took care of children whose parents were working. When the war ended, parents returned home and women resumed their traditional housewife roles, leading to the cancellation of most child-care programs (Alston, 2007).

In the latter half of the 20th century women began returning to the workforce in more permanent capacities (Wagner & Neal, 1994), with families increasingly dependent on two wage earners, and employers increasingly dependent on female workers (Ferber, O'Farrell, & Allen, 1991). Simultaneously, the fastest growing segment of the American population was persons age 85 and older, who commanded a large proportion of available care (Wagner & Neal, 1994). Traditionally, 80% of all care received by older Americans was provided by informal sources (Select Committee on Aging, 1987), and a majority of this percentage were women who were being drawn into the labor force (Stone, Cafferata, & Sangl, 1987). This made it increasingly difficult to provide programs for a new and growing generation of latch key children.

In 1985, the U.S. Department of Commerce estimated that 2 million (13%) of the nation's children between the ages of 7 and 13 were without adult supervision before or after school hours (Robinson, Rowland, & Coleman, 1986). In 2000, this number had grown to 6.9 million school children (Belsie, 2000). A majority of this unsupervised time was occurring after school, with the Census Bureau finding that 76% of latchkey children were home alone after school, compared to 15% before school and 9% at night (Alston, 2007). In 2010, the Children's Defense Fund estimated that the number of latch key children had escalated to 13 million (Blankenship, 2011), with the Afterschool Alliance (2009) reporting 15 million.

Establishing The Need For After School Program Support

In the decade prior to the turn of the century, a large body of research began to grow which linked a lack of supervision, particularly during the after school hours, with anti-social behavior. Public recognition of these risks, particularly those related to substance abuse and violence, led to nationwide support and investment in after school programs (Apsler, 2009; Hofferth, 1995; Zief, Lauver, & Maynard, 2004). Parents and communities lobbied to bridge the gap between the end of the school day and the end of the work day with effective programming (Apsler, 2009; Zief et al., 2004). In response, the number of after-school programs was increased, and existing programs were augmented with additional financial support from both private foundations and government funds (Apsler, 2009).

A particularly substantial investment came in 1994 when Congress legislated the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program, which grew quickly from an appropriation of \$40 million in 1998 to \$1 billion in 2002 (Dynarski et al., 2004). In

addition, state and local governments increased their support, with California alone boosting their funding of after-school programs six-fold over the next few years (Kane, 2004). Between 1991 and 1997, the number of children enrolled in before and after school programs increased from 1.7 to 6.7 million (Capizzano, Tout, & Adams, 2000). The increased support was intended to mitigate risky behavior and support positive behavior amongst youth, yet the subsequent body of evaluative research presented contradictory results regarding key youth outcomes.

High-Risk Sexual Behavior

Low family availability and negligible parental monitoring have been associated with high-risk sexual behavior among adolescents. In particular, a lack of after school supervision has been shown to lead to increased instances of unsafe sexual practices (Biglan et al., 1990), sexually transmitted infections (Cohen, Farley, Taylor, Martin, & Schuster, 2002), and teenage pregnancies. A study by Cohen et al. (2002) found that youths who were unsupervised for 30 or more hours per week were more likely to be sexually active compared to those who were unsupervised for 5 hours a week or less. In this study, boys who were unsupervised more than 5 hours per week after school were twice as likely to have gonorrhea or chlamydia infections as boys who were unsupervised for 5 hours or less (Cohen et al., 2002). More than half of sexually active youths reported that they had sex at home after school, and sexual-related risks increased as the amount of unsupervised time increased (Cohen et al., 2002).

Participation in after school programs has been shown to reduce risky sexual behavior amongst adolescents and teenagers (Manlove, 2004). Children in after school programs demonstrate more conservative sexual behavior and reduced rates of teenage

pregnancy (Gavin, Catalano, David-Ferdon, Gloppen, & Markham, 2010). Participation in curriculum-based, youth development and service learning programs has been shown to delay sexual activity, improve contraceptive use, and reduce teenage pregnancy (Manlove, 2004). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis of 30 youth development programs, Gavin et al. (2010) found that participation led to delayed sexual initiation, reduced frequency of sex, increased use of birth control, decreased sexual partners, and fewer pregnancies.

However, findings have been inconsistent at best, and ultimately depict a weak link between positive outcomes and after school participation. For example, in the analysis of 30 programs by Gavin et al. (2010), only 15 of the 30 programs had evidence of improving at least one adolescent sexual and reproductive health outcome. Furthermore, although criteria for effective sex education have been established, Ott, Rouse, Resseguie, Smith, and Woodcox (2011) highlighted a “noticeable gap” between best practices in sex education and what is possible on the community level (p. 176).

Alcohol and Drug Use

Self-care is an important risk factor for substance abuse amongst adolescents (Richardson et al., 1989). Richardson et al. (1989) found that eighth-grade students who cared for themselves 11 or more hours per week were at almost twice the risk of substance abuse as those who do not take care of themselves at all (p. 559). Furthermore, Richardson et al. (1989) reported that of those in self-care zero hours a week, 6.2% smoked one or more packs of cigarettes, 11.1% drank 11 or more drinks of alcohol, and 14% tried marijuana, whereas those in self-care more than 10 hours per week had proportions of 12.8%, 22.6%, and 23.5% respectively (p. 558). Another study by

Richardson, Radziszewska, Dent and Flay (1993) involving ninth graders found similar results, with unsupervised after school care leading to an increased susceptibility to cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use (p. 36). Recent reports have specifically isolated the after school hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. as the peak time for drug and alcohol use (Flannery, Williams, & Vazsonyi, 1999; Gottfredson, D., Gottfredson, G., & Weisman, 2001; Miller, 2003; Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christeson, 2000). A study in 2000 revealed that between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., kids are more likely to get hooked on cigarettes and experiment with dangerous drugs (Newman et al., 2000), while another report also highlighted these hours as the peak time for experimentation with alcohol (Miller, 2003).

Evaluating the effectiveness of after school programming in regard to alcohol and substance abuse has been challenging due to the proliferation of mandated alcohol and drug prevention programs already in place within school hours (D'Amico et al., 2012). Singular program evaluations have suggested that youth who participate in voluntary after school programs report less involvement with marijuana (St. Pierre, Kaltreider, Mark, & Aikin, 1992), and reductions in alcohol use (D'Amico & Edelen, 2007). Similarly, a cluster randomized controlled trial of 16 schools with the voluntary CHOICE program suggested participants were less likely to initiate alcohol use during the academic year compared with non-participants (D'Amico et al., 2012). However, D'Amico et al. (2012) did not find individual- or school-level changes in resistance self-efficacy, perceived prevalence of drinking, or intentions to drink (p. 422). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis of after school programs funded by the 21st century community learning centers program, Dynarski et al. (2004) found mixed evidence on drug use. After school participants were more likely than comparison students to both sell and use

drugs, and there were no differences between participants and non-participants who smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, or smoked marijuana (Dynarski et al. (2004).

Academic Achievement

Previous research has suggested that adolescents who were not supervised by adults after school had worse grades than those who were supervised by an adult (Dwyer et al., 1990; Richardson et al., 1993). In addition, a survey by the YMCA of the USA (2001) found that children who do not participate in after school activities are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school than teens who do participate. Research related to the influence of after school time utilization on academic performance has emphasized the *potential* impact of after school programs as much as the actual impact of unsupervised youth, and for good reason. Adolescents are most likely to be in a state of intense, sustained engagement during structured voluntary activities (Larson, 2000), and according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) it is this “flow” experience that builds intrinsic motivation and initiative which could potentially transfer to academic achievement.

Authors have suggested that after school programs can improve academic achievement and help develop strategies for long-term academic success by increasing participating in enrichment activities (Broh, 2002; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Theoretically, after school programs expose children to activities that develop the “prerequisites” to learning, which supports school achievement (Miller, 2003). Although they can’t change school experiences, after school programs provide environments that accommodate the needs, interests, and motivations of children (Miller, 2003). When focusing specifically on at-risk youth, Lauer et al. (2006) found that out-of-school time programs can improve the achievement of at-risk students in reading and

mathematics. Shernoff (2010) extended the literature by studying program engagement in relation to academic outcomes, finding that higher perceptions of challenge predicted better math grades, and higher perceptions of importance predicted both higher english and math grades (p.333).

However, authors found that program *quality* is a stronger and more positive predictor of academic performance than the *quantity* of program experience (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Lauer et al., 2006; Shernoff, 2010). This could explain why the large-scale evaluations of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program produced mixed results (Dynarski et al., 2004; James-Burdumy, Synarski, & Deke, 2007; James-Burdumy et al., 2005). For example, according to Dynarski et al. (2004) after school participants were no more (or less) likely to work on or complete their homework (p. 26), and did not report improved reading test scores and grades in math, english, science, or social studies (p. 32). In fact, treatment group students (i.e. participants) had lower average grades, less-regular homework habits, and more discipline problems than comparison group students (i.e. non-participants)(p. 32).

Crime and Delinquency

Over 60 years ago, research suggested that juvenile crime peaked during the after school hours (Kvaraceus, 1945), with subsequent studies in the 60's and 70's consistently revealing that parents of delinquent youths had limited awareness of where their children were, whom they were with, and what they were doing (Hirschi, 1969; McCord, 1979). McCord (1979) established a negative association between careless parental monitoring and rates of delinquency, and found that a lack of parental monitoring may determine which youths become engaged in the delinquency process, and which youth become

recidivists. Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) found that youth recidivists were primarily from families in which the monitoring process was disrupted.

This information became linked to after school programming in the 1990's, when several reports revealed that a majority of juvenile crime, particularly violent crimes, peaked between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. (Gottfredson et al., 2001; Snyder, Sickmund, & Poe-Yamagata, 1996). Snyder et al. (1996) found that more than 22% of youth crime happens between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days, and 20% of violent crimes (i.e., sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault) among juveniles occur during after-school hours. Furthermore, the frequency of violent crime was much greater in the after-school period than during evening hours (Flannery et al., 1999; Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), and youth crime and delinquency was most prevalent from the end of the school day until early evening (Snyder et al, 1996). A report by Newman et al. (2000) found that between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., juvenile violent crime not only tripled, but kids were also more likely to become victims of violent crimes themselves. More recently, Snyder and Sickmund (2006) found that juvenile violent crime peaked at 3 p.m. on school days, and violent crimes involving juvenile victims peaked between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. on school days.

Given the impact juvenile crime data had on the growth and funding of after school programming, extensive research has focused on evaluating the impact of after school participation on reducing crime and delinquency (Catalano, Loeber, McKinney, & United States, 1999; Fashola, 1998; Gottfredson, Cross, & Soule, 2007; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soulé, Womer, & Lu, 2004; Heller, Pollack, Ander, & Ludwig, 2013; O'Donnell, Michalak, & Ames, 1997). After school participation has been shown to

reduce both violent and non-violent crime arrests (Heller et al., 2013) and delinquent behavior (Gottfredson et al., 2004). Recently, some studies have even linked the efficacy of after school programs to subsequent decreases in chronic delinquency and adult offending (Katner, 2010).

However, similar studies have reported mixed evidence regarding delinquent behavior and recidivism among juveniles (Dynarski et al., 2004; Mahoney, Stattin, & Magnusson, 2001). One large-scale study found no significant differences between participants and non-participants in stealing, getting arrested, and victimization (Dynarski et al., 2004). Similarly, an evaluation of a leisure center in Sweden comprised primarily of at-risk adolescents found that participation was associated with increased incidence of criminality and persistent offending, with 22% of frequent participants reporting persistent criminal offending, compared to 17% for periodic participants, and 4% for nonparticipants (Mahoney et al., 2001).

Physical Activity

In 2004, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey estimated that 17% of children and adolescents (age 2-19) were overweight, with an additional 16.5% considered at risk of being overweight (Troost, Rosenkranz, & Dzewaltowski, 2008). According to the American Heart Association's Statistical Sourcebook (2011), approximately 1 in 3 children and adolescents (age 2-19) are already overweight or obese (p. 1). Overweight or obese children are more likely to become overweight adults (Troost et al., 2008; Whitaker, Wright, Pepe, Seidel, & Dietz, 1997), and show increased incidences of type 2 diabetes and asthma (American Heart Association, 2011).

Although schools were initially seen as ideal environments to promote physical activity, budget restraints and increased pressure to improve standardized test scores have led to considerable reductions in physical education classes and recess (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2006). Currently, only five states require physical education (PE) every year from kindergarten through 12th grade (Bornstein, 2011). Many schools have also significantly reduced the time allocated to recess, with one study by *The Elementary School Journal* reporting that up to a quarter of elementary schools don't schedule recess regularly for all grade levels (Pappas, 2011). In response, the after-school time period has been identified as an optimal time to promote physical activity amongst youth (Troost et al., 2008).

After school programs that include a physical activity component can be effective in improving physical activity levels, physical fitness, body composition, and blood lipid profiles of children and young adolescents (London & Gurantz, 2011; Beets, Beighle, Erwin, & Huberty, 2009). In particular, programs designed specifically to provide a physical component have been shown to improve measures of physical fitness and obesity (Troost et al., 2008; Story et al., 2003). In an analysis of multiple after school programs, although no effects on student fitness were gained from participating in non-fitness oriented enrichment after school programs, London and Gurantz (2013) found that programs run by community organizations can produce positive health outcomes. In response to the continued increase in youth obesity, the World Health Organization (Physical Activity Planning Guide), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Youth Physical Activity Guidelines Toolkit), and city governments (Food Fit Philly) have established fitness and active guidelines to help reverse the trend.

Despite the establishment of these global, national, and citywide standards for physical activity, children attending after school programs often fall short of benchmarks (Beets, Rooney, Tilley, Beighle, & Webster, 2010). Beets et al. (2010) found that on average, 12.9 minutes and 18.5 minutes was spent in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for girls and boys, respectively, compared to 73.7 minutes and 65.2 minutes for sedentary time. Furthermore, children meeting the policies daily ranged across programs, from 0.0% to 48.2% (Beets et al., 2010), which may explain why further studies have yielded contradictory results regarding the positive influence of after school participation on physical activity (London & Gurantz, 2013; Gutin, Yin, Johnson, & Barbeau, 2008).

Social and Behavioral Outcomes

As researchers and practitioners continued to adopt the positive developmental framework of youth development over the antiquated “deficit model” (Lerner & Benson, 2003; Lerner, Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002), academic and programmatic interest has grown in the potential of after school programs to build social capital and resources within youth. After school programs have been found to have an overall positive social, behavioral, and attitudinal impact on participating youth (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010). In particular, participating in quality after school programs have been found to lead to fewer internalizing and externalizing programs (Posner & Vandell, 1999) and positive social/behavioral outcomes for at-risk youth (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996). Urban, low-income and minority children participating in organized and structured after school activities have been shown to improve psychosocial functioning (Lerner, 1999) and social skills (Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010).

Conversely, many studies found after school participation to be unrelated (Apsler, 2009; Dynarski et al., 2004; Kane, 2004) or negatively related (Bissel, Dugan, Ford-Johnson, & Jones, 2002; James-Burdumy et al., 2007) to social/behavioral outcomes. These contradictory findings were also reported in a comprehensive meta-analysis by Roth, Malone, and Brooks-Gunn (2010), who found a weak and often generalized association between the amount of participation and developmental outcomes. Multiple large-scale reviews of the 21st CCLC programs (Dynarski et al., 2003, 2004; James-Burdumy et al., 2005) found little evidence supporting the development of social and interpersonal skills. Despite the increase in both funding and support, evaluations of after school programs have yielded contradictory results. In most cases, discrepancies have been attributed more to critical methodological issues than programmatic issues.

Methodological Issues

Despite tentatively concluding that after-school programs have positive impacts on participants, Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs (2002) stressed that more rigorous research designs were necessary to provide data that clearly documents program effects. Specifically, the limited use of rigorous research designs makes it difficult to truly assess the impact of after school programs and draw causal conclusions (Scott-Little et al., 2002). Inaccurate participation and attendance records, inconsistent research designs, selection bias, and presumed program homogeneity are the most common limitations noted by researchers and academics.

Participation

Many studies on the effectiveness of after school programs use dichotomous measures of youth participation to compare participants to non-participants (Roth et al.,

2010), which does not clarify the distinction between participation and attendance. As outlined by Weiss (2004), participation is the active involvement in an after school program, whereas attendance is generally an indication of the time youth spend in activities. Although it is more cost effective and logistically conducive to measure absolute attendance (participants vs. non-participants), more nuanced indicators are necessary to yield a complete understanding of how attendance influences outcomes (Weiss, 2004). For example, intensity (i.e., frequency of attendance during one program year), duration (i.e., years of attendance), total exposure (i.e., frequency of attendance over multiple years), breadth (i.e., involvement in different types of program activities), and engagement (i.e., effort and interest in program activities) have all been identified as accurate descriptors of attendance (Roth et al., 2010; Weiss, 2004).

Roth et al. (2010) identified substantial variability in participation intensity and duration in a number of evaluations of after school programs. Intensity of participation averaged 58 days per year in one program for elementary school students (Dynarski et al. 2003), 80 days per year in another (Lodestar Management Research, 2005), and 126 days per year in yet another (Chang-Rios, 2007). Similarly, Roth and colleagues (2010) found that participation rates ranged from 15% -53%, with a similar study of 11 evaluations by Durlak et al. (2010) reporting 15% - 26%. Kane (2004) also noted sporadic attendance in a review of four large-scale studies focused on after school programs. The typical participant attended one to two days in the average week, yet participants in the TASC program in New York City attended 3.9 days per week (p. 2). Nationally, the intensity of after school program participation has been shown to fluctuate with age, dropping considerably after fifth grade (Carver & Iruka, 2006; Roth et al., 2010) as older youth

develop independence and choice (Guavain & Perez, 2005). Likewise, elementary school students attend after school programs for more days per week than middle school students (Dynarski et al., 2003).

After school evaluations also typically consist of programs with varied participation duration and total exposure, as weekly and annual retention is a particularly ubiquitous issue in after school and out-of-school time programming (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Kane, 2004; Lauver & Little, 2005). A study by Leake and Gardner (2006) found that 75% of kindergartners continued to attend an after school program the following year, compared to only one-third of fifth graders. Similarly, in a study of eight programs by Weissman and Gottfredson (2001), 33% of the initially registered students dropped out of their respective programs, with attrition rates ranging from 11% to 53% amongst programs. In terms of total exposure, Goldschmidt, Huang and Chinen (2007) tracked participation over 5 years and reported an average total exposure of 194 days, while another study reported an average of 324 days of attendance over 3 or more years (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2004).

Finally, a study of breadth by the Texas Education Agency (2005) found that 26% of after school program participants attended fewer than one-quarter of available activities, while 34% attended more than three-quarters (p. 311). In addition, Lerner, Phelps, Lerner, and Theokas (2006) found that a majority of fifth graders are participating in three different types of programs, with almost 15% participating in four programs (p. 5). Since youth naturally select themselves into programs and participate in many activities simultaneously, it is difficult to determine which programs contributed to observed or measured effects (Lerner et al., 2006). As one would expect, multiple

theories have been developed to address the impact of participatory breadth on outcomes, with the three most prominent models classified as linear, threshold, and curvilinear (Chaput, 2004).

Linear relationships suggest that as participation breadth increases, youth outcomes will also increase proportionately (Baker & Witt, 1996; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). The second model posits that certain thresholds of participation breadth exist which will lead to improved outcomes only when they are exceeded (Chaput, 2004). For example, Baker and Witt (1996) suggest that such thresholds exist when youth participate in three to four activities, and again at five or more activities. Finally, studies on breadth during adolescence have revealed curvilinear relationships with positive outcomes (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). According to this model, high breadth leads to better outcomes than no/low breadth, but moderate amounts of breadth are associated with the best outcomes (Chaput, 2004).

These fluctuations are significant given the perceived impact continued participation has on positive developmental outcomes. For example, youth who attended 4-H for at least 1 year were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior, such as using drugs, damaging property, or smoking cigarettes, than youth who attended for shorter periods (Chaput, Little, & Weiss, 2004). Additionally, the number of activities in which youth participated during their high school years was positively associated with positive indicators including satisfaction with life (Gilman & Huebner, 2003), and numerous academic outcomes (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003).

Research Design

Due to the voluntary nature of after school program participation, it is extremely difficult to employ randomized experimental designs (Riggs & Greenberg, 2002). Ideally, experimental designs would be used to accurately assess the outcomes of after school programs, yet very few studies have been able to apply this method due in part to a perceived moral dilemma (Gottfredson et al., 2007; Kane, 2004). For example, in order to create a control group, certain youth would need to be excluded from participating in after school programs that provide opportunities for positive development. This creates an ethical issue that compromises the scientific rigor of many studies. Without a control group, it is difficult to determine whether positive outcomes are due to the program itself or the typical and expected development of children (Little & Harris, 2002).

In addition, quasi-experimental designs are rarely realistic given the context and setting of after school programming (Little & Harris, 2002). Despite the best efforts of practitioners and academics, many evaluations suffer from an inability to test for baseline equivalence and a lack of randomization. Similarly, even in ideal circumstances it is difficult to control for inherent differences amongst self-selected treatment and comparison groups (Riggs & Greenberg, 2002). Reporting that children in the treatment group displayed stronger outcomes than comparison group children does not take into account the pre-existing initial differences between both groups, which may in fact be responsible for later differences between the two groups (Bissell et al., 2003; Riggs & Greenberg, 2002).

Even if favorable program settings allow for quasi-experimental designs with control groups, selection bias is still a threat to the results of most studies. Even before participating in an after school program, a select group of students must first choose to enroll, either through their own personal motivations or the influence of their parents, family, or friends (Apsler, 2009). Most quasi-experimental studies then compare the performance of this self-selected subgroup of participants with that of other students who chose not to enroll in an after-school program (Roth et al., 2010). As Apsler (2009) points out, when investigators report superior performance by after-school participants, they oftentimes fail to consider that the observed differences may be due to the inherent characteristics of students who select themselves (through individual or supportive motivations) into the two groups (participants vs. non-participants), and may have had little to do with the program (p. 6). For example, according to Gottfredson and colleagues (2007), children motivated to join after school programs, or whose parents encourage participation, are “already on track to pro-social development.” (p. 290). Consequently, these fundamental differences may lead to higher scores on a host of performance measures (academic and social), making it difficult for researchers to posit that encouraging results were *actually* the result of program participation (Apsler, 2009).

Additionally, Weissman and Gottfredson (2001) found evidence that participants who dropped out of programs scored more at-risk in 11 out of the 12 indicators examined in their study. Dropouts had significantly more peer drug models and came from neighborhoods characterized by higher levels of social disorganization (Weissman & Gottfredson, 2001). Low attendance figures and attrition are common for after-school programs (Apsler, 2009; Grossman et al., 2002; Kane, 2004; Walker & Arbreton, 2004),

yet are not always accounted for in evaluative research design. Oftentimes longitudinal and cross-sectional program evaluations only report developmental measures for youth who frequently or continually participate in the program. This not only leads to an overestimation or underestimation of the intended outcomes, but also fails to capture a truly representative sample of the program population. Apsler (2009) described this process as a double-dose of selection bias evident in many evaluations of after school programs (p. 6).

Assumed Program Homogeneity

Although program effectiveness varies greatly across organizations (Durlak & DuPre, 2007; Lauer et al., 2006; Redd, Cochran, Hair, & Moore, 2002), program structure and quality is not always accounted for in the research design. Complexities related to the management's goals and objectives, political and social environments, and the availability of resources drastically influence the utility of programs (Trevisan & Huang, 2003). According to Durlak et al. (2010), after school programs "vary considerably in location, size, staffing, funding, hours of operation, activities and structure, and, most important, in their general mission and specific goals" (p. 285). In their meta-analyses, Scott-Little and colleagues (2003) found that participation in programs ranged from 7 to 76,000 participants, operating hours ranged from 6 to 20 hours per week, and activities offered ranged from 1 to 6. It is important to ensure the distinct needs of all stakeholders, including those participating in the programs, are accounted for in both the research design and methodology. Although evaluations may provide an abundance of information and data, if these needs are not explicitly targeted the outputs will prove impracticable and ineffective (Trevisan & Huang, 2003).

Furthermore, generalizing research findings from programs with varying levels of quality increases the likelihood of both Type I and Type II experimental errors.

In 2003, the Forum for Youth Investment reviewed 13 statements of standards for youth program quality (The Kellogg Foundation, The W. T. Grant Foundation, and The Forum for Youth Investment, 2003), and despite the different program groups (i.e., camps, after school programs), the core frameworks were similar (Durlak et al., 2007). In March 2007, the Forum revisited these standards and released a review of nine instruments designed to measure youth program quality (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). These have been significant steps in the field of after school programming, and reflect an ongoing commitment to establish uniform standards for practitioners. These developments must be tracked by researchers and integrated into evaluative frameworks, as the very definitions of program quality continue to change.

Introduction of Evaluability Assessment

Frequently, the source of these methodological issues actually occurs before the research process even starts. Programs are often *assumed* to be “evaluable”, which presumes: (a) extensive measurable objectives exist; (b) key stakeholders share the measurable objectives; (c) there is reasonable program structure and sufficient resources to obtain the objectives; and (d) program managers will use findings from evaluations of the program (Trevison, 2007). Given the variable quality, structure, and organization of both public and private after school programs, one can see how these assumptions are illogical and scientifically flawed. Many outcomes are often assumed to be a result of program interventions, yet a host of underlying structural and functional issues can significantly influence the measures. Thus, even if the procedures and evaluative design

are sound, data collected from an “unevaluable” program may lead to inaccurate causal links between participation and apparent outcomes. In order to ensure the integrity of causal links, one must be certain programs are properly implemented and reaching the populations they purportedly target before proceeding to evaluation. Pre-evaluation, or evaluability assessment (EA), provides a framework for achieving this objective, and can safeguard against the methodological issues outlined previously (Thurston, Graham, & Hatfield, 2003; Trevisan, 2007; Trevisan & Huang, 2003; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2004).

EA was first developed by Wholey (1979) in response to policymakers who perceived research projects as laborious and expensive initiatives that ultimately provided very little timely or useful information. This process improved summative and impact evaluative research by synthesizing important documents with input from stakeholders regarding the content and objectives of a program (Trevisan, 2007; Smith, 2005).

Emphasis is placed on *involving* stakeholders in the design, and the results of EA provide clear objectives, performance indicators, and options for improvement (Wholey, 2012). More importantly, EA serves as an initial step in the evaluative process, laying the foundation for future research to provide timely, relevant, and responsive findings that are useful to practitioners (Trevisan & Huang, 2003). This is particularly important, as EA could further bridge the gap between research and practice by providing results that are relevant (Trevisan, 2007), understandable and useful for after school practitioners (Wholey et al., 2004).

The underlying philosophy of EA is based on the rational model of organizational decision making (Smith, 1990). Originally developed from Vroom and Yetton’s (1973)

normative decision making process, the rational model was operationalized most recently by Schoenfeld (2011), who presented a six step model. This model assumes that decision makers are clearly identified and programs will remain static (Smith, 1990), however the assumptions underlying the rational model do not always hold – especially in after school settings – due to; (a) intentionally ambiguous goals; (b) means that are indistinguishable from goals; (c) diffused decision making; and (d) program sites operating under different assumptions (Smith, 1990; Scheerens, 1987). This lack of clarity leads to programs that are unable to meet the criteria for evaluation (Smith, 1990), which introduces EA as a process that ensures organizations are tightly coupled and highly structured (Holloway, 1981) before proceeding to and thus ready for evaluation.

A framework that has informed the use of EA was developed by Thurston (1991), and includes seven elements: (1) bounding the program by identifying goals, objectives, and activities that make up the program; (2) reviewing documents; (3) modeling resource inputs, intended program activities, intended impacts, and assumed causal links; (4) scouting the program or getting a firsthand look at how it operates; (5) developing an evaluable program model; (6) identifying evaluation users and other key stakeholders; and (7) achieving agreement to proceed to an evaluation (p. 208-209) (Thurston et al., 2003).

Similar methods have been suggested to help youth and childcare practitioners develop and organize internal assessments. Poulin and Orchowsky (2012) utilized EA prior to their evaluation of the Utah 4-H Mentoring/Youth and Families with Promise (YFP) program, and Wethington, Hall, Dawkins, Leviton, and Khan (2009, 2012) employed EA prior to assessing afterschool childcare and childhood obesity prevention

programs. Similarly, Coffman (1999) highlighted the utility of logic models in organizational evaluations, while Harris (2011) outlined a useful *After school Evaluation 101 Handbook* intended to help program directors who have little or no evaluation experience develop an evaluation strategy (p. 1). However, comprehensive EA has been used sparingly, if at all, as a *collaborative* technique by academics and practitioners in the field of after school research. This study will introduce a specified criteria informed by quality after school organizational frameworks, and illustrate that when implemented as a *joint initiative* by researchers and practitioners, EA improves short-term functionality, establishes the foundation for incisive and actionable long-term research, and helps mitigate methodological issues in the field of after school programming. Ancillary benefits of this EA include: (1) diagnosing goal confusion among stakeholders, (2) preventing staff from working at cross purposes, (3) recognizing the feasibility of goals and objectives, (4) determining which objectives are most attainable, (5) identifying priorities, (6) diagnosing strengths and weaknesses, (7) improving performance, (8) and facilitating the development of a 'learning organization' (Van Voorhis & Brown, 1996). By determining if a program is evaluable, and suggesting improvements to programs that are 'unevaluable', EA also maximizes the use of scarce evaluation resources (i.e. materials, travel costs, transcription costs, personnel fees)(Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 1994), and reduces costs (Dunn, 2007). More importantly, EA identifies functional and precise topics for *future* research initiatives for programs.

Development of After School EA Criteria

Although the general structure of EA remains relatively consistent, the method is typically adjusted slightly depending on the specific field of the organization being

reviewed. For example, in the field of public health Leviton, Khan, Rog, Dawkins, and Cotton (2010) incorporated EA into the systematic screening and assessment (SSA) method (p. 216). According to Leviton and colleagues (2010), the SSA method identifies the most promising innovations (i.e. programs, practices, or policies) intended to solve public health problems, and subjects them to evaluability assessment. Levitan et al. (2010) specified that EA can assist the core functions of public health by testing the assumptions of common objectives prevalent in most programs. (p. 226)

Similarly, Kaufman-Levy and Poulin (2003) noted the utility of EA in the field of juvenile justice (p. 7). Kaufman-Levy and Poulin (2003) provide a hypothetical scenario that is common in the field of juvenile justice, which explains how the method has been adapted to fit their industry:

Consider a new restorative justice program for property offenders. One of the program's objectives is to ensure that these juveniles provide restitution to the victim. The program has been running for about a year, and has been serving many youth. However, when looking at the program's data on the youths being served, it became apparent that the judge had been sending drug offenders to the program, not property offenders. Even though the program has spent the last year serving youth, it has not been functioning as intended. (p. 8).

Matthews, Hubbard, and Latessa (2001) also applied EA in the field of juvenile justice and correctional programming, naming specific characteristics of successful programs as "the principles of effective intervention" (p. 455). Matthews et al. (2001) adapted EA frameworks such as the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) to establish a program template that guided their assessment of correctional programs (p. 457).

In order to maximize the full value of EA in the field of after school programming, the criteria must be informed by both conventional EA guidelines and

empirically supported quality youth program parameters. Palmer, Anderson, and Sabatelli's (2009) extensive meta-analysis of quality after school programs provides an illuminating outline to achieve this objective. Palmer and colleagues (2009) uncovered a wide variety of perspectives related to the definition of program quality, with some perceptions based on outcome research and others from process measures. For example, Palmer et al. (2009) highlighted a meta-analysis by Metz, Goldsmith, and Arbreton (2008) which suggested that focused, intentional programming is essential in achieving positive outcomes. Similarly, Palmer et al. (2009) cited research from the Forum for Youth Investment who proposed that high-quality programs are comprised of four hierarchically related domains (safe environment, supportive environment, social interaction, and engagement) which collectively promote positive youth outcomes (p. 6). In addition, Palmer et al. (2009) synthesized definitions of program quality that emerged "from the field". For example, Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, and Shinn (2009) identified six dimensions of quality programs based on observational measures, which overlapped "substantially" with domains identified in previous research by the Harvard Family Research Project (2006).

Palmer et al. (2009) condensed the existing literature into six domains of program functioning considered "essential to program quality"; (1) supportive relationships, (2) intentional programming, (3) strong community partnerships, (4) promotion of youth engagement, (5) physical safety, and (6) continuous quality improvement.

Unsurprisingly, these domains are rooted in the crucial functional and structural components of programs which are assessed through EA. For example, supportive relationships are achieved by providing well-trained staff and ensuring appropriate

staff/child ratios (Palmer et al., 2009), while focused and intentional programming relies on clearly communicated program logic that permeates the entire organization. Palmer et al. (2009) also specifically highlight the importance of program management in supporting sustainable program improvements.

Assessment tools developed by both research and practitioners have focused on these dimensions as well. In a synthesis of youth program assessment tools, Yohalem et al. (2009) discovered “reasonable consensus across instruments about the core features of settings that matter for development.” (p. 12). While all tools measure certain constructs related to positive outcomes (i.e. engagement and skill-building), most instruments focus on features of the program setting such as management, staffing, and youth leadership (Yohalem et al., 2009). For example, the Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA) developed by the Center for Youth Program Quality (CYPQ) focuses on quality at the point of service, a professional learning community, and the system accountability environment. According to this quality system structure, factors outside the point of service can have a great impact on quality, and when all three levels are not aligned, “non-productive accountability behaviors are incentivized.” (p. 3).

After considering the empirically supported components of quality programs, the usefulness of EA in the after school setting is certainly recognized. As cited by Trevisan and Huang (2003), Joseph Wholey (1979), the creator of EA, indicated that:

Evaluability Assessment explores the objectives, expectations, and information needs of program managers and policy makers; explores program reality; assesses the likelihood that program activities will achieve measurable progress toward program objectives; and assesses the extent to which evaluation information is likely to be used by program management. The products of evaluability assessment are: (1) a set of agreed-on program objectives, side effects, and performance indicators on which the program can realistically be held accountable; and (2) a set of

evaluation/management options which represent ways in which management can change program activities, objectives, or uses of information in ways likely to improve program performance (xiii).

The general outline of EA adopted for this study was developed by Thurston (1991), and informed by the previous work of Wholey (1979), Rutman (1977), and Rossi and Freeman (1999). As stated previously, the framework includes elements which collectively assess the structural integrity of the program, and clarify the overall logic. In order to enhance this framework, components were added to ensure empirically supported organizational elements of youth program quality were present. Only elements related to the design, management, and logic of quality after school programs were included, as EA is intended to examine the evaluability of a program, and should not be confused as a full-scale assessment. The combination of traditional EA guidelines and quality after school program management principles formed a comprehensive criteria for evaluation that is tailored to the field of after school and youth programming. When utilized as a pre-assessment tool, this criteria will not only generate the products of EA outlined previously by Wholey (1979), but also maximize the impact of future evaluations and provide rapid, constructive feedback to program staff (Leviton et al., 2010).

In order to demonstrate the benefits of this EA criteria, the model was adapted as a pre-assessment tool with the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Afterschool Program. According to Wholey et al. (2004), a large, decentralized program in which policymaking and management responsibilities are dispersed is the perfect candidate for EA. Thus, the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation after school program was identified as an ideal partner for this study.

METHODOLOGY

Using Thurston's (1991) framework, this EA aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is Philadelphia Parks and Recreation's After school Program 'evaluable'?
2. What future research will yield useful results?

In order to answer these questions, a mixed-method of archival, secondary source evaluation, semi-structured interviews, and survey collection and analysis was employed to evaluate the PPR after school program.

Review of Documents

The first element of this research is to establish program intent through identifying the stated goals, objectives, activities, and performance indicators of the Philadelphia Park and Recreation Department's After School Program. Relevant documentation was gathered through public sources (website, online articles, etc.) and provided by program staff to identify the goals and objectives of the after school program. See Appendix A for a list of reviewed documentation.

This information was synthesized and used to inform the development of a logic model of the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation after school program (Appendix C), which traced the flow and reasoning that links program goals, to activities, to both expected and unexpected outcomes. The model started with an analysis of the resources available to the program (i.e. funding, staff, and equipment) which influence the practitioners ability to successfully implement initiatives. Next, the activities provided by after school programs were analyzed to understand the expectations and causal assumptions inherent in the program theory, along with performance indicators. This

logic model illustrated the flow of resources available to the department into the after school program components, and visually linked program activities to goals. Archival and secondary source data also established several a priori nodes (trends) regarding the goals and objectives of the program that guided the coding of interview transcriptions.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with program coordinators and six district managers. Although program coordinators and district managers regularly visit sites in their district, they are predominantly removed from the service-level operations of the after school program. Thus, the questions adapted for these interviews focused principally on managerial and structural issues, such as the overarching goals, objectives, and intended outputs, current performance measures, and perceived areas for improvement. Questions were adapted from the Wholey et al. (1994) Guide for Interviews with Key Policymakers, Managers, and Interest Group Representatives (p. 19), and included:

1. From your perspective, what is the program trying to accomplish and what resources does it have?
2. What results have been produced to date?
3. What accomplishments are likely in the next year or two?
4. Why would the program produce those results?
5. What are the program's main problems?
6. How long will it take to solve those problems?
7. What kinds of information do you get on the program's performance and results?
What kinds of information do you need?

8. How do you (how would you) use this information?
9. What kinds of information are requested by the Office of Management and Budget and the Legislature?

All semi structured interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and a constant comparison technique was employed with the assistance of qualitative analysis software (Nvivo 9).

The primary objective of the interviews with program coordinators was to confirm and clarify the predominant philosophies that had been ascertained from the archival review. The data from these interviews was corroborated with information gathered from synthesized documentation, and provided updated material regarding program structure and design. A matrix was then developed which incorporated a priori assumptions established from the archival review/synthesis process and interviews with both after school coordinators. This matrix was utilized during the analysis of interviews with district managers to determine the internal consistency of predominant program philosophies and concepts (See Table 1).

District managers were subject to the same line of questioning as program coordinators (Wholey et al., 1994), with particular emphasis on their conceptual view of the organization, and how it is operationalized within their specific region. According to the After School Program Manual, District Managers responsibilities include but are not limited to:

Insuring the presence of After School Programs at facilities in their district, communicating with Facility Supervisors and the After School Program Coordinator concerning the After School program, lending encouragement and support in all areas of the program, addressing any

problems that may arise, and forwarding all necessary paperwork to its proper destination (After School Program Manual, p. 8).

Accordingly, the purpose of these interviews was to ensure that the principal logic and values of the organization flowed from the hierarchy of management to program sites. Although not involved in the daily operations of the after school program, district managers provided information on the flow of resources and communication to each specific after school site in their region, and clarified their unique perceptions of after school program.

Surveys

Surveys consisted of 20 items, and were distributed to a convenience sample of RSI's and GSI's (n=13, 14% of total sites) during a scheduled staff training session. The purpose of this assessment was to further examine the variability in site size, staff, and flow of resources within the program. Questions were focused on the availability of resources, staff characteristics (i.e. experience, education, demographics), and site characteristics (i.e. attendance, program fees). Data gathered through the secondary source review and semi-structured interviews were used to inform the development of these questions, and a copy of the survey instrument is available in Appendix E. The survey data was entered into IBM SPSS Statistics 21, and frequency/descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the responses.

After School EA Criteria

In order to answer the first and most critical question, a specified After School EA Criteria was developed and modeled after the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Evaluability Assessment Template, which outlines a thorough and comprehensible structure. Based on a review of both general EA principles and empirically supported

youth program guidelines, this criteria consisted of four sections; (1) Management, (2) Implementation, (3) Resources, and (4) Evaluation. Collectively, these sections will not only ensure a program is ready for evaluation, but indicate what information will be relevant and useful for stakeholders. Figure 1 displays a copy of this instrument, and descriptions of each section are included on the following pages.

EA Criteria		
Management	Yes	No
Does the program have a clearly stated purpose?		
Does the program have specific and realistic goals and objectives?		
Are the goals and objectives communicated to personnel and staff?		
Are performance measures in place to determine if the program was successful?		
Is the program flexible and responsive to external factors?		
Percentage	%	%
If Yes \geq 80%: Proceed to Implementation checklist		
If Yes < 80%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Implementation	Yes	No
Is the program serving its intended population?		
Do the activities reinforce the stated goals and objectives of the program?		
Are the activities and programming planned, intentional, and focused on meeting needs?		
Do the youth have choice in the activities?		
Percentage	%	%
If Yes = 100%: Proceed to Resources checklist		
If Yes = 100%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Resources	Yes	No
Are staff properly trained and qualified to support participant needs?		
Are adequate supplies available to provide high-quality activities?		
Is a safe environment provided for participants to enjoy activities?		
Does the program have strong partnerships with schools and the local community?		
Percentage	%	%
If Yes = 100%: Proceed to Evaluation checklist		
If Yes = 100%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Evaluation	Yes	No
Does the timing of the evaluation fit into the program cycle?		
Can external factors (political, climatic, security etc.) hamper the evaluation?		
Will frontline staff and stakeholders in the field be available for evaluation?		
Will management and administrative staff be available for evaluation?		
Is an adequate evaluation budget available?		
Will results be used constructively to inform decisions?		
Percentage	%	%
If Yes \geq 80%: Proceed to Evaluation		
If Yes < 80%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Figure 1. EA Criteria. This figure contains the ‘evaluability’ criteria for youth after school programs.		

Management

Management and organizational structure are critical components of the EA guidelines proposed by Van Voorhis and Brown (1996) and Wholey et al. (1994). First, the overall program purpose must be identified, along with the supportive goals and objectives. The practicality of these outcomes, given available resources, is then evaluated along with the inherent causal assumptions and expectations of management. This section also addresses the internal consistency of program logic throughout the organization, and determines what/if performance indicators are being used to evaluate “success”. In order to evaluate these concepts, a logic model should be developed to graphically organize the information.

According to Knowlton and Phillips (2012), logic models display the thinking that connects design, plans, execution, and intended outcomes (p. 3). The technique has been utilized extensively to review and audit organizational management in the fields of public health (Baxter, Killoran, Kelly, & Goyder, 2010; Slater, 2006), social work (Alter & Egan, 1998; Rubin & Babbie, 1989), juvenile delinquency (Krebs, Lattimore, Cowell, & Graham, 2010; Hiller et al., 2010), and youth development (Catalano, Gavin, & Markham, 2010; Maslow et al., 2012). When used effectively, Knowlton and Phillips (2012) suggest that logic models can: (1) develop common language among stakeholders, (2) offer highly participatory learning opportunities, (3) document and emphasize explicit outcomes, (4) clarify knowledge about what works and why, (5) identify important variables to measure, (6) enable more effective use of evaluation resources, (7) provide credible reporting frameworks, and (8) lead to improved design, planning, and management (p. 3).

Logic models are also utilized as a key step in the EA process (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001; Thurston & Potvin, 2003; Wholey et al., 2004), as they allow researchers to determine if the program described in the model matches the program in its implementation (Cooksy et al., 2001). Funnell and Rogers (2011) assert that a logic model has three essential features: (1) it is a coherent causal model (a comprehensible explanation of the causal processes that are understood to lead to the outcomes), (2) it is logical (subsequent outcomes are plausibly consequential), and (3) it communicates clearly. Using these features as an outline, the logic model for this study not only clarified the overall purpose, goals, and objectives of the PPR after school program, but also guided interviews with district managers to determine if the logic was consistent throughout the organization. The clarification of program intent provided a framework to assess the efficacy of existing performance measures, and suggested indicators in critical areas where measures were currently absent.

Implementation

The stated goals and objectives of a program are ineffectual unless supported by the activities being provided at the service level. As Hirsch, Mekinda, and Stawicki (2010) stated, “no matter how expertly designed a program is, it is only as good as the implementation.” (p. 450). Durlak and DuPre (2008) specifically emphasized the impact of this concept on evaluation by asserting, “without data on implementation, research cannot document precisely what program was conducted, or how outcome data should be interpreted.” (p. 340). Thus, ensuring that activities reinforce the goals and objectives of the program is explicitly addressed in this section.

Similarly, ensuring the program is serving the intended population is a particularly important element of EA. For example, Kaufman-Levy and Poulin (2003) explained how EA diagnosed such a problem in the field of juvenile justice:

Consider a new restorative justice program for property offenders. One of the program's objectives is to ensure that these juveniles provide restitution to the victim. The program has been running for about a year, and has been serving many youth. However, when looking at the program's data on the youths being served, it became apparent that the judge had been sending drug offenders to the program, not property offenders. Even though the program has spent the last year serving youth, it has not been functioning as intended.
(p. 8).

This applies to the field of after school programming as well, since some programs specifically recruit children based on need (i.e. "at-risk" youth), while others serve more generalized populations.

Many after school program quality principles are intended to improve the implementation of activities, which is logical considering these interactions are the main channel through which youth experience the service. Accordingly, this particular section was enhanced with several empirically supported characteristics of quality after school programming. Once again, since this EA focused on the logic and management behind the implementation of activities rather than the quality of the interactions, only organizational elements supporting effective implementation were included.

Providing structured and intentional activities was a recurring element of quality programming highlighted in numerous independent program evaluations and meta-analyses. In their meta-analysis of quality after school programs, Palmer and colleagues (2009) highlighted the importance of after school programs offering focused and intentional activities. According to Palmer et al. (2009), these activities can be "chosen

to meet particular goals, target skill development, build on previous gains, meet specific needs, maximize youth engagement, or provide variety to participants.” (p. 9). Similarly, Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) noted that without the structure and supervision of focused and intentional programming, participants can fall short of intended outcomes or begin to perform worse than their peers. Little and colleagues (2008) determined that “programs work better in promoting positive outcomes when they are explicitly focused and targeted to specific outcomes, which requires a clear vision and goals for the program from the start.” (p. 12). Research by Sullivan (2012), which examined parent’s and teacher’s evaluations of after school programs, suggests this emphasis on structure is shared by parents as well. Sullivan (2012) noted that parents appreciate structured and intentional activities, with multiple parents specifically quoting structure as a key ingredient of quality programs.

In addition, most youth program quality assessments emphasized youth autonomy in policies and practices, a concept which has been addressed by extensive research in relation to its impact on participant engagement. For example, one of the YPQA Organization Items is *Youth Centered Policies and Practices*, which ensures “young people have structured opportunities to influence the format or content of program offerings based on their interests, preferences, and/or satisfaction.” Similarly, Larson and Angus (2011) noted that “a significant feature of many programs is that they encourage youth to experience personal ownership over and engagement in their projects.” (p. 278). This leads to higher average levels of attention, investment, and intrinsic motivation in youth programs compared to other daily activities (Larson, 2000; Vandell, Reisner, Pierce, Brown, Lee, & Bolt, 2006). Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazeovski, and Akiva (2010)

also specifically highlighted opportunities for purposeful engagement when defining quality at the point of service. According to Smith et al. (2010), “environments with high levels of choice, planning, and reflection prioritize deep thinking and promote a shared construction of processes and purposes.” (p. 359). These environments facilitate the use of self-reflection to plan, set goals, and make choices (Smith et al., 2010). Pierce and colleagues (2010) highlighted research by Beckett, Hawken, and Jackowitz (2001) which suggested “flexible programming that allows for student choice and autonomy in the selection of activities” was one of three practices that comprise high-quality programming (p. 382). Pierce et al. (2010) specifically suggested future research focus on autonomy within activities, which has been reported to be as important as choice of activities.

Resources

According to Wholey et al. (2004), evaluation is unlikely to lead to improved program performance when the program goals are unrealistic given the insufficient resources committed to the program (p. 33-34). In fact, Wholey et al. (2004) include the documentation of resources as an integral part of their suggested EA process. In Wholey and colleagues (2004) *Guide for Review of Documents and Interviews with Operating-Level Managers and Staff*, one of the goals is to determine “What resources are available to the project? Number of staff? Total budget? Sources of funds?” (p. 40). Identifying resource availability and inputs has been an integral element of EA models in various disciplines. For example, Thurston et al. (2003) developed a guide which included “modeling resource inputs” (p. 209), while Strosberg and Wholey (1983) specifically highlighted the importance understanding resources when determining program

plausibility, a term emphasized by numerous authors in discussion of EA. Strosberg and Wholey (1983) also noted that understanding resources can help determine if goals and objectives are realistic, and indicated that evaluators have “the responsibility to report any major resource deficiencies that may encumber the achievement of objectives.” (p. 68).

Identifying the availability of resources is a key component of understanding after school program quality as well. Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) contend that in order to understand outcomes, researchers need to understand how resources are linked to program processes and structure. Yohalem and Wilson Ahlstrom (2010) took this concept a step further in their meta-analysis of recent after school research, suggesting that the “presence of certain program resources may directly influence developmental outcomes.” (p. 351). More recently, research is finding that the arrangement and utilization of resources is just as important as their availability (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). In fact, many evaluations are initiated by public and private funders who want to ensure that their investments are being allocated efficiently. As ongoing research continues to draw links between resources and positive outcomes, assessment tools have begun to incorporate more resource-based items to assess quality programs. For example, Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010) noted that 35 of 44 items on the School Age Care Environment Rating System (1996) relate to the availability or utilization of resources, while the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) has 16 items related to resources (p. 353). Many of these resource-based assessment items deal with staffing issues, which substantiate a critical portion of the EA Criteria adapted for this study.

Youth-staff relationships have been consistently linked to both positive outcomes and youth engagement (Palmer et al., 2009), and ensuring staff are well-prepared is often cited as a key component of program quality (Little et al., 2008; Pittman, Smith, & Finn, 2008). For example, Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010) highlighted research by Vandell and colleagues that suggested staff ratios, staff education levels, and staff training are associated with positive outcomes (Vandell et al., 2004). In order to field a well-prepared staff, resources are needed to provide professional development opportunities, training, and adequate compensation for employees. Unfortunately, assembling sufficient resources to accomplish this task is often extremely challenging for practitioners, who are typically constrained by limited resources (Asher, 2012; Palmer et al., 2009). Despite the economic, political, or environmental factors that inhibit resource availability, ensuring staff are qualified and appropriately trained is essential to this EA. Rather than attempting to establish fixed parameters for quality staff standards (i.e. staff training, education levels, previous experience), this criteria is gauged by more subjective guidelines informed by previous literature. For example, Huang (2006) included staffing and professional development principles in her characteristics of promising programs, which provides a valuable context from which to evaluate staff resources. According to Huang (2006), promising programs generally have the following features:

Staffing

- Site coordinators and staff tended to be experienced. Site coordinators had worked in the after school field for a mean of 4.6 years and at their current sites for 4.3 years. Staff members had worked in the field for an average of 3.6 years and at their current sites for 3.5 years.
- Staff tended to be more educated, with the majority of staff members holding bachelors or master's degrees. (p. 18)

Professional Development

- Both site coordinators and program staff agreed on their need for professional development.
 - Similar opportunities for professional development were offered to the site coordinators and staff members (at an average of about 3.5 times a year), but site coordinators participated slightly more often than staff members (about 2.5 times a year).
 - The community-oriented programs tended to draw their staff from the community and to have a more comprehensive program focus. Professional development tended to be in-house.
 - Some of the larger scale programs funded by both private and public sources had a mixed-composition staff and more resources to conduct professional development and recruitment of content-specific specialists to serve as trainers and curriculum developers.
- (p. 18).

Providing a safe environment was not only a clear emphasis of PPR management, but has also garnered considerable attention from researchers and academics. Both physical safety and perceived safety have been cited as critical elements of quality youth programs. In fact, Palmer et al. (2010) included providing a healthy and physically safe environment as one of their six core domains of program quality. According to Palmer et al. (2010), research and practice consistently associates adequate spaces, supervision, and physical safety with quality, and refers to physical and psychological safety as a “foundational aspect of quality.” (p. 9). Likewise, the 2002 National Research Council identified physical and psychological safety as one of their eight specific features of programs supporting youth development. Research has also linked safety with specific outcomes and participatory patterns. For example, Miller (200) suggested quality programs that provide safe environments can help promote academic achievement. Similarly, Smith and Hohmann (2005) found that levels of engagement and interactional quality were significantly related to youth’s self-reported feelings of safety, among other variables. Thus, a managerial and organizational focus on providing a safe and clean

environment at each after school site was considered an important element of the EA criteria.

Finally, partnerships with public and private organizations have recently been emphasized as critical elements of quality after school programs. For example, in their study of high quality after school programs, Vandell, Reisner, and Pierce (2007) noticed quality youth programs had strong partnerships with neighborhoods, schools, and other community organizations. According to Vandell et al. (2007), “these partnerships were instrumental in ensuring that the after school organizations were well established in their communities and were likely to continue operation over the two-year study period.” (p. 3). Strong partnerships with families, schools, and other community organizations were also listed in the quality domains outlined by Palmer et al. (2010). These authors noticed, “partnerships with families can facilitate youth engagement, partnerships with schools can help synchronize service, and partnerships with other organizations can help share valuable resources and reinforce skills learned in different settings.” (p. 9).

Evaluation

This portion of the criteria simply ensures program managers will use subsequent evaluation results. According to Wholey (1987), one of the primary purposes of EA is to clarify intended uses of evaluative information. The importance of this particular aspect has been recognized by several other prominent EA contributors as well. For example, Van Voorhis & Brown (1996) suggested that EA helps facilitate the development of a “learning organization”, while Thurston and colleagues (2003) indicated that identifying evaluation users and achieving agreement to proceed to an evaluation are the two final steps of EA. Similarly, Trevison (2007) stated that one of the fatal assumptions of

evaluative research is that program managers will actually use the findings from an evaluation. This is a particularly important issue in the fields of after school and youth programming, as the divergence between research and practice has proven difficult to close.

In 1993, Jordan and Roland suggested that recreation professionals found it difficult to apply research findings published in peer-reviewed journals to their practical settings. More than twenty years later, Ohrberg (2013) highlighted the same problem after noticing a significant gap between the research community and practitioners in sports and recreation management. In his content analysis 15 sports and recreation management journals in 2012, Ohrberg (2013) found that only one-third of articles included content that was applicable to the profession, while “the articles that were not relevant – approximately two-thirds of the articles read – included an extreme range of topics that were either too specific or grandiose” (p. 397). In his critique, Ohrberg (2013) refers to a trend of theoretical and societal research topics that although important, were “simply not practically pertinent” (p. 397). While these topics draw interest and foster discussion amongst academics, the practical application was “completely lacking” (p. 397).

Nowicki and Arnold (2007) observed a similar gap in relation to human resource management within the broader discipline of leisure services. Although researchers recognize the importance of conducting research that matters to practitioners, Nowicki and Arnold (2007) noted a persistent “schism that exists between the needs of practitioners and research interests of academics” (p. 78). This conundrum is not unique to the youth leisure and recreation industries, as comparable disciplines such as social

work (Rubin, 2013) and juvenile justice (Willison, Mears, Shollenberger, Owens, & Butts, 2010) have battled similar issues.

Not coincidentally, EA has been successfully utilized in both these fields to help enhance the impact and usefulness of evaluative research. In fact, EA was developed in part to address this very issue, as policy makers in the 1970's were concerned with both the lack of useful information they were receiving from evaluations, and the futility of evaluating poorly conceived programs (Trevisan, 2007). When Wholey (1979) first developed the EA framework, he was particularly focused on meeting the information needs of program managers and policy makers, and stakeholder involvement was encouraged. As such, this section ensures that any information gathered from subsequent evaluations is useful for practitioners, and understood by management. The practicality and logistics of evaluation are also addressed to determine if future assessments can be supported. For example, questions related to a potential timeframe, available funding, and overall logistics are included. Collectively, these questions cover the important issues related to how results are used, and ensure clear expectations are outlined for both researchers and practitioners.

RESULTS

Management

Does The Program Have A Clearly Stated Purpose?

On the Youth Development section of the PPR website, the purpose of the after school program is clearly outlined along with a brief description of the program history, offerings, and basic information:

Based upon local research as well as national data, the Department recognizes that most youth engage in negative behavior and/or become victims of violence between the hours of three o'clock and six o'clock in the evening. So Philadelphia Parks & Recreation has instituted After School Programs to improve the lives of Philadelphia's children and to support Philadelphia's families. The primary goal is to provide safe places and structured activity during non-school hours for children to learn and grow.
(City of Philadelphia: Youth Development, 2013)

This overarching purpose is evident throughout program documentation as well, along with reminders of how the after school program fits within the entire PPR organization. For example, in both the After School Program Manual and After School Program Parent's Handbook, the PPR department Vision, Mission Statement, and Goals are listed on the first page. Each document then continues to a description of the After school Program:

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation has instituted After school Programs to improve the lives of Philadelphia's children and to support Philadelphia's facilities. The primary goal is to provide safe places and structured activity during non-school hours for children to play, learn and grow.
(After School Program Manual, p. 7; After School Program Parent's Handbook, p. 3)

The research cited in this excerpt has certainly resonated with program coordinators, who not only acknowledged the information but also alluded to how it has impacted the rationale of the program. For example, as Program

Coordinator A stated, “the program’s trying to keep kids safe during the after-school hours, primarily between 3:00 and 6:00, where research has shown that kids are most likely to either get hurt or to get into trouble.”

While these sources provide detailed explanations of the overall purpose of the after school program, the message has also been condensed to a three-word slogan which reinforces the program intent in a positive and concise manner. “Play, Learn, Grow” appears on numerous internal (After School Program Manual cover page) and external (After School Program Parent’s Handbook, p. 1-3; Fox Chase Recreation Center Welcome Letter, p. 1) sources. This shortened phrase provides a concise message that resonates with potential participants’ parents, and reinforces the predominant purpose of the PPR after school program.

Does The Program Have Specific And Realistic Goals And Objectives?

A thorough synthesis and review of content-based publications and documents revealed several key goals and objectives that were corroborated in interviews with management personnel. If attained, these goals and objectives will allow the PPR after school program to succeed in achieving their purpose. These goals and objectives have been classified as short-term outcomes in the logic model presented later in this report, and each specific short-term outcome is discussed in detail in this chapter.

Document reviews and interviews with After School Program Coordinators revealed that providing a safe environment, improving physical health, academic support, community engagement, and supporting social/behavioral enrichment were the primary intended short-term outcomes of the after school program. These concepts are discussed in detail below:

Safe Environment

According to archival and secondary sources, a safe environment is the primary goal of the PPR after school program. This is clearly evident on the main page of the after school program website, which states the primary goal as providing “*safe places* and structured activity during non-school hours for children to learn and grow.” This emphasis on safety is communicated directly to the families of participants through the After School Program Parent’s Handbook, which is updated and distributed annually. For example, on the first page of this document it states, “Philadelphia Parks and Recreation strives to provide a *safe, clean and ready-to-use environment* so your child can enjoy his/her Out-of-School-Time experience.” Similarly, the influence of safety on promoting positive youth development is clearly acknowledged in the Strategic Objectives of the Department of Parks and Recreation, which is both printed and published online. According to this document, one of the objectives is to, “develop strategic and supportive partnerships that *keep youth safe* and advance positive youth development principles.” (p. 1).

Internally, the importance of safety is clearly communicated to staff through extensive documentation and established protocols. Health and Safety guidelines are clearly outlined in the After School Program Manual to guide the conduct of staff, and specific sections deal with Accessibility and Inclusion, Accident Reports, Incident Reports, and Procedures for Major Incidents and Discipline Issues. For example, the following sections from the Health and Safety pages outline details for site specific protocol, and illustrate the depth of information provided for staff:

F. Security

To promote the safety of our participants, all children must be signed in when arriving, and signed out when leaving for the day. Only those people who are authorized on the official Registration Form (appendix) to pick up the children may sign them out of the program. If a child is old enough to sign him/herself in and out, they should be required to do so each day. Sign In/Sign Out copies must be maintained at the facility for a period of one year.

G. Smoking Policy

“Smoking is prohibited in all City owned and occupied space to which the public has access.” (Executive Order No. 12-93)

There will be absolutely no smoking inside any facility that house an After School Program, or in any area where After School Program activities are being conducted.

H. Fire Safety

The After School Program will have a working fire extinguisher mounted in full view (or in a labeled cabinet) out of reach of the children. Stairways, hallways, exits from rooms, exits from the facility and other means of egress servicing as an exit site shall be unobstructed and clearly labeled “EXIT.” Specific evacuation plans for each site should be designated by the Facility Supervisor in conjunction with the RSI and posted by the entrance to the area used by the After School Program. Evacuation plans shall provide for removal of all persons from the facility in a single trip. Fire Drills should be conducted monthly. A fire drill log must be posted in the After School room. (see appendix)

I. Medication

Under no circumstances will Philadelphia Parks & Recreation staff administer, store or serve any medication for After School participants. If prescribed, however, asthma-inhalant medication may be self-administered by the participant during the After School period with written authorization by appropriate medical personnel. Staff may assist with epi-pen administration.

J. Maintenance

The RSI is responsible for keeping the equipment and supplies for the program stored neatly and in place for each day’s activities. Set-up and clean up for the projects related to the After School Program are also the RSI’s responsibility. Maintenance concerns of a larger scale should be reported to the Facility Supervisor. Any obvious safety hazards should be documented and submitted to the Supervisor.

K. Health Concerns

Some major health concerns involve conditions that are contagious and pose a health risk to other children. In the event a child reports to the program with ringworm, pink eye, or head lice, the RSI should notify the Facility Supervisor, who should discuss the situation with the parent.

Program coordinators also emphasized the importance of safety in their afterschool operations, often referring to it as their primary concern. In fact, when asked about the overall purpose of the program, Program Coordinator B responded, “first to provide a safe place for the kids to meet.” It is clear safety is a primary objective of the after school program, as evidenced by the published documentation, internal protocols, and interviews with management.

Improving Physical Health

The importance of physical activity and nutritional awareness within PPR has grown rapidly in recent years. As Program Coordinator B stated, “the physical component of it has become very large. We actually encourage twenty to thirty minutes a day of physical activity. We have physical activity trackers.” Currently, RSI’s are responsible for completing Weekly Physical Activity Trackers, which provide an aggregate daily estimate of the amount of physical activity participants engage in. On Weekly Physical Activity Tracker forms, staff are reminded to ensure 30 minutes of daily or 150 minutes of weekly physical activity for all youth, and to promote the participation of every child. The scale ranges from 0 to 100 minutes per day, and although the data is not individualized, the forms are a useful output for ensuring compliance.

Furthermore, the Office of Health and Opportunity, Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and The Food Trust partnered with PPR to develop the Get Healthy Philly initiative, which aims to improve the health outcomes of after school program participants. On the first page of the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines booklet, PPR First Deputy Susan Slawson clearly outlines the intended purpose of this initiative:

I am pleased to present to you Philadelphia Parks & Recreation's (PP&R) Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines for Out of School Time programs. PP&R collaborated with the Department of Public Health and The Food Trust in an effort to improve the health and lives of young people in our programs. Through these partnerships, we have been able to develop guidelines and standards for our youth. It is my hope and expectation that we integrate and implement these guidelines into our programming. These guidelines reflect the Department's Vision, Mission and Goals, especially those that impact the health and well-being of our youth and teens. I hope that you will find these guidelines to be informative and helpful as we strive to make our youth healthier and more physically fit than ever.
(Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, cover page).

The booklet contains an extensive list of guiding principles and supportive strategies to help staff promote physical activity and nutritional awareness at their sites. For example, the following passage is a sample objective from the Appendix, and highlights the detailed communication contained within this document:

- 1) Philadelphia Parks & recreation programs support the well-being of youth by ensuring daily moderate to vigorous physical activity.
 - a) Supportive Strategies
 - i) Staff to incorporate moderate to vigorous physical activity into daily schedules.
 - ii) Utilize physical activity energizers in programming.
 - iii) Arrange the after school schedule to ensure that youth do not sit for more than 60 minutes at a time.
- (Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, p. 5)

While the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines have been published online, the emphasis on physical activity and nutritional awareness is also directly communicated to parents through the After School Program Parent's Handbook, which states "in a structured environment, children will be given the opportunity to work on homework, *participate in physical activity*, games, visual and performing arts." (p. 3). Clearly, the importance of ensuring daily physical activity is not only understood by staff, but also communicated to key stakeholders.

According to the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, after school and summer programs and staff recognize the “potential and responsibility to positively engage youth in healthy behaviors.” (p. 1). As such, physical activity standards are monitored with weekly reports by after school program staff, who record the amount of physical activity included in their programming, and submit monthly reports to their district managers. In addition, the SPARK and Food Trust partnerships have provided the knowledge and equipment necessary to sustain the growth of the health and fitness components of the program. Nutritional guidelines have been provided for staff to follow, and the USDA meal plan is now providing snacks and supper in many after school program sites. Interviews with program coordinators suggest management has recognized and supported this recent trend, as Program Coordinator A revealed “we’ve recently introduced physical activity and nutritional guidelines, so we’re also feeding kids. At this point we’re giving them a supper.” Similarly, Program Coordinator B specified, “food and nutrition has actually gotten to be a big part. And healthy snacks have gotten to be a big part of it too.”

Academic Support

Academic support was consistently regarded as a component of the after school program, however it did not receive the same emphasis as other primary goals (i.e. safe environment, physical activity). Although academic and educational support occupies a large portion of available programming time, specifically improving academic achievement and attitudes is perceived as more of a secondary short-term outcome amongst management and program documentation. For example, the sample activity guide in the After School Program Manual allocates approximately one hour ($\frac{1}{3}$ of total

program time) to homework assistance (p. 15), yet program coordinators typically classified the support as a service component rather than a strategic outcome.

When referenced in program documentation, academic support typically augments other short-term outcomes, or is listed simply as one of the services of the after school program. For example, on the PPR After School website homepage, “homework assistance” is simply mentioned as one of the supports that children receive as part of the experience. Similarly, in the After School Program Parent’s Handbook it states that the program “helps keep children and youth safe, active, healthy and *ready to learn*.” (p. 2). When addressing the curriculum directly on the following page, a similar message simply lists homework assistance as one of the services: “In a structured environment, children will be given the opportunity to *work on homework*, participate in physical activity, games, visual and performing arts.” (p. 3)

Program coordinators also referred to academic achievement as a secondary outcome of the program. For example, when asked if improved academic achievement was an objective of the program, Program Coordinator B responded, “That’s not the main goal. That’s definitely part of it, we do encourage that the kids do their homework at the program.” Likewise, Program Coordinator A stated:

The program’s trying to keep kids safe during the after-school hours, primarily between 3:00 and 6:00, where research has shown that kids are most likely to either get hurt or to get into trouble. Second to that, we’re trying to give them some support with their homework, and also give them time to be social and to play and be kids.

Although the academic component is typically referred to as a service rather than an intended outcome, the expectations for participants regarding the academic enrichment

activities is clearly outlined in the After School Program Parent's Handbook, which includes a PPR After School Program Homework Agreement:

PPR After School Program Homework Agreement

We are starting out the year by organizing our homework center. We believe we can support your family and your child's success by providing some time during our program for homework. We ask that you and your child discuss whether or not he/she should work on homework during our program. Although doing homework during the program is optional, there will be no group activities during homework time. We feel that we can provide the best homework assistance when staff, participants and family have a clear understanding about how this will work. Although we assist with it, homework is ultimately the responsibility of the parent. Please make a habit of reviewing all of your child's work with them.

(After School Program Parent's Handbook, p. 8).

This document helps staff organize the homework assistance service, and a supplemental form includes questions that provide additional information regarding the participants' preferred learning environment and topics. Interestingly, questions are included for both the participant and their parent/guardian, which provides after school staff with two perspectives on the participants strengths, weaknesses, and optimal learning environment. The questions contained in this supplemental document are included below:

If you decide that your child should work on homework, please work together to fill out the following information:

PARTICIPANT

1. Circle which you prefer when doing your homework
 - a. Quiet place to work OR a place where I can talk and move while I work.
 - b. Doing homework first thing OR after a snack and time to run and relax.
 - c. Working alone OR working in a small group.
2. Which homework assignments are usually the easiest for you?
3. Which homework assignments are usually the hardest for you?
4. Please complete this sentence: when I get stuck on my homework, it helps when adults...
5. I agree to:
 - a. Come to the Homework area when I have homework.

- b. Bring the books, worksheets and supplies that I need to complete my tasks.
- c. Ask for help when I need it.

PARENT/GUARDIAN

- 6. Which homework assignments are usually easiest for your child?
- 7. Which homework assignments are usually hardest for your child?
- 8. Please finish this sentence: When my child gets stuck on homework, I find that it DOES NOT help when I...
- 9. I agree to:
 - a. Check that my child has completed his/her homework. I understand that although After School Program staff will assist my child with his/her own homework, they are not responsible for any work left incomplete or answered incorrectly.
 - b. Support my child with unfinished or difficult homework.
 - c. Talk to teachers at school about homework issues.

Although the academic component of the PPR after school programs is not prioritized like the physical activity guidelines or safe environment, it has been a consistent element of the curriculum since the inception of the program, and is a key service for participants and parents.

Community Engagement

Community engagement emerged as a relatively consistent theme in both document review and interview analysis, particularly related to the local natural and outdoor environment. In the 2011 Appraisal of Recreation and Entertainment Opportunities, independent consultants noted that community recreation centers are a “primary connection between Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and residents” (p. 7), and suggested that the department “expand the vision of recreation centers so that they blossom into training centers as much as recreation centers.” (p. 7). In the same document, the consultants noted, “recreation centers are strategically situated throughout the city, and serve as gathering places for neighborhoods and communities.” (p. 7).

Most of the after school programs operate out of existing community recreation centers, suggesting these programs have the ability to enhance that connection, a strength clearly recognized by management within the PPR department. For example, in the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Objectives, four of the objectives of “Out of School Time” activities were directly associated with connecting youth to the outdoor environment of Philadelphia:

- To expand effort to link and engage youth in new outdoor activities, to discover different adventures, and to learn new skills in Philadelphia’s outdoor spaces.
 - Provide high quality programming focusing on the environment, historical and cultural assets.
 - Use park land to broaden participant experiences.
 - Provide experiences and information that will introduce youth to green jobs as well as careers in recreation, the environment and cultural/historical arts.
- (PPR Strategic Objectives, p. 1)

This emphasis on engaging youth in both local and regional neighborhoods is communicated to the public and parents of participants through both published documents and public forums. For example, in the After School Program Parent’s Handbook it states one of the goals of the program is to, “connect them to their communities and to parks, recreation and the natural world.” (p. 2). Similarly, when speaking to a Summer Hall Meeting, PPR Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis stated one of the five strategic objectives related to youth was “connecting them to their communities and their future.” (January 20, 2010, p. 2). Similar comments by the commissioner and other public officials reflect a citywide promotion of youth civic engagement, particularly related to the development of green space. The PPR Youth Urban Agriculture Program is an output of these initiatives, and has been a major contributor to GreenWorks Philadelphia goals, which includes planting 300,000 new

trees and adding 500 new acres of open space by 2015. These groups operate in conjunction with after school programs, and allow participants to participate in urban gardening and other projects that connect them with citywide initiatives.

Program coordinators also expressed a desire to engage or involve participants with activities in their local and regional neighborhoods. For example, bus trips, museum visitations, and gardening projects were all highlighted as activities which could help connect kids to their neighborhood and city. As Program Coordinator B stated,

In some facilities it is you know, the neighborhood really relies on having this option. And especially with schools closing and you know, the whole – I'd say the biggest change or the biggest impact is that this is kind of the one steady right now.

Community engagement is clearly one of the goals of the PPR after school program, with both interview and secondary source data suggesting many recreation centers have a strong connection to the local community.

Social/Behavioral Enrichment

Promoting a social atmosphere is clearly a documented goal of the after school program, as staff are encouraged to provide free time for participants to play and be social. Although not explicitly stated in most documentation, Program Coordinator A alluded to the social elements of the after school curriculum, “we’re trying to give them some support with their homework, and *also give them time to be social and to play and be kids.*” This recognition and support of free play is evident in both the After School Program Parent’s Handbook and the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines. On page 3 of the After School Program Parent’s Handbook, it states “play is an important component of the After School Program. Time is set-aside for children to relax, hang out with friends and select activities they enjoy.” Similarly, the Healthy Physical Activity

and Nutrition Guidelines document describes how a “*pleasant social environment* is provided during scheduled meals and snacks, *encouraging social interaction, conversation, and positive eating behaviors.*” (p. 3). The same document also states that the program “allows youth to eat in small groups to *encourage socializing and conversation.*” (p. 8).

In order to support these social environments, clear behavioral expectations are outlined for participants in their registration material, and cited in additional departmental and after school documents. For example, page five of the After School Program Parent’s Handbook contains information on what participants can expect from the program and what the program expects from the participant:

A Participant May Expect

1. To be treated in a respectful manner.
2. To participate in a safe, supportive and consistent environment.
3. To have discipline that is fair and non-punitive.
4. To receive nurturing care from the staff members directly involved in the program.
5. To use the program’s equipment, materials and facilities on a daily basis.

The Program Expects that the Participant Will

1. Be respectful at all times to the program staff, all participants and the facility.
2. Be responsible for their actions.
3. Avoid bringing in personal items such as phones, money, video games or anything else valuable. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Staff and After School Staff are not responsible for any lost or stolen items.
4. Take care of all program materials and equipment properly and return all items to their place when done, or before taking out new materials and equipment.
5. Remain with their group and staff throughout the duration of each session. No participants are permitted to leave designated areas without permission.
6. Arrive at the start of the program. Tardiness is unacceptable, except for extenuating circumstances.
7. Participate in some way with all of the After School activities scheduled.

In addition, an extensive Code of Conduct is included in the Parent's Handbook, which outlines specific behavioral guidelines, and how children will be disciplined for unacceptable behavior:

Participants Code of Conduct

We have self-respect and we have self-control. Therefore we will respect these rules, the adults, other and ourselves.

1. We are responsible for our own actions. We do not blame others.
2. Participants must remain with their group at all times.
3. We never shove, hit, push, bump or act rude or purposely annoy anyone.
4. We never use harsh or crude language with one another.
5. We speak pleasantly and politely, using quiet tones of voice.
6. We always clean up our area before we start another activity.
7. We take care of our equipment and materials properly and return them to their place when finished.
8. We do not run or throw anything in the building.
9. Bullying of any kind is never acceptable.

Discipline

- Infractions are addressed by giving the child a reminder of the rules and a warning for the first offense.
- The second offense will result in a small period of "Time Out" away from the group.
- When discipline is a problem and cannot be corrected within the program, a parent will be notified. If it is not possible to speak directly with the parent a letter explaining the situation will be sent home via whoever picks up the child.
- A plan of action that addresses the problem behavior will be discussed. Communication with the parent, staff and child is necessary to resolve the problem.
- If subsequent behavior problems persist, the child can be suspended or dismissed from the program. Parents will be notified.
- Philadelphia Parks & Recreation reserved the right to discharge any child from the program who imposes a threat to the safety of participants or staff in the program. In addition, the following infractions will result in the immediate dismissal from the program:
 - Possession of any weapon
 - Physical abuse of another participant
 - Possession of illegal drugs, including alcohol
 - Theft (proven)

In order to support the positive behaviors that contribute to a social atmosphere, staff are trained to be conscious of their own conduct. Listed below are some of the guiding principles and supportive strategies from the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, which staff are encouraged to implement into their programming:

Guiding Principles

- Staff model positive behaviors by making positive comments about physical activity.
- Staff is confident in their ability to promote physical activity.
- Staff encourages and supports youth trying new activities.
- Staff uses physical activity to reinforce, reward and use as a celebration for group achievement, positive behavior, or goals and activities.

Supportive Strategies

- Use physical activity as reinforcement for positive behaviors.
- Whenever possible, use physical activity to reinforce and extend other afterschool goals and activities.

(Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, p. 6).

This combination of both internal and external documentation outlining explicit expectation for participants, staff, and parents underscores a focus on social and behavioral development.

Are The Goals And Objectives Communicated To Personnel And Staff?

As stated in the introduction of the After School Program Manual, day-to-day decisions regarding the operation of the after school program are made at the facility level, however the program is intended to be “conducted in the same manner as the many other programs at each facility. “ (p. 6). Staff are informed of the predominant goals and objectives of the after school program, yet given flexibility to design and implement activities at their site. In order for this organizational structure to operate efficiently, the roles of employees at each hierarchical level must be clearly identified and maintained.

The After School Program Manual describes these positions in detail, and provides a chain of command for staff to reference:

A. Roles and Responsibilities of the After School Staff

- RSI – The Recreation Specialty Instructors will be responsible to work with the Facility Supervisor to recruit children, plan the curriculum, take daily attendance and implement the program. They are directly responsible for the supervision of the children at all times. They must be present and assist during specialist instructors' visits as well as any other special guest visitors to the program. They are responsible for completing a variety of paperwork and submitting that paperwork to the facility supervisor honoring all deadlines.

- RSI (Enhancement) – These RSI's are hired and assigned to programs by the after school office. They are responsible for instructions in their specialty at each facility to which they are assigned. When in each facility, they are under the supervision of the facility supervisor.

- Facility Supervisor – After School Program responsibilities include recruitment and hiring of RSI, recruitment of the children to attend the program, overall supervision, record keeping and support of the program at their facility. They are responsible to collect all required paperwork from the RSI, check for accuracy, and submit to the After School Office according to all deadlines.

- District Manager – Responsibilities include but are not limited to: insuring the presence of After School Programs at facilities in their district, communicating with a Facility Supervisors and the After School Program Coordinator concerning the After School Program, lending encouragement and support in all areas of the program, addressing any problems that may arise, and forwarding all necessary paperwork to its proper destination.

C. Chain of Command

1. Commissioner
2. Deputy Commissioner/Regional Director
3. District Manager/After School Program Coordinator
4. Facility Supervisor
5. Recreation Specialty Instructor (RSI).

Please Note: The Facility Supervisor should make decisions regarding the program (in consultation with the District Manager when necessary) and questions should be referred to the After School Program Coordinator only if a solution/decision needs clarification. The Facility Supervisor may designate a Recreation Leader Trainee, Recreation Leader I or an

Assistant Recreation Leader assigned to the facility to be responsible for the After School Program in his/her absence.

The integrity of this chain of command is maintained through an extensive list of forms and documentation. The chart included in Figure 2 is a copy from the After School Program Manual (p. 13), and illustrates how formal records and monitoring have been integrated into the program protocol. As stated in the manual, “each form has a reason and a proper chain of command in which it is to be filled out, authorized and handed in.” (p. 13). Staff at each level are required to either complete, authorize, or collect documents that are typically filed at both the site and After School Office. This ensures the safety of participants, and establishes clear communication between various levels of management and staff.

Staff are also required to attend orientation, trainings, and professional development seminars each year to learn the basic rules of running a PPR after school site. According to the manual, these trainings teach staff about the chain of command, their roles and responsibilities, and the records they must continuously update. In addition, staff learn about the goals and objectives of the program, and are shown sample activities by enhancement staff. In order to sustain this learning environment, trainings are offered throughout the year, and staff are provided with a “Resources And Support” section in their manual that provides information, including a Sample Activity Guide (p. 15).

In order to determine if the goals and objectives were consistent throughout the organization, a matrix was developed to organize the data graphically. The goals and objectives procured from program documentation and interviews with management were inserted as rows, and columns represented district manager interviews.

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	WHY
RSI and Site Supervisor	Registration Forms	Before child starts program.	Keep a copy onsite, send one to After School Office.	Important information needed on the child. Need for records.
RSI and/or Site Supervisor	Parent Handbook	Have parent sign appropriate spot in book.	Keep copy with registration.	Agreement between parent & site. May need at a later date.
RSI	Sign In/Sign Out	Log every day	Keep in a binder.	Documents who attended that particular day. Safety.
RSI	Daily Log Book	Log every day	Keep with Sign In/Sign Out in Binder.	Document any discussion or incidents with parents or staff.
RSI	Weekly Attendance	Log every day/Submit Weekly.	Keep copy with Daily Sign-Ins and attach at end of week. Send a copy to ASP Office.	Accountability. GPUAC funded sites need to supply this info to retain grant money.
RSI	Monthly Attendance	Log every day/Submit Monthly	Keep copy with Weeklies and Dailies in binder. Send a copy to the ASP Office.	Documents enrollment numbers and participation.
RSI	Weekly Food Paperwork	Log every day/Submit Weekly	Keep copy in binder. Send copy weekly.	Accountability for Food Program Funding
RSI	Monthly Food Participants	Log every day/Submit Monthly	Submit a copy to ASP Office.	Accountability for Food Program Funding
RSI	DROP Slips	Review Attendance at the end of the month. Send a DROP Slip if not returning.	Attach a copy to the registration and keep on file on site. Send a copy to the ASP Office with all Monthly Paperwork.	Needed to keep updated program enrollment information.
RSI and Site Supervisor	Accident	Whenever an accident occurs	Keep copy onsite with child's registration information AND Site Supervisor should file with all other accident paperwork. Send a copy to ASP office.	Documentation of any accidents or incidents is critical in order to legally protect our participants and staff.
RSI and Site Supervisor	Incident	Whenever an incident occurs	Keep copy onsite with child's registration information AND Site Supervisor should file with all other incident paperwork. Send a copy to ASP office.	Documentation of any accidents or incidents is critical in order to legally protect our participants and staff. Staff support.
RSI	Trip Permission	Needed prior to any trips off-site	Keep a copy with the participants' registration. Keep a copy of all Trip Permission Slips with any trip info sent home to parents.	Although each registration form has a spot parents sign allowing their child to participate in trips, it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED you have a separate permission slip for EACH TRIP.
RSI	Emergency Drill Log	Once a month	Keep POSTED next to your ESCAPE ROUTE by an exit.	City regulation
Site Supervisor	Fee Class Registration & Insurance Forms	Once a year	Retain and Submit a copy.	Protects anyone working at your facility who is not a paid employee of the city.
Site Supervisor	RSI Evaluation	Once a year	Copy to employee, copy in file, copy to ASP office.	Provides insight to the RSI how their work is being viewed.
Site Supervisor	Personnel Transaction	When Necessary	Copy to employee, copy in file, copy to ASP office.	Provides information on why an employee has left the position
Site Supervisor	Financial Reports	With Monthly Reports	Document all transactions monthly.	Keeps track of all financial information.
RSI/Site Supervisor	Any Memos	When Necessary	Keep copies of all memos wherever necessary.	Document any special requests, questions or concerns

Figure 2. Forms, Documentation, & Record-Keeping. This figure illustrates the internal chain of command within the PPR After School Programs.

An ‘X’ was placed if a trend was referenced or affirmed by a district manager, and omitted if it was not. Program protocols and procedures were also synthesized to determine if internal communication was formalized or documented. Table 1 displays a copy of the matrix, and each outcome is subsequently discussed in detail.

Table 1						
<i>Management Matrix. This table examines the consistency of goals and objectives amongst district managers.</i>						
	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
Intended Program Outcomes						
Safe Environment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Improved Physical Health	X	X	X	X	X	X
Academic Support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Engagement	X	X	X		X	X
Social/Behavioral Enrichment	X	X		X	X	X

Safe Environment

All district managers placed providing a safe environment as one of their main priorities, with some managers even citing the same research as coordinators, which also appears in program documents. This suggests a clear channel of communication regarding current and emerging trends exists between management and staff. The following excerpts provide examples of district manager responses:

So I think that’s still basically what we’re trying to accomplish. I still think that’s part of our mission is to provide safe, whether they are somewhat structured activities, but there are guidelines and the range is wide open depending on what your site is like and what your site offers. (District Manager B).

Well, I think the main goal is to give them a safe and clean environment for the kids in the community. It’s first it’s for I’m gonna say it’s the we want a clean and safe place where these kids can go after school from 3 to 6. (District Manager D).

The first thing would be to have a safe, structured activity for kids during the after school hours. So somewhere that either parents can drop kids off or they can safely walk or be walked in the neighborhood. (District Manager E).

I think it's trying to give children a positive outlet to do something during the afterschool hours between 3:00 and 6:00, which we all know are the hours where most violence occurs. (District Manager F).

Some managers referred to their after school programs as “safe havens” or “second homes” in their communities, which reflects a perspective shared by researchers and practitioners, particularly those working with at-risk youth populations (Diversi & Mecham, 2004; Hirsch, 2005; Vandell & Shumow, 1999). The following interview responses are examples of this perception:

I think it becomes like a second home. They're very comfortable. They run in, they know where to put their coat. They run in, they know where to put their bags. They know who to ask for what type of equipment they need. They know the spaces that are available to them during the afterschool hours. (District Manager A).

It's more of a little safe haven in a neighborhood. They get a snack. They get a juice. It's sorta like an extension of home, like that gap between school and parents coming home. It's sorta like a safe haven for kids. (District Manager C).

The importance of providing a safe environment was clearly one of the primary goals of the PPR after school program according to district managers.

Improved Physical Health

The program emphasis on physical activity was evident from interviews with district managers, who acknowledged the increasing importance of the component:

I think the goal is of course, to have them be more active and fit. But the programs that we've implemented have been fun in nature, so it's not like you're going to sit down and you're going to do ten pushups and then you're going to do ten jumping jacks. It's really engaging them. It's almost like semi-dance. You have physical activity component. (District Manager A).

And the fitness component. And because many of our sites, you're not going to get much screen time. I don't care if there's a computer lab. I don't care if there's a teen center with some games in it. We are not in that kind of business. We are more to physical activity. (District Manager B).

Some district managers specifically referred to the guidelines outlined by coordinators and program documentation. For example, District Manager D stated, "well, I think what they're looking for is 30 minutes to an hour of physical activity a day. And I really think that has to – that will improve with our after school programs." This suggests that the goals and objectives related to improving physical health are efficiently communicated to staff. Once again, although the guidelines provide parameters for physical fitness (i.e. 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day or 150 minutes per week), district managers do have different perceptions regarding its relative importance compared to other objectives. For example, although some managers stressed the importance of improving fitness, District Manager C stated, "fitness component's big. I still think the social component's first. Then the fitness would be somewhere next, and academic would be last." Despite these minor discrepancies, all district managers agreed on the importance of the improving physical health of participants.

Academic Support

Similar to interviews with coordinators, district managers indicated that providing academic support was an element of the program, yet did not imply promoting academic achievement was one of their primary goals. Typically, academic supports such as homework assistance were simply referenced as one of the many services offered by the program. For example, District Manager A explained, "the goal is to involve youth in their downtime while parents are working. Give them something where they can engage,

be committed to, and have adult supervision. While getting free time, *but also time to do either homework*. Having some structure, but also having freedom to explore different things.” Similarly, District Manager F stated, “*our programs have tried to have an educational aspect* as well as a fitness aspect, and also current events, and special events, and healthy snacks for children.” This description is consistent with both information from program documentation, and interviews with coordinators.

Once again, although district managers agreed on the academic element of the program, there was varying perspective on its relative importance. For example, District Manager B stated, “as far as what we were trying to accomplish, I think, at least from what I remember, the start was to kind of given an hour to homework.” Likewise, District Manager D described, “we want to have the children involved. We want to work on helping with homework work. We want to give help in that area.” Comparatively, District Manager C specifically noted how the academic component was secondary to both the social and fitness elements of the program, “I still think the social component is first. Then the fitness would be somewhere next, and academic would be last.” Although specifically improving academic performance is not a primary objective of the program, both management and staff agree academic support it is a large part of the curriculum and an important secondary outcome.

Community Engagement

Promoting positive connections to the local community is a clear goal for most district managers, and is achieved through integrating activities that engage youth with their local neighborhoods. As District Manager B stated, “you want to take them to a show. You want to take them ice-skating. You want to be able to do the different things

with them that they might not always get, and you want those to be positive experiences.” Some of these experiences are simply for fun or entertainment, however other initiatives provide volunteer opportunities for youth. These service experiences allow youth to contribute positively to their communities, as referenced by District Manager A:

I think for Parks and Recreation we really look to engage them in community. That they find that the rec center becomes almost like a second home, and they take commitment in kind of following the rules, but seeing also that others are following the rules. That there’s kind of respect for the facility, and then respect for individuals in the community.

Developing community connections was a prominent objective amongst district managers. While the individual connections of participants were certainly recognized, the facility and program was also believed to be a primary connection to the neighborhood. For example, District Manager B stated, “I think if your site has an after school program, it really connects to the neighborhood.” This is an important distinction that was recognized by program coordinators as well, who specifically emphasized the importance of assimilating the program and facility into the local community.

Social/Behavioral Engagement

District managers noted how participation in the after school program often prompts more active engagement and involvement with other social community programs. This facilities exposure to youth from a variety of backgrounds, and fosters friendship and camaraderie. As District Manager E stated:

They’ve all made bonds and friendships at after school, so you know, they like to get there to meet up with their friends. I think kids become more engaged in the other programs if they are in the after school program. So you’ll see the same kids in the T-Ball or basketball program that are in the after school program, so in general, they become engaged in the recreation program. (District Manager E).

In addition, district managers noted how participants were encouraged to limit their screen time in favor of physical activity or socialization. District Manager A identified this trend by stating, “they are not being engaged with machines and technology. *They’re engaged socially*, and they’re engaged physically with other things during that period.” By promoting this social atmosphere, district managers ensure participants are positively interacting with each other. In fact, District Manager C described the social component of the after school program as the most important element.

These concepts were echoed in both program documentation and interviews with coordinators, which implies that enhancing social and behavioral skills is consistent goal of the program. The goals and objectives identified through interviews with management and document review were consistent with those outlined by district managers. This suggests that specific goals are identified by management and communicated to staff to guide the implementation of activities at the service level.

Are Performance Measures In Place To Determine If The Program Was Successful?

Currently, the main performance indicators used to determine the success of each site are the attendance rates and overall quantity of sites. For example, when explaining what administrators ask for in relation to the after school program performance, one program coordinator explained:

They will ask us for attendance numbers. They will ask us for the total number of programs, like sites in the program. They will ask for attendance, how many places have the kids registered, and kids are actually showing up, which is pretty strong. (Program Coordinator A).

Attendance has grown rapidly since the inception of the program, and program coordinators have used these figures to lobby for more financial support and resources.

However, this information is generally used to determine how existing resources should be allocated rather than an indication of behavioral or attitudinal growth of participants. Physical activity trackers are another performance measure used by management to ensure participants at each site are receiving adequate exercise during the program hours. Although these forms do not provide individual progress, they do provide an overall gauge of the amount of physical activity occurring at the site.

Both management and district managers acknowledged that additional performance measures would be useful in evaluating the attainment of other social/behavioral objectives (i.e. satisfaction, involvement). For example, both afterschool coordinators expressed a desire to conduct participant and parent evaluations of the programs that would assess their satisfaction and personal perceptions:

Well, I think that some baseline data of who are we serving, what are the demographics, whether it's age, gender, neighborhoods, income levels? What's the poverty line? I think that may be helpful for us in some ways, whether it's for grant or just to be able to talk about our kids. (Program Coordinator A).

I don't think you can make a strong line between, "If this child comes to my after school program, he/she will increase his/her academic performance by X, Y, Z." I don't think you can do that, but as we were talking about where do kids feel safe, and if we can talk about building civic engagement with kids, connection to community. I think that those are really important values as we develop our next generation of citizens. (Program Coordinator A).

I think participant evaluation is huge. We need to know what the kids think of the programs. Parent evaluations to find out what it is. Why they're sending their child there. What it is that they're hoping to get from those programs. What it is they like, don't like. Why they chose this one over another one. And our own staff I think we need to follow up with, too. (Program Coordinator B).

This proactive attitude is reflected amongst the district managers as well.

Although some expressed a skeptical perception of evaluation, a majority recognized

areas of assessment that would be useful to integrate into daily operations. For example, District Manager C stated, “if there was a tool that you could measure things, I would be interested.” Other managers echoed similar sentiments:

I would love to be able to sit down with my leader of the playground, my RSI, and say, “Okay, this is where you guys started athletically, socially, school wise, and this is where we would wanna go,” but realistically I don’t see it happening. (District Manager C).

But those are the areas that the research is around now, supportive adult relationships, feeling safe. Social skills and confidence, and doing the flaw of the summer camp is that we only do it at the end, but I know a lot of surveys do the kids at the beginning and the end, so I think that would be really valuable. (District Manager E).

I mean, you know, in an ideal world, you would be able to work with schools as well and see if they’re attending school more as a result of it or if grades are improving or their behavior, but it’s like pie in the sky. (District Manager E).

But there really should be some type of parental evaluation that you send home maybe in November. And then again in maybe March. So that you know, you see what they’re asking you. Maybe this is lacking or they’re looking for this, or this is fabulous. And then you can work on it from November until March to possibly make some of those changes. (District Manager F).

This particular area of the PPR After School program is currently underdeveloped given their goals and objectives. Although overall site numbers, registration and attendance, and physical activity trackers provide useful information, more in-depth evaluation is needed to understand if participants are developing positive behaviors, enhancing their physical fitness and academic aptitude, or improving social skills. This will allow inform managerial decisions and allow staff to implement more effective services.

Is The Program Flexible And Responsive To External Factors?

Both program documentation and interviews with management support the transparency of the PPR after school program, and it's responsiveness to external factors. For example, the emphasis on participant safety and providing a safe environment was in response to external research that indicated juvenile crime spiked during the after school hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. This was evident in interviews with both management and district managers:

I think it's trying to give children a positive outlet to do something during the afterschool hours between 3:00 and 6:00, which we all know are the hours where most violence occurs. (District Manager F).

Well, I think the main goal is to give them a safe and clean environment for the kids in the community. It's first it's for I'm gonna say it's the we want a clean and safe place where these kids can go after school from 3 to 6. (District Manager D).

The program's trying to keep kids safe during the after-school hours, primarily between 3:00 and 6:00, where research has shown that kids are most likely to either get hurt or to get into trouble. (Program Coordinator A).

Similarly, the growing emphasis on physical activity and nutritional awareness was in response to information gathered and utilized by management:

And, again, that's beginning to address the fact that Philadelphia has one of the hungriest congressional districts in the country, so we decided to look at the nutrition in the snacks we were giving them, and we've been able to create a way to get them suppers. (Program Coordinator A).

This flexibility in program curriculum and structure is encouraged at each of the specific sites as well, as both internal employee protocols and public documents refer to the importance of flexibility and understanding individual site information:

This book provides the basic information for ALL the PPR After School sites across the city. There may be additional information you will need to know about your individual site. Please direct any questions or concerns

to the PPR staff at your facility.
(After School Program Parent's Handbook, p. 1).

Please keep in mind this is a living document and is subject to change as the After School Program grows and develops.
(After School Program Manual, p. 3).

Utilizing external information to inform program decisions is also a definite quality of upper management. Following the merger of the Department of Parks and Recreation and Fairmount Park Commission in 2009, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PaRC) was established. PaRC consist of 15 members, nine of whom are appointed by the Mayor from nominations made by City Council, and six of whom serve ex officio. According to their website, PaRC is eager to work with the public to provide “the very best ideas and recommendation to our elected and appointed officials concerning the protection, preservation and promotion of Philadelphia’s historical, cultural, environmental and recreational resources and programs.” PaRC hold six public meetings a year, on the third Wednesday of every other month, which allows direct communication between citizens and the important public officials, including the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation. Although many of these public forums are used to address concerns over park and facility maintenance, the after school program has certainly benefitted from the managerial transparency PaRC provides.

The PPR Department has also actively sought external reviews from independent consulting firms, most recently in 2006 and 2011. In 2006, the Fairmount Park Commission partnered with Leon Younger & PROS to produce a strategic plan that reviewed community and stakeholder input, operational and financial management, park facilities/programs, financial resource/partnerships, and park governance. Although primarily focused on the utilization of urban green space, the report did include

information about programs operating out of community recreation centers, and highlighted important information from various stakeholders. In 2011, the newly formed Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department hired Fermata Inc. to conduct an appraisal of recreation and entertainment opportunities. Once again, although the scope of this project was broad and focused on the utilization of park lands, the after school programs were certainly considered as a component of the system. Both these initiatives indicate a willingness by the Commissioner and appointed officials to seek external input and information to continuously improve their operations.

Implementation

Is The Program Serving Its Intended Population?

All of the documentation published about the afterschool program is clearly directed toward youth. As evidenced in previously reported excerpts, participants are referred to as “children and youth” rather than teenagers, a distinction that is also clearly made by program coordinators and district managers. For example, Program Coordinator A indicated, “our program is more typically 5 ½ or 6 year olds to 10 year olds, and we do go to some 12s.”

We always try and increase, again, draw from the after-school program, which is really the only program and kind of build out programs from that. So increasing other programs at the facility and building off of the school program. As the kids kind of age out of after school, a big goal is for that usually after school ends at age 12 or 13. So an important goal is to build out the 12 to 15 year old programs so as they age out of after school, they have some other programs in place where they don't suddenly stop coming to our facility. (District Manager E).

The youth population served by the after school program is intentionally broad, and doesn't specifically target a subset of Philadelphia youth (such as “at-risk” children). As one program coordinator stated, the after school program is “really in the truest spirit

of inclusion”, so each child between six and twelve years old has an opportunity to participate. A member of the Data Committee, who collects and inputs information from the after school registration forms, confirmed that a majority of participants fall within this age range, however both program coordinators noted the potential utility of acquiring more information on participants. For example, one coordinator considered the potential benefit of more in-depth demographic information:

Well, I think that some baseline data of who are we serving, what are the demographics, whether it’s age, gender, neighborhoods, income levels? What’s the poverty line? I think that may be helpful for us in some ways, whether it’s for grant or just to be able to talk about our kids.
(Program Coordinator A).

More specifically, coordinators noted how certain information regarding participants with physical or mental disorders would allow them to potentially target external funding sources (i.e. grants, foundation support) that would provide additional resources to provide care and support:

We serve a number of children from the behavioral health system, so we have kids in our program with disabilities, kids with special needs, kids who have autism or other oppositional defiant disorders, physical disabilities, that we serve unconditionally. (Program Coordinator A).

Currently, the PPR after school program is serving its target population, however more background and demographic information would allow both site staff and coordinators to enhance their services to specifically suit the needs of their participants. Furthermore, this additional information would allow site staff to segment the youth population in their neighborhood, which could potentially aid in recruiting and retention efforts.

Do The Activities Reinforce The Stated Goals And Objectives Of The Program?

Although program coordinators and district managers allow day-to-day decisions regarding after school activities and services to be made by site staff, the overall purpose and objectives of the program are communicated to staff through trainings and orientation, and guide the development of their curriculum. One district manager provides a fairly detailed description of the process:

I think it's almost like a proactive approach where we take the time in late August, early September, to train the RSIs. Give them workshops that they're engaged in, but then they take those back and they engage their youth in. We give them classroom management skills and training opportunities where they know how to set up the program environment to get the most out of it. Supervision. How to best supervise those that are in their care. So all those things are done before the program begins, and the idea is that they have a good skill set before the children are even coming in. That they can arrange structure, and have something in mind so that it's just not oh, here we are. What are we going to do today? (District Manager A).

They can really set or lay out a plan before they get there. So our objectives, we know what they are, but we try and set up before the program even begins. The skill set and the abilities, the resources for RSIs that they can kind of lean on. (District Manager A).

And with regards to the program you know, evolving and changing each day, the facility supervisors are there for you know, support for the RSIs. The District Managers will support, you know, if the leaders reach out to them, the District Manager. And then the afterschool coordinator is always available. So really, within the department of Parks and Recreation, peers are a great source of support and resource. (District Manager A).

To supplement trainings, the After School Program Manual includes a sample activity guide and reminds staff that “activity guides should be prepared and followed to give the program structure and continuity.” (p. 15). Program coordinators and district managers provided some examples of activities that reinforce stated goals and objectives:

The 4-H, obviously that's – we're doing some urban gardening, which we just started. The SPARK training is actually – it came out of that Health Department grant, and we train the worker who we have. (Program Coordinator A).

And SPARK is a program where there's a lot of equipment provided, so hula hoops, balls, parachutes, things like that, and then all of our after-school staff, as well as a leader from every facility that had any after-school program, was trained in noncompetitive games using that equipment. (Program Coordinator A).

We also have partnerships with the Phillies, called Phillies Fundamentals, where at about ten sites the Phillies come in once a week, and they do an activity with our kids related to baseball. So if they do a geography lesson, they might have a map of the United States and then have pinpoints where all the ballparks are. (Program Coordinator A).

Dance. A few of them have different dance options. Some of them have – there's another one, A2O, Arts and Artists Outdoors. It's separate, but at the same time what was happening is some of the kids that are in the afterschool program go into that program. And that kind of happens with a few different things. Like some centers might have different activities going on for kids. (Program Coordinator B).

They do Flip For Fitness, which is a deck of cards. The cards are always changing. Their activity always changes. They can be the group leader if the person so chooses. And also I've seen it even within this district. Zumba. Having Zumba instructors come in. What is that? Zumba is dance, but it is physical activity. So they're engaging in something that they enjoy not realizing that they're actually being physically engaged. (District Manager A).

We know the little kids have the 100 book challenge, and they come in with their books, and you go through that and you help them and everything. (District Manager B).

In addition to the activities provided by RSI's and site supervisors, enhancement RSI's enrich the curriculum by providing specified modules focused on skills. According to the After School Program Manual, "these RSI's are hired and assigned to programs by the after school office. They are responsible for instructions in their specialty at each

facility to which they are assigned. When in each facility, they are under the supervision of the facility supervisor.” (p. 8). For example, as one district manager noted:

When it first started, we had what was called enhancement RSIs. And you would have somebody who came out. You know, they might have traveled to three different rec centers in the week, but you know, they might have been doing music with the folks, or they might have been doing art, or they might have been doing performing arts. (District Manager F).

Program enhancement is also available to after school sites, and specifically outlined as a resource in the After School Program Manual:

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Environmental Education, Visual Arts, Sports & Athletics, Performing Arts, SPARK & Creative Resolution Theatre program provide various in-house opportunities in which the After School Program can take part. Partnerships with various agencies and non-profits also provide enhanced educational, nutritional and cultural education for our programs (p. 15).

Several district managers alluded to these partnership programs that have helped promote one or multiple program objectives. Although the various partnerships vary between districts and even specific sites, their focus on overarching program objectives is clear:

They actually do a little archery program. We have fitness which partners with us. That’s an organization that comes out and again it’s fitness. They work with the children and there’s a culminating event in March which we just had two weeks ago. So there’s those community resources and partnerships (District Manager F).

For the SPARK training there’s a core curricula. And they can go right to this book, and you know, so kind of everybody is doing that city-wide if they are following the SPARK (District Manager F).

With regards to partners. You know, Philly’s Fundamentals come in to some of our programs. We have tennis partners with a couple sites. And partnership. And there are some smaller partnerships I’m sure within different afterschool programs, exposes the youth to different experiences. Which is all I think a positive. (District Manager A).

Promoting physical activity and nutritional awareness is a particularly developed objective of the after school program, and the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines provides benchmarks and strategies for staff to employ at their sites. For example, after school programs are required to incorporate a minimum of 30 minutes per day or 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity (Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, p. 1). This progress is tracked by physical activity tracker forms, which site staff submit to the After School Office weekly. Similarly, after school programs must limit non-work screen time to 30 minutes per day (p. 2).

The extensive staff training and orientation process, along with the departmental and site specific enhancement instructors and partnerships, ensure that the activities support the stated goals and objectives of the program. This connection is supported by both district managers and program coordinators.

Are The Activities And Programming Planned, Intentional, And Focused On Meeting Needs?

Offering focused and intentional activities is a critical component of the after school program. For example, Program Coordinator B stated the overall purpose of the program was “first to provide a safe place for the kids to meet. Structure. Structured activities for them to participate in.” Most district managers also referenced the importance of structure in their description of the overall purpose of the program. District Manager E stated, “the first thing would be to have a safe, structured activity for kids during the after school hours.” Similarly, District Manager B stated, “I still think that’s part of our mission is to provide safe, whether they are somewhat structure activities, but there are guidelines and the range is wide open.

PPR after school program documents also promote a focused and structured environment, with the Parent's Handbook stating, "in a structured environment, children will be given the opportunity to work on homework, participate in physical activity, games, visual and performing arts." (p. 3). This structure is maintained through extensive forms and documentation required weekly and monthly from the RSI's and site supervisors (see Figure 2). In addition, certain program objectives are monitored and tracked through supplementary standards and protocols, such as the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines.

Although the after school program promotes a structured environment for most activities, the importance of providing time for free play is certainly recognized as well. In fact, providing unstructured free time (or "play") was often referred to as one of the planned and intentional strategies of the program by both program coordinators and district managers. For example, Program Coordinator A stated, "you may have a Boys and Girls club that has a highly structured program. You may have the library that has the LEAP program, which is a drop-in program where kids can get on the computers and do something." Similarly, Program Coordinator B revealed, "it's nice to see them come from school where it's all, you know, structure, structure. They come to after school and there is a million different kids, not classmates. It's just friends." District managers also recognized the importance of making time for play within a structured and supervised setting:

Give them something where they can engage, be committed to, and have adult supervision. While getting free time, but also time to do their homework. Having some structure, but also having freedom to explore different things. (District Manager A).

Importantly, promoting play and free time is an intentional strategy of the after school program, rather than simply a consequence of ineffective planning. For example, in the After School Program Manual it states, “Play is an important component of the After School Program. Time is set-aside for children to relax, hang out with friends and select activities they can enjoy.” (p. 7). A subsequent quote is included in the manual to reinforce this position: “...for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” (p. 7). According to the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, staff members are required to continue their supervision of participants on equipment during both structured activities and active play time (p. 5). It is clear that the activities provided by the PPR after school program are planned, intentional, and focused on meeting the objectives of the program.

Do Youth Have Choice In The Activities?

Providing a diversity of programming and activity options for participants is increasingly becoming a priority for both program coordinators and district managers. Most of the initiatives that have been introduced within the last decade have included elements of choice and independent learning opportunities for children to have more control over their daily activities. One program coordinator explains this progress in detail:

The fact that we are more consistently providing meals to the kids, that the activities that we're really incorporating – certainly play – but the homework aspect, the nutrition, the physical activity, really trying to broaden the offerings, and I think that we have learned that you don't bring all the children in and everybody does every activity at the same point. I think that choice is something that's beginning to evolve a little bit more strongly as it relates to our young people.
(Program Coordinator A).

In 2011, PPR piloted “Youth Councils” at four afterschool sites, a program which illustrates this trend of choice and leadership of programming. The program was featured in the July 2012 issue of Parks and Recreation, and is described below:

A mentor met with the youth councils every other week to discuss nutrition, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles with the children. Once the children on the council learned the lesson/activity, they then taught it to the other children in the program.

As an example, one of the lessons revolved around screen time. The children on the youth council were asked to estimate how much screen time they had in a day. As they were sharing their answers, even they were surprised by the amount of screen time indicated. They discussed the consequences of too much screen time and healthy alternatives. The Youth Council kids then conducted the same survey and discussion with the other children in the program.

The children have learned how to make healthy snacks, read nutrition labels, and play new games to stay active. For the 2012-2013 after school program, Philadelphia will expand the youth councils to 25 sites who will meet with a leader on a weekly basis.

Youth autonomy and choice has also been integrated into the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, which focuses on engaging and educating participants on healthy behaviors. For example, one of the supportive strategies outlined in this document recommends that staff “involve youth with taste testing new menu products, food preparation, and clean up.” (p. 8). Similarly, the guidelines specify that “if the afterschool program offers nutrition education, it will prioritize science-based nutrition materials from non-profit, federal, state, or city agencies.” (p. 3).

Specific activities within the after school program also provide leadership opportunities for youth. For example, urban gardening projects such as the Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI), Teens 4 Good, The Village of Arts and Humanities, and Neighborhood Foods provide opportunities for youth to connect with their communities

while also teaching them about gardens and biodiversity. Many of these programs have partnered with local PPR after school sites, and provide participants with unique opportunities to contribute to their community. Furthermore, the goals and objectives of these programs, particularly related to positive development and civic engagement, overlap considerably with the mission and purpose of the PPR after school program.

Finally, the intentional focus on providing time for play and “free-time” was outlined previously in this report, yet further emphasizes the opportunities youth have to individualize their own experience. Although structured activities exist that reinforce certain skills or intended program outcomes, providing time for individual creativity is also a major component of the after school program.

Resources

Are Staff Properly Trained And Qualified To Support Participant Needs?

Program coordinators and district managers agree that providing and mandating staff trainings has been one of the most important developments for the after school program. As District Manager E described, “All the after school instructors receive 12 to 24 hours of training for a year. And there’s other training, they are able to go to additional training.” District Manager C specifically detailed the development of staff training standards:

We have so many hours of training per season. I think it’s 24 hours. We have CPR. We have first aid. We have AED’s in the room now. We’ve come light years in the past 15 years, so a lot of good things have happened. (District Manager C).

According to the After School Program Manual, RSI’s must meet the following requirements before being considered for a position:

1. High School graduate, Vocational School graduate or GED.

2. Sufficient experience equivalent to two years of full time paid experience conducting and instructing classes or groups of children in educational or recreational activities.
3. Ability to physically perform the duties and to work in the environmental conditions required of this position.
4. City of Philadelphia residency.
5. Current Fire Safety, First Aid and CPR Certification Cards, valid through June of the current school year, must be presented. Classes are offered prior to school year.
6. Police crossing guards, school district personnel and others on government pensions are not eligible for this position due to funding origins.
7. All RSI's employed by the PPR After School Program are required to have a PA Criminal Background Check, a Child Line Clearance and FBI Fingerprint Clearance on file in the main office of the After School Program.

Once employed, RSI's who have completed three years of employment with the After School Program are required to obtain twelve hours of training each year, while RSI's with less than three completed years of service must take twenty-four hours of training every year (p. 9). These trainings supplement CPR, First Aid, and Fire Safety certifications, which do not count towards training hours. In addition, all staff are required to attend After School Administration Orientation, where they are instructed on the basic rules of running a site. As stated in the manual, "professional development trainings are required of the after school staff so they may be better informed of practices to help them conduct their program." (p. 9). Various workshops and supplemental seminars are offered throughout the year, with some mandatory for all staff, and others only for RSI's with less than 3 years of experience.

In a sample survey of RSI's representing 15 after school sites in six districts, staff reported a range of education, experience, and training hours. 50% of respondents attended Some College or higher, with 17% reporting that they had earned a 4 Year Degree. Overall experience of staff in the fields of recreation, education, and youth

development was strong (mean: 7.4 years), and individual experience ranged from 1 to 18 years. Staff reported between 0 and 18 years of experience with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (mean: 4.8 years), and 1 to 15 years of experience at their current site (mean: 6.7 years). Staff training ranged from 12 to 35 hours, with an average of nearly 20 hours. In general, these results suggest that although staff do not possess particularly strong academic qualifications, they are extremely well-trained and have extensive experience with both youth programming and PPR. This may reflect a departmental recruiting tactic one program coordinator alluded to.

I still go back to the RSIs typically are recruited from the neighborhoods where they serve, and that has always been our primary mission. These are good people that may not have the strongest academic background, but they care about the kids, and they come to these trainings, and they really acquire skills and they take so much pride in what they do for the kids. (Program Coordinator A).

At the end of each year, site supervisors complete a performance report on each RSI based on ten categories; (1) Knowledge, (2) Quality of Work, (3) Supervision, (4) Outreach, (5) Programming, (6) Work Habits, (7) Relationship with People, (8) Attitude, (9) Initiative, and (10) Dependability. These reports are reviewed and signed by the RSI, then filed at both the site and After School Office. The combination of these hiring, training, and evaluation practices ensures that staff are qualified and prepared to effectively lead after school sites.

Are Adequate Supplies Available To Provide High-Quality Activities?

District managers indicated that although reduced funding has placed more stress on limited staff, ample supplies are still available for activities and programming either through the department budget or new partnerships. For example, one district manager noted that “supplies have been pretty plentiful”, while another stated that “the facilities

have a lot of their own supplies”. The department has a warehouse that sites can order from, and supplies are usually delivered once or twice a year depending on availability. Individual facilities are also encouraged to charge program fees that can be used to purchase additional supplies for their program. District Manager C explained this process, “I have some programs that are self-sustaining that they can afford to hire extra staff, buy equipment, buy extra snacks, but those are the parents who pay the fees to fund to after-school.” District Manager F also alluded to a similar structure, “some of the programs are able to charge a small fee, tuition fee, and with that they supplement other staff as well as supplies, and some extra trips.”

Additionally, many sites have benefitted from partnerships that either donated equipment directly to the site, or have supplies for after school participants to use as part of their initiative. For example, most managers specifically highlighted the SPARK partnership, which provided athletic and fitness supplies to supplement the core curricula. District Manager A stated that the SPARK partnership “gave equipment to every site, and a resource guide for games and activities”, while District Manager B believed it was “wonderful for our people all to have the same kind of materials, like when they got that SPARK.” Program coordinators also highlighted the benefit of this partnership:

And SPARK is a program where there’s a lot of equipment provided, so hula hoops, balls, parachutes, things like that, and then all of our after-school staff, as well as a leader from every facility that had any after-school program, was trained in noncompetitive games using that equipment. (Program Coordinator A).

Between supplies provided by the PPR department, supplemental equipment purchased with tuition fees, and existing partnerships, sites have sufficient supplies to provide a quality program.

Is A Safe Environment Provided For Participants To Enjoy Activities?

A clean and safe environment is extremely important to the PPR after school program, as it provides an effective platform from which to promote other goals and outcomes. As stated previously, both management and district managers consider safety a prominent objective of the PPR after school program. This section specifically addresses how that objective is integrated into the established protocols and procedures of the organization.

According to program coordinators, approximately sixty percent of facilities have a caretaker on-site all day, while the remaining forty percent are serviced by a crew from the Facilities department on a rotating basis. Despite this considerable attention, there have been issues with aging facilities and general upkeep. In the 2011 Appraisal of Recreation and Entertainment Opportunities, independent consultants noted how “recreation centers, in general, have limited staffing and aging facilities.” (p. 24). This was also observed by certain district managers, who stated that some facilities were now too small for their growing attendance.

Program coordinators have also recognized the maintenance issue, indicating a backlog that has delayed some facility repairs. However, one program coordinator indicated that since the 2009 merger with the Fairmount Parks Commission they have received additional budget allocations to help address the issue, and is optimistic of continued improvements:

The facilities and maintenance has been an issue, and with the merger we're looking at safe, clean, ready to use, and you may hear that from other folks, but if a facility is not maintained as far as cleanliness – I have always looked at programs, “Would I send my child here,” and I think that that's the standard. And, also, as we're talking about things being fixed, we just recently received an additional allocation in our operating budget,

that we have so many skilled trades and vacancies, we are now going to be able to fill them and clear some of the backlog. (Program Coordinator A).

Providing a safe physical environment for participants is a clear goal of the PPR after school program. The After School Parent's Handbook includes a cover letter to parents which includes the following statement addressing the safety of the facilities, "Philadelphia Parks & Recreation strives to provide a safe, clean and ready-to-use environment so your child can enjoy his/her out-of-school time experience." (p. 1). In addition, guidelines and strategies set forth in supplemental materials reinforce this emphasis, particularly in relation to the use of equipment and supplies. For example, in the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, guiding principles and supportive strategies are provided to ensure a safe environment for play and physical activity is provided.

Guiding Principles

- i) Equipment is clean, inspected, developmentally appropriate, and in good working condition.
- ii) Play areas are free of hazardous materials.
- iii) Staff members supervise youth on play equipment, during active play, and during all structured activities.

Supportive Strategies

- i) Perform a daily facility inspection and provide ongoing supervision before, during, and after physical activity.
 - ii) Perform daily inspection of physical activity equipment and maintain proper storage of such equipment.
 - iii) Ensure that daily physical activity includes age-appropriate activities.
 - iv) Provide one trained staff member of every 15 children participating in physical activity during afterschool and summer programming.
- (Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, p. 5)

Similarly, PPR has documented guidelines for serving food and drink to participants. According to the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, fresh drinking water must be "available to youth at all times, indoors and outdoors, including

trips off-site during program hours.” (p. 2). Similarly, meals must be served “in a clean and safe environment, in compliance with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health Office of Food Protection requirements, and at proper serving temperatures.” (p. 3).

These documented standards provide reference points to help staff ensure the physical safety of participants, however promoting a safe social atmosphere that ensures their perceived safety is equally as important. In the After School Program Manual, procedures for discipline issues are provided to help staff promote consistent positive behavior. The protocol is included below:

- Infractions should be addressed by giving the child a reminder or warning for the first offense. Document all infractions in Daily Log book.
 - The second offense should cause the child to spend a period of “time out” apart from the group.
 - When a discipline problem cannot be corrected within the program, a parent (and facility supervisor) should be notified. Document the discussion in Log Book.
 - A plan of action that addresses the problem behavior should be discussed and implemented among the parent(s), staff and the child to resolve the problem.
 - If subsequent behavior problems persist, suspension or dismissal from the program should result.
 - Be consistent and treat all children equally.
- (After School Program Manual, p. 18).

Behavioral expectations are also communicated directly to parents and youth through the Participant’s Code of Conduct, which was outlined previously in this report and is included in the After School Program Parent’s Handbook (p. 9). This outlines clear expectations for participants, and promotes a positive social atmosphere amongst both staff and youth.

Personal safety is promoted and monitored through procedures and protocols that have been developed by the after school program. This significant emphasis is not only evident in program documents and forms, but also in interviews with coordinators and

managers. These measures ensure that each after school site maintains a safe environment and social atmosphere that is conducive to promoting important program goals and outcomes.

Does The Program Have Strong Partnerships With Schools And/or Local Community?

Interviews with program coordinators and district managers revealed extensive partnerships with external agencies at various levels. For example, the partnership with SPARK provided training for instructors who then taught the core curricula to after school staff and leaders at each facility. This partnership not only offered noncompetitive options for physical activities, but also provided equipment such as hula hoops, balls, and parachutes that enhanced the impact of such games. This relationship was part of a grant from the Health Department's Center for Disease Control, and has been implemented throughout the entire PPR after school system. Similarly, PPR collaborated with the Department of Public Health and The Food Trust to develop the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines, which provided specific strategies and guidelines for staff to integrate appropriate physical activity and nutritional awareness into their programming.

Smaller-scale partnerships exist at the district and site-specific level as well. The Phillies Fundamentals program operates at about ten sites, and provides learning activities related to baseball. Similarly, some sites are partnered with 4-H, which provides urban gardening projects and alternative activities such as archery for after school participants. Finally, certain programs have agreements with faith-based institutions and community centers that help provide additional resources such as meals and program space. For example, one district manager explained:

It's a lot of work, but they provide a hot meal for the kids. And it's actually with the Archdiocese program. But anybody from our department, our after-school programs, when they have a training there, and they see what they're doing, they would love to do it. But it's a lot of work and a lot of coordination. (District Manager B).

One partnership that has garnered considerable attention has been Mantua in Action with Drexel University, which is a program that is currently being piloted at two after school sites. Drexel University has partnered with local agencies to provide equipment and qualified staff to run programs in disadvantaged neighborhoods. One district manager was particularly optimistic of the potential of this development:

Drexel is sponsoring, Mantua in Action. All right. So that's huge. That's gonna be the wave of the future, we hope, is that a college or business works with the neighborhood group to succeed in out-of-school-time programs. That's working great there. It's been going on for about a year. (District Manager C).

Although strong relationships currently exist, program coordinators expressed a desire to continue searching for practical and functional partnerships. Program Coordinator A stated, "perhaps we can look at strategic partnerships, but I think the partnerships it's a very delicate piece. It has to be sustainable and well thought out." Importantly, management and leadership emphasized the importance of finding creative partners that provide sustainable and constructive resources.

Evaluation

This particular section was addressed in interviews with program coordinators and district managers. The evaluation would require semi-annual collection periods to record survey responses from participants at the beginning and end of each program cycle. In order to accurately measure more latent constructs such as involvement, these cycles would need to be part of a longitudinal design that would allow results to be tracked from

year to year. Coordinators and managers affirmed this structure would fit into the timing of their regular program cycle, and did not foresee any logistical complications.

The political climate would not present any restrictions to scheduled survey collections, as Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis has consistently supported the transparency of the PPR department. External appraisals and reviews were commissioned in 2006 and 2011, and PaRC was formed to allow various stakeholders to voice their input. The security of respondents personal information would be another potential issue to mitigate, as analysis would be completed by an external agency. However, establishing a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) agreement between PPR and the external agency would protect the privacy of information, and a disclaimer inserted into the participant waiver would protect the security of participants, similar to the Photo Release Agreement which is already contained within the participant registration form.

Through their participation in the preliminary EA, frontline staff, stakeholders, and management have affirmed they are available for evaluation processes such as interviews and survey collections. Internal program documentation and staff procedures protocols were submitted for this EA analysis, and management/service staff willingly accommodated supplemental interviews and survey collections. This further indicates a departmental willingness to support external review and assessment. Management has also indicated that while funding has been reduced in recent years, adequate resources are available for evaluation if performed through a partnership.

Finally, coordinators and district managers indicated that results would be useful in making informed decisions related to the program. For example, Program Coordinator B stated:

I think participant evaluation is huge. We need to know what the kids think of the programs. Parent evaluations to find out what it is. Why they're sending their child there. What it is that they're hoping to get from those programs. What it is they like, don't like. Why they chose this one over another one. And our own staff I think we need to follow-up with, too. You know, the interesting thing about our programs is that we have certain guidelines, but each facility runs differently. So it's different at every site. And I think to find out – to get the parents and the children's feedback gives us a better idea of where we should be looking for grants, and where we should be looking for partnerships and funding.

Similarly, Program Coordinator A indicated that both baseline information and subsequent analysis would aid resource allocation and managerial decisions:

Well, I think that some baseline data of who are we serving, what are the demographics, whether it's age, gender, neighborhoods, income levels? What's the poverty line? I think that may be helpful for us in some ways, whether it's for grant or just to be able to talk about our kids. How much? I don't think that you can make a strong line between, "If this child comes to my after-school program, he will increase his academic performance by X, Y, Z." I don't think you can do that, but as we were talking about where do kids feel safe, and if we can talk about building civic engagement with kids. Connection to community. I think that those are really important values as we develop our next generation of citizens. I think in an ideal situation – I mean certainly we would like to look at this if we can apply for funding, but most importantly is to have a unified discussion within the department of Parks and Recreation about the best place to put a supervisor, based upon their skills and abilities, to be able to provide the best opportunity for kids.

District managers also referenced the potential value of longitudinal assessment and consistent evaluation, as District Manager F noted:

Those are the areas that the research is around now, supportive adult relationships, feeling safe. Social skills and confidence, and doing the flaw of the summer camp is that we only do it at the end, but I know a lot of surveys do the kids at the beginning and the end, so I think that would be really valuable.

This information suggests that PPR is prime candidate for evaluation, and would benefit tremendously from resulting information. Included on the following page is the completed EA Criteria:

Completed EA Criteria		
Management	Yes	No
Does the program have a clearly stated purpose?	X	
Does the program have specific and realistic goals and objectives?	X	
Are the goals and objectives communicated to personnel and staff?	X	
Are performance measures in place to determine if the program was successful?		X
Is the program flexible and responsive to external factors?	X	
Percentage	%	%
If Yes \geq 80%: Proceed to Implementation checklist	80	20
If Yes < 80%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Implementation	Yes	No
Is the program serving its intended population?	X	
Do the activities reinforce the stated goals and objectives of the program?	X	
Are the activities and programming planned, intentional, and focused on meeting needs?	X	
Do the youth have choice in the activities?	X	
Percentage	%	%
If Yes = 100%: Proceed to Resources checklist	100	0
If Yes = 100%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Resources	Yes	No
Are staff properly trained and qualified to support participant needs?	X	
Are adequate supplies available to provide high-quality activities?	X	
Is a safe environment provided for participants to enjoy activities?	X	
Does the program have strong partnerships with schools and the local community?	X	
Percentage	%	%
If Yes = 100%: Proceed to Evaluation checklist	100	0
If Yes = 100%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Evaluation	Yes	No
Does the timing of the evaluation fit into the program cycle?	X	
Can external factors (political, climatic, security etc.) hamper the evaluation?	X	
Will frontline staff and stakeholders in the field be available for evaluation?	X	
Will management and administrative staff be available for evaluation?	X	
Is an adequate evaluation budget available?	X	
Will results be used constructively to inform decisions?	X	
Percentage	%	%
If Yes \geq 80%: Proceed to Evaluation	100	0
If Yes < 80%: Modification is required before proceeding		
Figure 3. Completed EA Criteria. This figure contains the completed ‘evaluability’ criteria for youth after school programs.		

CONCLUSION

Is The PPR After School Program Evaluable?

Although a uniform curriculum is not followed by each site, the core vision and perceptions of intended outcomes is relatively consistent throughout the hierarchical management structure of the PPR After School Program. The program operates as a large decentralized organization, with decisions regarding the day-to-day operations made at the facility level (p. 6). Due to a particularly strong training and professional development program, the goals and objectives are consistently communicated to site supervisors and RSI staff, who are empowered to develop programming curriculum and activities built around the overarching purpose. From a management perspective, the internal structure of the PPR after school program is sound, and the goals, objectives, and intended impacts are clearly communicated throughout the organization.

However, PPR after school programs serve local communities throughout the city that vary considerably in terms of their demographic, racial, and socioeconomic profiles. Similarly, the survey results suggest that sites also have varying levels of resources in terms of staffing, financial support, supplies, and maintenance. These disparities are due in large part to the environmental factors mentioned previously, and are difficult to control for with limited funding and information. From an evaluation perspective, these inconsistencies may have significant influences on any outcomes assessment that aggregates results to measure the impact of a singular intervention (i.e. PPR after school program). Furthermore, tracking the progression of individual children and youth throughout the program may prove problematic, as the baseline and subsequent measures

may be positively or negatively influenced by a number of environmental or contextual factors that are not associated with the PPR after school program.

Future evaluations of the PPR after school program must not only control for these differences, but also exercise caution when combining data from more than one site. For internal purposes, maintaining disaggregated data will actually provide useful information for management decisions such as staff and resource allocation, even without a control group. Yet in order to accurately study the impact of the after school program on developmental outcomes, a control group with baseline equivalence should be established. In conclusion, the PPR after school program fits the appropriate criteria for evaluation, provided that the previously discussed issues are mitigated.

What Future Research Will Yield Useful Results?

Impact of Staff Training and Professional Development

In the field of youth programming and childcare services, frontline staff are generally subjected to heavy workloads, excessive regulation, and low compensation (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). Lack of training and poor support cause many to leave the field altogether, with a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003) describing the rate of staff attrition as a “state of crisis” (p. 2). Staff are increasingly expected to handle complex problems on a daily basis despite a lack of preparation and baseline ability (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003), an issue that is compounded by shrinking budgets for community-based recreational programming (Brown, 2010). Light (2003) administered a random sample survey of over 1,200 frontline child care, child welfare, employment and training, juvenile justice, and youth service workers, which revealed that over 75% were frustrated with their work, 51% felt unappreciated, and 42%

estimated that 1 out of every 10 of their coworkers was not doing his or her job well.

Similarly, a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003) defined eight general factors that pose the greatest challenge to the workforce (p. ii).

1. Nonprofit, government, and for-profit employers cannot find sufficient numbers of quality staff
2. When they do, too many of those workers do not stay
3. Workers are paid less than those in other jobs at comparable levels
4. There is limited opportunity for professional growth and advancement
5. Workers receive poor supervision, and little guidance or support
6. Rule-bound jobs leave little latitude for discretion and drive out the most entrepreneurial workers
7. The education and training these workers receive do not match the roles and demands actually encountered on the job
8. Workers are paid less than those in other jobs that require comparable skills

Despite the hardships faced by program staff, practitioners and researchers alike agree that workforce quality contributes powerfully and directly to better service outcomes (Weiss et al., 2006). In a longitudinal study of promising after school sites, Huang (2006) highlighted the importance of leadership skills, support, and staff capital (i.e., personal characteristics, relational skills, and subject matter knowledge) in enhancing the quality of programs and facilitating student engagement and retention. Staff are crucial to establishing a safe environment in the after school setting (Jones & Deutsch, 2011), and can promote a general sense of belonging, personal efficacy, and positive social environments (Mahoney, Eccles, & Larson, 2004). According to Larson

(2000), mentoring relationships influence academic achievement and psychosocial development, and previous research suggests that relationships with staff are integral to youth attachments in after-school programs (Deutsch & Hirsch, 2002; Hirsch, 2005).

More specifically, within urban youth programs adults can facilitate learning by providing opportunities to overcome challenges at an appropriate developmental level (Larson & Walker, 2006). Youth can develop an emotional attachment to an organization driven primarily by psychosocial aspects of the place, which contribute to an overarching socio-emotional attachment to programs as “home-places” or “second-homes” (Deutsch & Hirsch, 2002; Hirsch, 2005; Jones & Deutsch, 2011). As Jones & Deutsch explained, according to this model, aspects of the program such as feeling cared about and having close relationships with adult staff are important components of the overall environments of after-school settings that may keep youth involved as they age. (p. 1383).

When asked about the strengths of the after school program, both PPR program coordinators and district managers highlighted the significant work of their staff. PPR typically recruit after school program staff from the local community, which is a common characteristic of quality community-oriented programs (Huang, 2006). Interestingly, one program coordinator estimated the average experience of PPR site supervisors and RSI’s is between 6-8 years, while the surveys administered to a small sample of staff revealed an average experience of 7.4 years, which far exceeds the average observed in Huang’s (2006) study of quality programs (4.6 years). Professional development and training has been cited as an integral component of high quality programs (Huang, 2006; Little, 2004; Seligson, 2004; Weaver, Beets, Webster, Beighle & Huberty, 2012), however few studies

have addressed the direct connection between professional development and youth outcomes (Hill, 2012), causing practitioners and researchers to often make a “leap of faith” (Hall & Gannett, 2010) that such strategies *actually* improve program operations and youth outcomes (Hill, 2012).

The Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department places a major emphasis on professional development, investing significantly in training opportunities and seminars.

According to the After school Program Manual (p. 9-10):

Professional Development Trainings are required of the After School Staff so they may be better informed of practices to help them conduct their program. All staff are required to attend an After School Administration Orientation where they are instructed on the basic rules of running a Philadelphia Parks & Recreation After School site. Various other workshops and trainings are offered throughout the year. Some are mandatory for all, others for those RSI's with less than 3 years' experience. RSI's will be compensated for attending Professional Development Trainings set up through the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation After School Office only.

Every RSI with less than 3 full years of employment experience is required to complete 24 hours of training every year, and RSI with more than 3 years of employment experience must obtain 12 hours of training per year (After school Program Manual Appendix, p. 9). In addition, several sessions are mandatory for all staff, including site supervisors. This level of training seemingly exceeds the average offered by quality programs studied by Huang (2006), who reported that professional development was offered to site coordinators about 3.5 times a year, and to staff members about 2.5 times a year. The association between PPR's extensive staff development and training programs and the intended outcomes of the after school program require further examination. Assessing this relationship would not only expand the existing body of research, but could also lead to more streamlined operations for management. In addition, the

relationship between professional development and employee retention rates require further examination, as PPR after school coordinators and district managers reported low turnover despite numerous national studies reporting poor retention rates and widespread job dissatisfaction amongst frontline staff (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003; Light, 2001).

Involvement as a Measure of Participation

Currently, the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation after school program maintains accurate logs of attendance that not only include participation, but also track the physical activity of participants. Attendance sheets are maintained by site supervisors and RSI's, which track the intensity and duration of participation, along with total program exposure. This information is passed through the district managers and coordinators to the data committee, who enter the information monthly into a database. These figures essentially act as a proxy for participant satisfaction, and are used to assess the quality after school program sites in the city.

The importance of accurately measuring attendance has been discussed previously in this report, however a growing body of literature is extending the concept of participation to include behavioral and emotional elements of attachment and engagement in programs and activities (Shernoff, 2010; Weiss, 2004). It has been shown that youth benefit from participating in organized activities. However, merely attending an activity may not be sufficient for reaping the benefits of involvement (Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010). The definition of participation now goes beyond attendance to include youth engagement and involvement in program activities. Attitudinal constructs are not

simply a component of program participation, but more important features to be considered when assessing program quality and outcomes.

For example, in their study of five programs serving middle school students, Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, and Connell (2010) reported an association between engagement and various measures of program quality, but not program attendance. Similarly, in a study of middle school students Shernoff (2010) found the positive relationship between program attendance and social outcomes was mediated by youth engagement, and that even when program attendance was not associated with outcomes, youth engagement did positively predict outcomes (Hirsch et al., 2010). Alexandris, Kouthouris, Funk, & Oga (In Press) segmented youth recreational swimmers into groups (high, medium, and low) based on their involvement with swimming and found statistically significant scores in five negotiation strategies, with the highly involved individuals reporting the highest scores, and the lowest involved individuals reporting the lowest scores. Other studies have found that youth engagement is strongly related to program design and youth outcomes, and suggest that engagement could indicate the quality of youth's experience in these settings (Hirsch et al., 2010).

Traditionally, academics and practitioners have linked participation and attendance with program outcomes, however children's attendance in after-school programs is not always voluntary, and can be influenced by many factors which are not necessarily related to the quality of participants' experience in the programs (Hirsch et al., 2010). This emphasizes the need to assess more latent constructs that assess participant's attachment to an activity or program.

Focus on Positive Youth Development (PYD) over “Deficit View”

Although anecdotal suggestions of positive youth outcomes were evident in reviewed program documentation, the terms were often related to short-term outcomes or broadly generalized. Furthermore, when asked about the goals and benefits of the after school program, district managers and site supervisors often referred to how participants were being “kept out of trouble” or “kept off the streets”. In short, the benefits of participation for children were oftentimes that they did *not* commit acts of crime/violence, did *not* use drugs or alcohol, or did *not* engage in anti-social behavior.

This viewpoint has been referred to as storm and stress or as an ontogenetic time of normative developmental disturbance (Lerner, R., Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, J., 2005), where positive behavior is typically implicitly or explicitly regarded as the absence of negative or undesirable behaviors (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma 2003). The concept was often predicated on the assumption that children are “broken” or in danger of becoming broken, and thus were regarded as “problems to be managed” (Benson et al., 2007; Lerner & Benson, 2003). As recently as 1999, a predominant emphasis in the youth development field continued to be a reliance on this “deficit model” of youth which defined positive development as the absence of adolescent problem behaviors (Lerner et al., 2005). Although reductions in drug abuse or teenage crime are clearly beneficial, focusing on positive indicators may be more effective when encouraging the development of desirable, healthy, and valued behaviors among children and adolescents (Lerner et al., 2005).

A new vision and vocabulary for discussing America’s young people has emerged that is associated with latent constructs which capture the essence of to-be-developed

indicators that comprise PYD (Lerner, R., Phelps, Lerner, J., & Theokas, 2006). The new vocabulary emphasizes the natural strengths within all young people and involves concepts such as developmental assets, civic engagement, and well-being (Lerner et al., 2005). According to Lerner et al. (2002), these developmental strengths are processed by bidirectional relations between children and their own unique contexts which consist of mutually regulated conditions (Zimmerman, Phelps, & Lerner, 2008). Zimmerman et al. (2008) propose that in relation to youth programming, when the strengths of youth are aligned with such contextual resources (i.e. after school programs), positive development will be promoted. These concepts are predicated on the idea that every young person has the potential for successful development and that all youth possess the capacity for positive development (Lerner et al., 2005).

Although evidence of this approach is certainly prevalent amongst PPR staff, a further commitment to adopt this terminology and further clarify the positive goals and outcomes of the PPR after school program to both internal and external stakeholders may prove beneficial. Although providing a safe environment is the prominent objective, it should not be confused with the overall mission or long-term outcomes. The PPR after school program has multiple activities (i.e. urban gardening, homework assistance, youth councils) and partnerships (i.e. USDA after school meal, SPARK fitness) that provide outstanding resources for youth to develop critical skills. In order to participate in these optimistic and constructive opportunities, children implicitly must not be engaging in risky behavior. Essentially, the PPR after school program can effectively reduce negative behavior by promoting positive behavior.

Although implicitly suggested by the nature of existing partnerships, program structure, intended short-term outcomes, and activities, the PPR after school program could further integrate PYD vocabulary into their training modules, objectives, and mission. The provision of a safe environment and participant's perception of safety can be reclassified as one of the objectives or short-term outcomes of the program, and subsequent evaluations should then examine the relationship between this important objective and the intended long-term outcomes.

Consider Contextual Differences

In a synthesis of research focused on at-risk youth, Koball et al. (2011) observed that there is no official definition of at-risk youth (p. 3). The term is not an absolute identifier, but rather used to describe young people who have a low probability of successfully transitioning to adulthood and achieving economic self-sufficiency (Koball et al., 2011). "At-risk" environments exist in a variety of settings across subpopulations, and children are continually subjected to new personal challenges and circumstances (Dion et al., 2013). Koball and colleagues (2011) identified "risk factors" to guide interventions (p. 3), and although the advancement of youth development research and practice has sought to mitigate some of these issues (i.e. family dysfunction, school resources, sociability), certain external influences are deeply rooted in the structure of society, and have a tremendous impact on youth. Koball et al. (2011) highlighted several of these factors, including poverty, community resources, and exposure to violence.

Although PPR serves an exclusively urban population, the social and environmental backgrounds of their participants vary considerably. The PPR after school program operates out of almost 100 sites covering approximately 140 square miles across

Philadelphia. Each of these facilities recruits through word of mouth and occasional direct marketing techniques (i.e. flyers, posters), from children in the local neighborhood with drastically different demographic, socioeconomic, racial, and academic backgrounds. According to the After school Program Manual, program fees are determined by the facility supervisors, with the following guidelines:

- A fee between five and twenty five dollars (\$5.00-\$25.00) should be charged per participant, per week. Discounts for more than one child in a family may be offered.
- Fees can be collected weekly, biweekly, or monthly.
- All fees must be deposited in the facility Advisory Council Account. Fees must be reinvested into the program. After School fees should be used to purchase supplies, equipment, trips, furniture, or to hire additional staff.
- If a family has difficulty meeting the financial requirements, supervisors have the latitude to make alternate decisions involving volunteer service in exchange for payment.

As a result, after school sites receive varying levels of financial support from their local communities. In general, low-income areas pay lower program fees (or none at all), and higher income areas are able to charge more. Consequently, sites in lower income areas that serve children who are exposed to more “risk factors” actually have less financial capital than facilities in higher income areas. This impacts the facility supervisor’s ability to purchase supplies, fund trips, and effectively advertise the after school program. Several district managers alluded to this issue,

I have some programs that are self-sustaining that they can afford to hire extra staff, buy equipment, buy extra snacks, but those are the parents who pay the fees to fund the after school. (District Manager D).

There are neighborhoods where the facilities probably raise enough money where they could probably pay for staff, and there are other parts of the city where the facility really depends on the city staff.
(District Manager A).

The PPR department currently uses all available information (i.e. attendance records, input from district managers) to allocate supplemental staff and resources to sites throughout the city. Integrating environmental factors into data from performance measures and outputs would greatly expand and contextualize this information, and allow management to continually make informed decision.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Initially proposed by Little (1993), these positively charged latent constructs were first presented as the four Cs of PYD (competence, confidence, connection, and character) (Zimmerman et al., 2008). Evidence from research and practice has since been reviewed and supports the use of these C's and a fifth C (Caring) in understanding the outcomes of programs (Lerner et al., 2005). Numerous reviews have indicated that the Five Cs Model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date (Bowers et al., 2010; Heck & Subramaniam 2009), as the PYD construct has displayed good psychometric properties and each of the five Cs exhibits excellent internal consistency (Lerner et al., 2005). As the PYD perspective was adopted by more youth-serving programs, Geldhof et al. (2013) introduced the short-form and very-short-form PYD measure, which has proven practical for both researchers and practitioners. Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, and Bloom refined these items even further to ensure all items could be answered using the same response-option descriptors in their study involving youth sport participants.

Given the context and setting of the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation after school program, this measure provides a useful model for assessment. District managers and coordinators expressed an interest in assessing the social and behavioral development of their participants, and the 5 C's model of PYD would provide such information. More importantly, many of the short-term outcomes outlined in the logic model appear collectively synonymous with key PYD constructs. This measure would not only provide information related to short-term outcomes of the PPR after school program, but would

assess the development of PYD as more latent construct reflective of long-term positive change.

Program Involvement

The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) provides a useful framework to study participation in physically active leisure from an involvement perspective (Beaton & Funk, 2008). The PCM proposes a stage-based developmental trajectory of recreational involvement, with participant engagement progressing from “minimal” to “enhanced” while behavioral engagement progresses from simple to complex. According to Beaton and Funk (2008), as psychological engagement forms, participation becomes more contingent on individual rather than sociological processes, and attitudes and behavior patterns become more predictable (p. 63).

Although the PCM offers the ability to gauge and track engagement across multiple entities, this measure will be specifically applied to the PPR after school program environment, as the activities do not conform to a conventional curriculum and vary from site to site. This information will enrich current outputs and may be particularly useful for predicting retention rates among participants. Similarly, managers will be able to identify the unique demographic, environmental, and social characteristics of participants at different stages of the PCM.

Physical Activity

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention developed the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey (YRBSS) to monitor six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth (Brener et al., 2004). Unhealthy dietary behaviors and physical inactivity were identified as two of the six categories to be measured.

Although self-reports of these behaviors are affected by both cognitive and situational factors, understanding the differences in factors that threaten the validity of self-reporting can assist policymakers in interpreting data (Brener et al., 2004). With the physical activity trackers and nutritional meal logs, PPR after school managers can maintain relatively objective measures of participant activity levels while on site. Therefore, only one additional item will be added to this assessment, which will combine the content of two YRBSS items regarding sedentary behaviors. This questions will be related to “screen time”, which is defined as any time in front of a television, computer, or game console for the purposes of entertainment. This definition fits appropriately with the guidelines outlined in the Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines (p. 2-3, 5).

Nutrition

The Pro Children Project questionnaire was designed to evaluate the psychosocial factors related to fruit and vegetable consumption in children from several Northern European countries (De Bourdeaudhui et al., 2004). The measures are theory-based, literature-based, and brief for maximum practicality, and the questionnaire was validated using cross-sectional results from multiple European countries (De Bourdeaudhui et al., 2004). Subsequent studies in North America have utilized the Knowledge, Self-Efficacy, Intentions Questionnaire (KSIQ), which comprises three of the fifteen constructs adapted from the initial questionnaire (Gates, A., Hanning, Gates, M., Isogai, Metatawabin, & Tsuji, 2013; Gates, A., Hanning, Gates, M., Isogai, Metatwabin, & Tsuji, 2011).

The KSIQ instrument provides an excellent complement to the food logs currently maintained by RSI and GSI site staff, as it focuses on the potential determinants of consumption in children, rather than their reported consumption. Through partnerships

with the USDA and Food Fit Philly, the PPR after school program provides snacks after school that meet established nutritional guidelines. Therefore, this instrument will specifically evaluate the participant's knowledge of healthy foods, and their intentions to continue healthy consumption behaviors in their daily lives.

Safety

The Perceived Safety Scale was designed to assess student's perceptions of their own personal safety at home, at school, and in their communities (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2013). The psychometric properties of this 3-item scale were tested using data from a diverse group of 5,163 middle school students from Ohio, and showed that the 3 items loaded on a single latent Perceived Safety factor. Overall, this measure provides a useful framework for assessing children's perceptions of safety, which may influence positive youth development outcomes.

As stated previously, youth can develop emotional attachments to organizations which contribute to the development of programs as "home-places" or "second-homes" (Jones & Deutsch, 2011). PPR district managers and program coordinators not only emphasized the importance of safety, but also referred to the after school programs in their regions as "safe havens" (District Manager C) and "second homes" (District Manager A), which would certainly seem appropriate given the at-risk population most sites serve. In order to gauge these perceptions, one additional item will be added to the current scale to assess perceptions of safety specifically related to after school program sites. This will not only contribute to the composite latent construct of perceived safety, but also allow for relative situational comparisons.

DISCUSSION

This EA ensured the structure and vision of the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR) after school program was consistent throughout the organization by clarifying the inherent program logic, refining objectives and intended outcomes, and identifying specific program priorities. Due to the decentralized structure of the PPR after school program, environmental contexts vary considerably within the organization, along with the resources available to specific sites (i.e. supplies, equipment, and maintenance). If these issues were not diagnosed through the use of EA as a pre-evaluation step, subsequent formative studies and outcome assessments may have provided misleading information regarding the efficacy of the program. Instead, these characteristics have been accounted for in the subsequent evaluation recommendations, which increases the probability that resulting information will be useful for managers.

Furthermore, by relying primarily on existing documentation, along with interviews and surveys with internal stakeholders, this EA ensures that recommendations for future evaluations fit the overall objectives and intended long-term outcomes of the program. By developing an evaluative design that is informed and shaped by the specific logic and structure of the PPR after school program, this EA not only reinforces the fundamental purpose of the program internally, but also provides measurable indicators that staff understand and can react to. EA greatly increases the likelihood that data gathered from future assessments will provide relevant, timely, and useful information for all stakeholders involved with the organization. This will directly inform the decisions and thinking of policymakers, coordinators, facility supervisors, and site staff, and facilitate the continued development of an outcome-driven information system.

Finally, this EA relied on a consistent dialogue between researchers and practitioners to determine what was feasible and practical given the existing resources. As this discourse continued throughout the EA process, the applications and utility of future evaluation were discussed to ensure resulting information would be integrated into the operations and decision-making process. A formal evaluation design has been presented in this report, and will be subsequently reviewed by PPR after school coordinators to establish timely parameters.

In the current economic climate, after school funding from federal, state, and local sources has been drastically reduced (Fleming, 2011). Similar to other industries, the budgets of recreation departments across the country are under continued threat (Jacobson & Blank, 2013), and face the difficult prospect of maintaining quality services for growing demand, with limited funding and staffing. When strategic partnerships or operational and external funding allow for evaluations, it is imperative that scarce resources are used effectively. It is even more important that appropriate evaluation methods are employed which consider the goals and objectives of the program, so that subsequent information is functional.

This report demonstrates that EA not only maximizes scarce resources, but also increases the likelihood that subsequent evaluations will provide useful and accurate information. Similar to most youth recreation and out-of-school time environments, conducting scientifically rigorous studies in the after school setting is particularly difficult, and can lead to misleading information that overestimates or underestimates the true impact of programs on intended outcomes. If utilized as a formal pre-evaluative

step, EA can help mitigate the threat of many methodological issues outlined previously, and provide useful feedback to practitioners regarding program structure and theory.

LIMITATIONS

EA is typically conducted by a team composed of members from stakeholder groups, program implementers, and administration, thus building a broad comprehensive view of the program (Trevisan & Huang, 2003). In this particular EA, the team consisted primarily of stakeholders within the PPR organization, with only one external representative. Consequently, the archival, secondary source review, semi-structured interviews, and survey collection was analyzed by one member of the team. Although this member was supported by external advisors and committee members, future reviews should consider involving more than one external team member in the EA process to allow for balanced perspectives and input from outside the organization.

As stated by Trevisan and Huang (2003), EA can also be time consuming due to scheduling conflicts, difficulties in gaining commitments from key stakeholders, and the restricted availability of program documents. Despite the exceptional cooperation of stakeholders within the PPR after school program, arranging times for interviews and surveys that fit in the schedules of both parties is challenging, and should be accommodated. Once again, this concern may be alleviated considerably when more reviewers are available.

The purpose of EA is to increase the likelihood that subsequent evaluations will produce timely, relevant, and useful information to improve youth recreation and after school programming. Although the suggested criteria presents a constructive framework to guide analysis, modifications may be necessary depending on situational factors. Furthermore, the criteria should be considered a dynamic rather than static instrument, as

the organizational quality standards of after school and youth programming continue to be identified and redefined.

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APPENDIX A
List of Reviewed Documentation

1. After school Program Parent's Handbook
2. After School Program Manual
3. Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Guidelines
4. May 25, 2011 Internal Appraisal of Philadelphia Recreation and Entertainment Opportunities
5. Participant Registration/Waiver Forms
6. Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation Operational Structure Chart
7. Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation Regional Structure Chart
8. Fairmount Park Strategic Plan
9. Sample Weekly Physical Activity Tracker
10. Sample Attendance Log
11. June 2004 Fairmount Park Strategic Plan, Summary Report
12. Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Objectives
13. Summary Notes from Commission on Parks and Recreation Meeting – March, 2010 through February, 2013
14. Nancy A. Goldenberg & Alexander "Pete" Hoskins Testimony on behalf of The Philadelphia Commission on Parks and Recreation – April 12, 2010
15. Sample 2010 Summer Camp Review Report
16. Sample 2010 Summer Camp Survey
17. Fox Chase Recreation Center Welcome Letter

APPENDIX B

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Sample Participant Evaluation Survey

How much do you agree or disagree with the following?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All in all, I am glad I am me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get a lot of encouragement at my school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my family I feel useful and important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adults in my town or city make me feel important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being a part of the after school program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I am at the after school program, I can really be myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find that a lot of my time is organized around the after school program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How true is each of these statements for you?

Question	Always True	Usually True	Sometimes True	Seldom True	Almost Never True or Never True
I feel my friends are good friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a lot of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am happy with my height and weight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am happy with myself most of the time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am better than others my age at sports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do very well at my classwork.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How important is each of the following to you in your life?

Question	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Not Sure	Quite Important	Extremely Important
Helping to make the world a better place to live in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accepting responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get in trouble.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think about the people who know you well. How do you think they would rate you on each of these?

Question	Not At All Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Quite Like Me	Very Much Like Me
Enjoying being with people who are of a different race than I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How well do each of these statements describe you?

Question	Not Well 1	2	3	4	Very Well 5
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I want to help them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see someone being picked on, I feel sorry for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see another person who is hurt or upset, I feel sorry for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now some questions about Food!!

Please tick one box for each question.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Eating fruit every day makes me feel good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating fruit every day gives me more energy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's difficult for me to eat fruit every day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I decide I can eat fruit every day, I can do it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating vegetables every day makes me feel good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating vegetables every day gives me more energy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's difficult for me to eat vegetables every day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I decide I can eat vegetables every day, I can do it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tick one box for each question.

Question	None	1-3 pieces per WEEK	4-6 pieces per WEEK	1 piece per DAY	2 pieces per DAY	3 pieces per DAY	4 pieces per DAY	5 pieces per DAY
How much fruit do you think you should eat to have a healthy diet?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many vegetables do you think you should eat to have a healthy diet?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The next 4 questions ask about Safety!!

For each question please select an answer that best describes you.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel safe in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe in my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at my after school site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The next question asks about Physical Activity!!

Question	Less than 1 hour per day	1 hour per day	2 hours per day	3 hours per day	4 hours per day	5 or more hours per day
On an average school day, how many hours do you spend on entertainment screen time? (Count time spent on things such as Xbox, PlayStation, an iPod, an iPad or other tablet, a smartphone, YouTube, Facebook or other social networking tools, and the Internet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX C
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation After School Program Logic Model



APPENDIX D
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation After School Program Logic Model Revised



APPENDIX E
Site Staff Survey
Site Staff Questionnaire

Thank you for opening Philadelphia Parks and Recreation afterschool survey. This should only take about 5 minutes. It is VERY important that you give HONEST answers to each question. DO NOT think about what you think a "correct" answer might be. There is NO right or wrong answer. Just be honest.

Please be assured that the answers and your participation as well as any information that you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. We only want HONEST feedback in order to improve our programs. There will be NO rewards or punishment for answering in a certain way. Again, just be HONEST.

District: _____

Facility: _____

1. Birthdate (MM/DD/YYYY).
2. What is your gender?(circle one)
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your current employment position? (circle one)
 - a. Site Supervisor
 - b. Recreation Specialty Instructor (RSI) or GSI
4. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify? (circle one)
 - a. African-American (non-Hispanic)
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islanders
 - c. Caucasian (non-Hispanic)
 - d. Latino or Hispanic
 - e. Native American or Aleut
 - f. Other
5. Prior to the afterschool program, have you worked for Philadelphia Parks and Recreation? (Circle one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. NoIf yes, what were your previous job titles?
Job Titles: (write in)_____.
6. How long did you work for Philadelphia Parks and Recreation before afterschool? (write in) _____ Years.
7. How many years have you been working at your current site? (write in) _____ Years.
8. How many years have you been working in the field of recreation, education, or youth development? (write in) _____ Years.
9. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Some High School or Less
 - b. High School/GED
 - c. Some College
 - d. 2 Year Degree (Associates)
 - e. 4 Year Degree
 - f. Masters Degree
 - g. Doctoral Degree
10. Approximately how many hours of training did you participate in this year (August through March)? (write in): _____ Hours.
11. As a child, did you participate in the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation programs?(circle one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. NoIf yes, which programs did you participate in? (i.e. sports, camp, art, etc.)(write in)

12. How far is your facility from your home? (circle one)
 - a. 1-2 miles
 - b. 3-4 miles
 - c. 5-6 miles
 - d. 7-8 miles
 - e. 9+ miles
13. Do you have an onsite maintenance employee at your facility?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
14. On average, how many children attend your site daily? (write in): _____ participants.
15. How many site supervisors currently work at your facility? (write in): _____ site supervisors.

16. How many RSI's and GSI's currently work at your facility? (write in): _____ RSI's & GSI's.

17. Does your site charge a program fee? (circle one)

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, how much is the program fee? (write in): \$ _____

18. From your perspective, what are some of the objectives of the afterschool program? (write in)

19. What activities/programs do you use to achieve those objectives? (write in)

20. From your perspective, what is the main goal of the program? (write in)
