



Making the Case: How Good Afterschool Programs Improve School-day Attendance

It goes without saying that poor school attendance can lead to academic failure. The opposite is also true: students struggling academically often disengage from school and start skipping classes because they don't see an avenue to success. Research shows that good afterschool programs can not only improve academic performance but also influence school-day attendance, even when most don't appear to make it an intentional goal. They accomplish this by:

- Providing socialization and peer attention in a supervised venue.
- Re-establishing the link between effort and results—first in a non-school activity.
- Engaging students in challenging activities that help them develop persistence, a trait critical to later success in school and life.
- Providing consistent contact with caring, stable adults.
- Increasing the sense of belonging at school.

Consider the research:

- A 2009 study of 322 7th and 8th grade students at Boys & Girls Club for 30 months found that **those attending afterschool programs skipped school fewer times, increased school effort and gained academic confidence.** The first two indicators increased with the number of days attending afterschool programs. The Public/Private Ventures study focused on 10 clubs across the country. (*Arbreton, Amy et al, Making Every Day Count: Boys & Girls Clubs' Role in Promoting Positive Outcomes for Teens, May 2009*)
- Middle-school students attending the Citizen Schools afterschool program in Boston **attended school 11 more days than their peers** who did not participate, according to a 2009 study. They also were more likely to attend high school regularly, even though the program stopped in middle school. For example, in the 11th grade, participants attended school 13 more days than their peers. (*Vile, J.D., Arcaira, E. & Reisner, E.R. Progress toward high school graduation: Citizen Schools' youth outcomes in Boston. Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. , 2009*)
- L.A.'s BEST program found that **students' regular school-day attendance improved once they began participating in the afterschool program.** That led to higher scores on standardized tests of math, reading and language arts. The June 2000 report summarized five studies and findings from tracking BEST students in 2nd and 5th grades in the 1993-94 school year. (*Huang, D et al. A decade of results: The impact of the L.A.'s BEST after school enrichment initiative on subsequent student achievement and performance. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, 2000*)

- The California Afterschool Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program found that **regular school-day attendance improved for students participating in its afterschool programs.** Students who had previously missed 5 percent of the school year turned up an extra 5.6 days. Those absent 10 percent of the year came another 11 days, according to the 2002 evaluation. (*Evaluation of California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program: 1999-2001*; Department of Education, University of California at Irvine with the Healthy Start and After School Partnerships Office, California Department of Education, February 2002)
- A 2002 evaluation of The After-School Corporation (TASC) programs found **improvements in both school attendance and academic achievement for students who participated for two consecutive years.** The study compared participants to students not involved in the afterschool programs, which were offered in 143 public schools in New York City and 73 others elsewhere in the state. (*Walsh, Megan et al; Promoting Learning and School Attendance Through After-School Programs: Student-Level Changes in Educational Performance Across TASC's First Three Years, October 2002*)
- The Ohio Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project found that students who joined the program in **1st grade missed three days of school, compared to an average eight absences in kindergarten.** Eighth graders joining the program went from missing 18 days in the previous year to 5 days in the 1998-1999 school year. (*Evaluation: 1998-99 School-Year Program Evaluation, Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Expansion, College of Education, University of Cincinnati, August 1999*)
- Pathways to Progress in Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools found **"dramatically better school attendance," with afterschool participants coming to school an average 18.4 more days** than their peers, according to a 2004 report. (*Wahlstrom, Kyla, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Pathways to Progress, Saint Paul Public Schools, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota, March 2004*)

Attendance Counts is beginning to partner with afterschool providers to determine what could happen if providers make improved school-day attendance a stated goal and priority for their programs. As we learn more, we will post what we are learning on www.attendancecounts.org.