

BEST PRACTICES IN BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Prepared for Council Bluffs Community School
District

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In the following report, Hanover Research reviews the literature on before- and after-school programs and considers best practices for participation, content, and assessment. The report further examines how the program at Council Bluffs Community School District aligns with these best practices.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

As a recipient of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant in 2014, Council Bluffs Community School District requested a review of best practices in out-of-school-time. To improve student achievement, educators and policymakers have devoted an increasing amount of attention to how students spend their time outside of school. Research suggests that productive out-of-school time that focuses on building students' academic knowledge as well as their socio-emotional development can have a positive impact on achievement levels overall.¹ However, because outcomes depend largely on program quality, experts have begun to identify specific factors that make before- and after-school programs successful.

In the following report, Hanover Research reviews the relevant literature to compile best practices in before- and after-school programs. The report then examines how the Council Bluffs Developing Relationships Engaging All Middle Schoolers (CB DREAMS) program aligns with these best practices. This report proceeds in two sections:

- **Section I: Literature Review** explores best practices in before- and after-school program participation, content, and assessment. This section also examines qualities of successful summer programs.
- **Section II: The CB DREAMS Program** reviews the available program information to determine alignment with the best practices identified in Section I.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Before- and after-school programs should aim to fill gaps by offering missing or underrepresented activities.** Student choice among a wide variety of program options is likely to increase engagement. Although highly specialized programs may limit the number of potential participants, those who do participate are more likely to have a high level of engagement with the program. Research has shown leadership development programs and activities geared toward the transition to high school to improve student retention in before- and after-school programs.
- **Highly effective before- and after-school programs align academic instruction with the school curriculum and track program effectiveness.** Programs should provide opportunities for academic support as well as non-academic enrichment, such as recreation and art. Increasing engagement through parent involvement and personalizing instruction through small classes and/or groups also supports program success.

¹ Lauer, P. et al. "The Effectiveness of Out-of-School-Time Strategies in Assisting Low-Achieving Students in Reading and Mathematics: A Research Synthesis." Institute of Education Sciences, 2004. <http://cyitc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/McRel-Report-OSTeffectiveness.pdf>

- **Assessment is necessary to measure progress toward established goals.** Experts recommend that programs set both short- and long-term goals for programs. An example of a short-term goal might be “participants read and write more,” with the corresponding long-term goal of increased language arts skills (e.g., reading comprehension, writing). Programs should establish clear metrics by which to assess achievement of articulated goals.
- **Summer programs, though different, may contain many of the same components as before- and after-school programs.** As with before- and after-school programs, summer school programs should have a unique culture that differentiates the program from the school year. For optimal effectiveness, summer programs ought to integrate academic and non-academic components, as well as free time and outdoor recreation.

SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section details best practices in before- and after-school programs, including program participation, content, and assessment.

PARTICIPATION

This section addresses program participants: middle school students, program size, and adult supervision.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Programs occurring outside the regular school day and school year serve multiple purposes, often providing academic enrichment, youth development, and safety outside the home.² Researchers with the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) note that a number of studies have concluded that students “experience greater gains across a wide variety of outcomes if they participate [in before- and after-school programs] with greater frequency (more days per week) in a more sustained manner (over a number of years).”³ However, schools can struggle to attract middle school students to extracurricular programs, as “they are less inclined to participate in adult-supervised activities during non-school time than elementary school students.”⁴

Securing sustained participation from middle school students requires a variety of activities that feel “fundamentally different from in-school learning environments.”⁵ In particular, leadership development and activities geared toward the transition to high school have proven particularly successful for student retention.⁶ HFRP recommends three specific strategies to engage middle school students:⁷

- **Recognize students’ need to be with friends.** Middle school students are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure and are more likely to engage in activities if their peers are doing so. Encourage opportunities for peer interactions through small-group activities and collaborative homework help to foster positive connections.

² Little, P., C. Wimer, and H. Weiss. “After School Programs in the 21st Century: Their Potential and What It Takes to Achieve It.” Harvard Family Research Project, February 2008. p. 2. <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/after-school-programs-in-the-21st-century-their-potential-and-what-it-takes-to-achieve-it>

³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴ Deschenes, S. et al. “Engaging Older Youth.” Harvard Family Research Project, April 2010. p. 33. <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/engaging-older-youth-program-and-city-level-strategies-to-support-sustained-participation-in-out-of-school-time>

⁵ Stonehill, R. et al. “Enhancing School Reform Through Expanded Learning.” The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, January 2009. p. 17.

<http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/EnhancingSchoolReformthroughExpandedLearning.pdf>

⁶ [1] Deschenes, Op. cit., p. 33.

[2] Ibid., p. 48.

⁷ Adapted from: Deschenes, Op. cit., pp. 34-35.

- **Provide structure and routine within an atmosphere of exploration.** Consistent program experiences can offset the changes middle school students experience in other aspects of their lives.
- **Use developmental stage to help youth try new things.** Many students begin to disengage from school during middle school; therefore, it is valuable for programs serving middle school students to help students find activities of interest before they disengage completely.

SIZE

Although research does not establish an unequivocally optimal student to staff ratio for before- and after-school programs, evidence generally suggests that programs with lower ratios have better outcomes than programs with proportionally fewer staff members.⁸ The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA), which “supports high quality programs that serve students through structured, hands-on programming that engages them in learning and positive activities,”⁹ advises an adult to youth ratio for after-school programs between 1:10 and 1:15 for children ages six and older.¹⁰ Other organizations, likewise, cite research that recommends a maximum staff to student ratio of 1:15.¹¹

ADULT SUPERVISION

According to HFRP, “one of the most critical features of high-quality programs [...] is the quality of a program’s staff.”¹² The IAA recommends that all program staff have training in youth development, group leadership, activity planning, and community outreach, as well as one or more years of experience.¹³ Similarly, an analysis of 176 New York City after-school programs revealed that programs with higher director salaries, better-educated staff, and parent liaisons had higher rates of participant retention.¹⁴

Recognizing the importance of adult supervision, HFRP notes that after-school programs without sufficient supervision may actually produce negative outcomes, as youth may

⁸ Rhodes, J. “Researcher Corner: The Critical Ingredient in Afterschool Programs.” National Mentoring Partnership, 2005. p. 2. http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1311.pdf

⁹ “About the Iowa Afterschool Alliance.” <http://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org/about-the-iaa/>

¹⁰ “Iowa Afterschool Alliance Standard Categories and Corresponding Indicators of Quality Afterschool Programs.” Iowa Afterschool Alliance, September 2008. p. 1. http://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org/documents/cms/docs/quality/IAA_2009_Standard_Categories_01_21_ejb.pdf

¹¹ [1] Beighle, A., M.W. Beets, H.E. Erwin, J. Huberty, J.B. Moore, and M. Stellino. “Promoting physical activity in afterschool programs.” *Afterschool Matters*, 2010, p. 27.

http://www.niost.org/pdf/afterschoolmatters/asm_2010_11_june/asm_2010_11_june-4.pdf

[2] “Safe Havens: B&GCA, Girls, Inc. & YMCA.” American Youth Policy Forum, p. 99.

<http://www.aypf.org/publications/compendium/C2S34.pdf>

[3] “What first steps do I need to take to establish a good afterschool program?” WNET.

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/afterschool/exploration.html>

¹² Little, Wimer, and Weiss, Op. cit., p. 7.

¹³ “Iowa Afterschool Alliance Standard Categories and Corresponding Indicators of Quality Afterschool Programs,” Op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁴ Little, Wimer, and Weiss, Op. cit., p. 7.

engage in “problematic behavior.”¹⁵ In contrast, program participants are more likely to realize positive outcomes if they develop positive relationships with staff members. To foster positive relationships with program participants, staff members should:¹⁶

- Model positive behavior,
- Actively promote student mastery of skills and concepts presented in activities,
- Listen attentively to program participants,
- Provide frequent, individualized feedback and guidance during activities, and
- Establish clear expectations for mature, respectful peer interactions.

In addition to program staff, families can impact before- and after-school program quality, influencing program participation and student retention.¹⁷ Not only does parent involvement increase the likelihood of student attendance, but it also helps parents understand ways to improve learning in the home.¹⁸ Furthermore, engaging family through out-of-school programs can facilitate positive relationships between parents and school staff.¹⁹ To foster meaningful family engagement, the Afterschool Alliance suggests communicating with parents through newsletters, bulletin boards, and daily interaction. Activities such as family game nights and Saturday events can bring together program participants, families, and staff.²⁰

CONTENT

Middle school students enjoy selecting from a wide variety of activities in before- and after-school programs, including those that offer academic and non-academic content.²¹ As an HFRP report explains, “choice is an important program component and a key feature of youth development.”²² The IAA supports this view and includes choice of activities (as well as the choice to engage in “free time”) among its indicators of effective programming. This section reviews both academic and non-academic content for before- and after-school programs.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶ Adapted from: Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁷ [1] Little, Wimer, and Weiss, Op. cit., p. 8.

[2] Deschenes et al., Op. cit., p. xiv.

¹⁸ [1] McCombs, J. et al. “Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning.” RAND Education, 2011. p. 34. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

[2] McCombs et al. reference evidence presented in: Cooper, H. et al. *Making the Most of Summer School: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review*, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 65(1), 2000.

¹⁹ “A Profile of the Evaluation of Transition to Success Pilot Project.” Harvard Family Research Project, 2004.

<http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/transition-to-success-pilot-project>

²⁰ “Starting Your Afterschool Program.” Afterschool Alliance, 2007. p. 18.

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Utah4HAfterschoolGuide.pdf>

²¹ Deschenes et al., Op. cit., p. xiv.

²² Ibid.

ACADEMIC

The IAA recommends that after-school programs provide a “balance of academics, homework assistance, and enrichment programming” along with character development and skill development.²³ Additionally, after-school programs may help develop more broadly defined “life skills,” including decision-making, communication, and cooperation with others.²⁴

A guide published by the Charles C. Mott Foundation, *Academic Content: After-School Style*, recommends that instructors in before- and after-school programs familiarize themselves with the school curriculum in order to connect schoolwork with academic content in extracurricular programs.²⁵ The guide suggests that while after-school instructors may use different instructional practices than classroom instructors, they each work to improve student learning. Further, the comparatively informal nature of after-school programs enables after-school teachers to incorporate concepts from multiple academic subjects into lessons and activities.²⁶

To create a curriculum, the Afterschool Alliance suggests developing activities that are “interesting and appropriate for the various age and skill-levels of the youth being served.”²⁷ Similarly, the authors of *Academic Content: After-School Style* maintain that the content of after-school programs should “more deliberately support academic content learning” and offer subject-specific guidelines for students in Grades 6 through 8 (Figure 1.1).²⁸

The authors also recommend that academic content for after-school programs address specific themes, such as pets and animals or the seasons. They maintain that “themes that organize afterschool projects or activities can be focused to reinforce almost any school subject area,” allowing for the integration of multiple subjects into a single lesson plan.²⁹

²³ “Iowa Afterschool Alliance Standard Categories and Corresponding Indicators of Quality Afterschool Programs,” Op. cit., p. 3.

²⁴ Weisburd, C. “Academic Content: After-School Style.” Foundations, Inc., 2003. p. 10.
http://www.nccap.net/media/pages/Foundations%20ACAS_HandBook1.pdf

²⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁷ “Starting Your Afterschool Program,” Op. cit., p. 9.

²⁸ Weisburd, Op. cit., p. 35.

²⁹ Ibid.

Figure 1.1: Academic Content Guidelines, Grades 6-8

READING	MATH	SCIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read more complex, young adult level material ▪ Read for different purposes, including skimming, highlighting, and close reading ▪ Read and write for functional purposes such as completing forms and applications ▪ Use research materials and methods to make presentations ▪ Present references and citations ▪ Identify and use different literary forms and techniques ▪ Use standard grammar ▪ Identify and analyze media messages and recognize opinion, bias, and hidden messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use fractions, percents, and decimals to choose which to use for different purposes ▪ Multiply, add, divide, and subtract complex numbers and fractions in more complex strings of operations ▪ Express very large and very small numbers in different ways ▪ Work with two- and three-dimensional geometric figures, formulas, and measurements ▪ Use numbers and symbols to express and solve problems ▪ Choose, use, and explain different approaches to getting answers ▪ Figure out problems mentally, with paper and pencil, and/or with calculators and explain why the method was used ▪ Make and use graphs, charts, and diagrams for a variety of purposes ▪ Make reasonable estimates and explain reasons for estimates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain techniques for improving the accuracy and reliability of results and conclusions ▪ Explain and illustrate life cycles of living organisms ▪ Explain the concept of ecosystems and the relationship of living things and the environment ▪ Explain and illustrate the composition of living things in terms of cells and cell components and structures ▪ Explain elements of health and nutrition, and effects of environment and culture ▪ Explain the composition of matter using terms of chemistry and atomic structures ▪ Describe relationships and movement patterns of planets and other bodies, and their effects on Earth ▪ Discuss bias, ethics, and cultural difference in science

Source: Foundations, Inc.³⁰

NON-ACADEMIC

In addition to offering academic support, **before- and after-school programs should seek to offer activities that are missing or underrepresented in the traditional school day, such as sports, technology, or music classes.** This is particularly true for older youth; one report notes that “filling the gap” in available activities is a key element of recruiting students to after-school programs and keeping them engaged in program activities.³¹ One study maintains that to expand the scope of activities, before- and after-school programs should have access to facilities such as kitchens, libraries, and computer labs.³²

³⁰ Weisburd, Op. cit.

³¹ Deschenes et al., Op. cit., p. 42.

³² “Starting Your Afterschool Program,” Op. cit., p. 9.

To examine the most effective after-school programs, The After-School Corporation (TASC) conducted an evaluation of 10 high-performing after-school programs in New York City. TASC selected programs based on changes in student achievement on standardized math and reading tests for Grades 3 through 8 between the 2000-2001 school year and the 2001-2002 school year. All 10 programs featured a wide range of activities including dance, music, drama, and field trips. The authors found that this comprehensive strategy to after-school learning “sparks [participants’] interests and expands their vision.”³³ Additionally, the report authors note the importance of unstructured time for outdoor play and physical movement, as these activities allow children to release built-up energy and interact with program staff in an informal setting.³⁴ Likewise, the IAA also recommends after-school programs incorporate time for outdoor play into daily schedules.³⁵

Figure 1.2 details many non-academic skills that students may develop through before- and after-school programs, including skills related to work habits, communication, cooperation, independence, and decision-making.

Figure 1.2: Non-Academic Skill Development

Work Habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding directions ▪ Being on time ▪ Meeting deadlines and due dates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working neatly ▪ Following through on responsibilities ▪ Planning work time
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaking clearly ▪ Talking to a group ▪ Leading a group discussion ▪ Expressing ideas in different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expressing disagreement without fighting ▪ Clear handwriting ▪ Knowledge of more than one language
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working in groups or teams ▪ Working with different cultures ▪ Being responsible to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking for help ▪ Leading a group or team ▪ Offering and receiving criticism
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concentrating on working alone ▪ Planning time ▪ Asking for and using help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finding information in different ways ▪ Self-evaluation ▪ Sense of self-identify
Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collecting information ▪ Weighing information and forming opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thinking about consequences ▪ Evaluating results and outcomes

Source: Foundations, Inc.³⁶

³³ Birmingham, J. et al. “Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-up to the TASC Evaluations.” Prepared for The After-School Corporation and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, November 2005. p. 6. <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Iowa Afterschool Alliance Standard Categories and Corresponding Indicators of Quality Afterschool Programs,” Op. cit., p. 14.

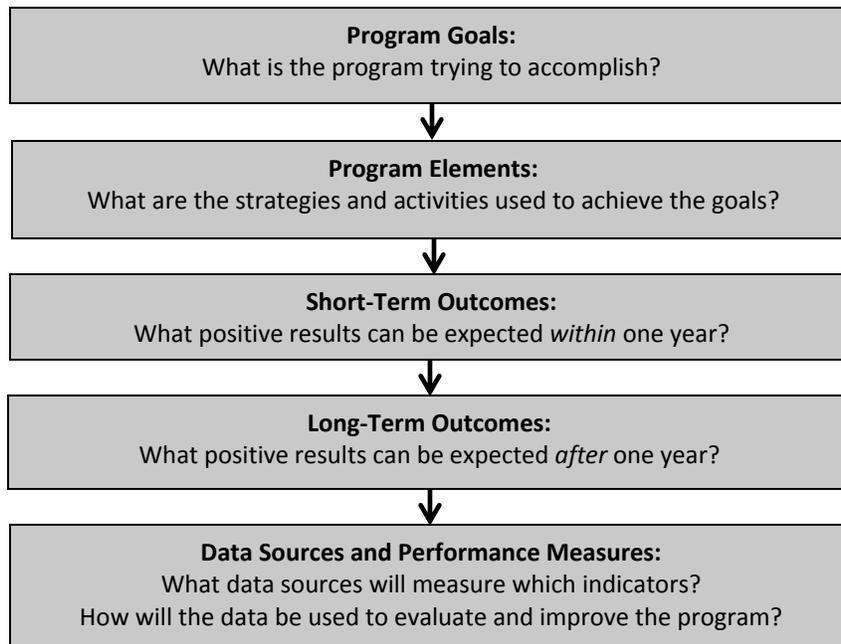
³⁶ Weisburd, Op. cit., p. 11.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a critical element of program development and evaluation. This section describes the basic process of assessment, focusing on program goals and metrics for evaluation.

To promote accurate program assessments, TASC emphasizes the importance of evaluating assessment criteria within the context of the program participants. Figure 1.3 describes TASC’s process for developing a high-quality after-school program. The first steps require a clear articulation of program goals and the elements of the program targeted to those goals. Program developers ought to consider short- and long-term outcomes, as well as the data sources and performance measures to evaluate these outcomes.

Figure 1.3: Program Development Process



Source: The After-School Corporation³⁷

PROGRAM GOALS

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education hosted an After-School Summit for educators, researchers, program evaluators, policy experts, and government officials to discuss “ways to improve and measure the quality and effectiveness of after-school programs.”³⁸ **The summit report concluded that, in order to be successful, enrichment programs must establish appropriate goals, identify relevant program elements, set desired outcomes,**

³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁸ “Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs.” C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, May 2005. http://www.nccap.net/media/pages/framework_61505.pdf

and create plans for evaluation.³⁹ Similarly, an HFRP review of research on after-school programs noted that many research studies have revealed that programs “explicitly focused and targeted to specific outcomes” are more successful in promoting participant success.⁴⁰ The report suggests that programs use a sequenced set of activities and active forms of learning to help children achieve skill development objectives.⁴¹ HFRP’s literature review drew from large experimental or quasi-experimental studies published between 1998 and 2008.⁴²

To begin the process of program development, the Afterschool Alliance recommends program administrators consider the basic developmental needs of children:⁴³

- A warm and secure environment,
- Opportunities to develop initiative and independence,
- Encouragement of creativity, and
- Clear limits and expectations of behavior.

The elements listed above provide a solid foundation from which to incorporate supplemental goals. Figure 1.4 presents a few potential program goals across four areas: academics, social/emotional learning, prevention, and health/wellness. An example of a short-term academic goal might be “participants read and write more,” with the corresponding long-term goal of increased language arts skills (e.g., reading comprehension, writing).⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁰ Little, Wimer, and Weiss, Op. cit., p. 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴² Ibid., p. 2.

⁴³ “Starting Your Afterschool Program,” Op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁴ Birmingham et al., Op. cit., p. 15.

Figure 1.4: Potential Outcomes of Before- and After-School Programs

AREA	INDICATORS
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations ▪ Higher school attendance rates and less tardiness ▪ Less disciplinary action ▪ Lower dropout rates ▪ Improved achievement test scores and grades ▪ Greater on-time promotion ▪ Improved homework completion ▪ Engagement in learning
Social/Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decreased behavioral problems ▪ Improved social and communication skills ▪ Improved relationships with peers, parents, and teachers ▪ Increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy ▪ Lower levels of depression and anxiety ▪ Improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoidance of drug and alcohol use ▪ Decreases in delinquency and violent behavior ▪ Increased knowledge of safe sex ▪ Avoidance of sexual activity ▪ Reduction in juvenile crime
Health/Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better food choices ▪ Increased physical activity ▪ Increased knowledge of nutrition and health practices ▪ Reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI) ▪ Improved blood pressure ▪ Improved body image

Source: Harvard Family Research Project⁴⁵

METRICS

Alongside program goals, metrics are the second crucial component of program assessment. Researchers Ronald Sabatelli and Stephen Anderson from the University of Connecticut School of Family Studies Center for Applied Research note that the majority of youth program evaluations consider the following four types of outcomes:⁴⁶

- **Knowledge:** *What new information did participants learn?*
- **Attitudes:** *Did the program change the way participants think or feel?*

⁴⁵ Little, Wimer, and Weiss, Op. cit., pp. 3–6.

⁴⁶ Sabatelli, R., S. Anderson, and V. LaMotte. "Assessing Outcomes in Child and Youth Programs: A Practical Handbook." University of Connecticut School of Family Studies Center for Applied Research, September 2005. pp. 13-16. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/evaluation/documents/ChildYouthOutcomeHandbook2005.pdf>

- **Beliefs:** *Did the program change the values participants held?*
- **Behaviors:** *Did the program change the way participants act toward others or help them develop new skills?*

Qualitative assessments of before- and after-school programs tend to indicate participant satisfaction. Sabatelli, Anderson, and LaMotte caution that measures of participant satisfaction indicate success in meeting participants' needs and do not directly measure actual benefit from the program.⁴⁷

A report from the C.S. Mott Foundation's Committee on After-School Research and Practice suggests several potential performance metrics to evaluate program participants' academic outcomes. These sample metrics, which may be best suited for evaluating specific types of academic programs, include:⁴⁸

- Number and type of books checked out
- Number of books read
- Hours per week spent reading
- Rating of enjoyment and comfort with concepts taught in program
- Grades
- Test scores
- Homework completion rate
- School attendance

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Summer programs may contain many of the same components of before- and after-school programs but differ in format. As with before- and after-school programs, summer school programs should have a unique culture that differentiates them from the school year.⁴⁹

A report from the Wallace Foundation recommends that summer programs start the recruiting process early in the school year to maximize student enrollment and teacher quality.⁵⁰ Similar best practices apply to summer programs as before- and after-school programs; in particular, summer programs should aim to minimize class size, ensure adequate staff training, and provide a variety of academic and non-academic activities.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs," Op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁹ McCombs et al., Op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 36.

Child Trends recommends the following approaches for effective summer programs:⁵²

- **Hire experienced, trained teachers to deliver academic lessons.** Programs employing teachers with bachelor’s degrees and a few years of teaching experience yield more positive outcomes than programs using college students or untrained instructors.
- **Limit class sizes to 15 or fewer students.** Research suggests optimal outcomes with two to four adults per classroom, with one adult being a trained teacher.
- **Teach content that complements curricular standards.** Aligning content with grade-level standards supplements student learning during the school year. Additionally, grounding lessons in a real-world context enhances student learning.
- **Complement group learning with individual support.** Mentoring, tutoring, career counseling, financial advising, and homework assistance may result in more positive outcomes than whole-group learning alone.
- **Make activities interesting and enjoyable.** Incorporating non-academic activities into summer learning programs enhances children’s enjoyment of the program, potentially increasing their willingness to participate in the academic aspects of the program. Hands-on activities such as games, field trips, nature expeditions, and experiments make academic activities more engaging.

⁵² Terzian, M., K. Moore, and K. Hamilton. “Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth.” *Child Trends*, July 2009. p. 3.
<http://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Effective-and-Promising-Summer-Learning-Programs.pdf>

SECTION II: THE CB DREAMS PROGRAM

This section reviews the Council Bluffs Developing Relationships Engaging All Middle Schoolers (CB DREAMS) program to determine to what extent the program aligns with before- and after-school program best practices previously identified in Section I. While this section relies on publicly available information, Hanover Research will update the analysis using additional program information from Council Bluffs upon request.

PROGRAM REVIEW

The CB DREAMS program provides opportunities outside of school to all students in Grades 6 through 8 at two Council Bluffs middle schools. The program comprises 14 hours of programming per week before and after school, as well as “clinics, camps, and academics” over the summer.⁵³

The program aims to serve over 200 students and employs four full-time staff members who are paid stipends to lead each activity.⁵⁴ Staff positions include a program director and an achievement specialist.⁵⁵

The CB DREAMS program appears to have clearly articulated goals. A news article about the program specifies three goals program administrators seek to achieve:⁵⁶

- Improve reading and math scores on the Iowa Assessments or district tests,
- Promote higher attendance, and
- Foster increases in hope, engagement, and sense of well-being.

Best practices dictate the clear connection between each goal and a metric of assessment. Figure 2.1 displays the metrics used to assess the program’s achievement of each goal.

Figure 2.1: Metrics

METRIC	METHOD
Improve reading and math scores on the Iowa Assessments or district tests	Achievement specialist will collect and analyze achievement data
Promote higher attendance	Attendance rates
Foster increases in hope, engagement, and sense of well-being	Gallup Student Poll and StrengthsFinder

Source: The Daily Nonpareil⁵⁷

⁵³ Stewart, S. “Council Bluffs Community School District Grant: Middle Schools Receive \$900,000.” The Daily Nonpareil, April 11, 2014. http://www.nonpareilonline.com/news/local/council-bluffs-community-school-district-grant-middle-schools-receive/article_cb35f782-c11f-11e3-97ec-001a4bcf887a.html

⁵⁴ Stewart, S. “Kirn, Wilson to Add Activities Thanks to \$900,000 Grant.” The Daily Nonpareil, August 17, 2014. http://www.nonpareilonline.com/news/local/kirn-wilson-to-add-activities-thanks-to-grant/article_f8d5047c-2b86-593c-b1fc-9897cf3c9d6a.html

⁵⁵ Stewart, “Council Bluffs Community School District Grant: Middle Schools Receive \$900,000,” Op. cit.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

CB DREAMS actively promotes family involvement, offering family events as often as once or twice a week on evenings and weekends.⁵⁸ Family events, offered at each school, include wellness events and a job seekers series at a local community college.⁵⁹

The Council Bluffs program allows students to choose the activities in which they would like to participate and provides opportunities for academic support as well as non-academic enrichment. CB DREAMS reportedly offers approximately 30 different activities, including activities recommended by students and sponsored by school staff.⁶⁰ Academic activities include tutoring, homework help, reading, creative writing, book club, science club, and Spanish group. Students also help coordinate National History Day. Non-academic activities, enumerated in Figure 2.2, relate to athletics, physical fitness, career exploration, technology, arts, and other enrichment activities. Students may also participate in leadership development through leadership club and the National Junior Honor Society.

ASSESSMENT

Program administrators may use the following questions presented in Figure 2.3 to assess the alignment of the CB DREAMS program with best practices. These questions are rooted in the best practices described in Section I, with affirmative answers signaling alignment. For example, if the CB DREAMS program maintains a ratio of no more than 15 participants per adult, program administrators may feel confident that the adult to student ratio is consistent with best practices for before- and after-school programs.

If Council Bluffs provides evidence of these program features or arranges for an informed staff member to participate in an in-depth interview, Hanover Research may conduct an independent analysis of the program on the basis of these characteristics.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Family Engagement." CB DREAMS <http://www.cb-schools.org/parents-students/student-support/before-after-school-care/middle-school/cb-dreams-program/family-engagement/>

⁶⁰ Stewart, "Kirn, Wilson to Add Activities Thanks to \$900,000 Grant," Op. cit.

Figure 2.2: Non-Academic Activities

Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Football ▪ Basketball ▪ Soccer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Golf ▪ Cross Country ▪ Wrestling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kickball ▪ Cheerleading
Physical Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frisbee golf ▪ Dodgeball ▪ Morning run/walk ▪ Open gym ▪ Canoeing ▪ Horseback riding ▪ Swimming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kickboxing ▪ Archery ▪ Ropes course ▪ Ice skating ▪ Skiing ▪ Bobsledding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scuba diving ▪ Agility ▪ Strength training ▪ Bowling ▪ Dance team ▪ Fantasy football
Career Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College tours ▪ Fire academy ▪ Police academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aviation Academy ▪ Crime scene investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health care
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Google Club ▪ Wi-Tech ▪ Tech club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ iCreate ▪ Video game design ▪ Stock market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Robotics ▪ Dungeons & Dragons
Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Art Club ▪ Sound & Music ▪ Painting ▪ Jazz band ▪ Drama 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dance ▪ Show choir ▪ Photography ▪ Cosmetology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fashion ▪ Tie dye ▪ Sharpie art ▪ Knitting
Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooking ▪ Multicultural club ▪ Community service ▪ Card sharks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wildlife club ▪ Lego league ▪ Teen central ▪ Friendship club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thrill seekers ▪ Chess ▪ Comedy club ▪ Sign language

Source: Council Bluffs Survey Results⁶¹

⁶¹ Survey conducted by Hanover Research on behalf of Council Bluffs School District. Unidentified programs include BOKS, GYST, Lynx, Sphero, and WOWT.

Figure 2.3: Identifying Best Practices in Before- and After-School Programs

SECTION	QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the program maintain a ratio of no more than 15 participants per adult? ▪ Are program staff appropriately trained to develop positive relationships with program participants? ▪ Does the program engage in activities to promote retention? ▪ Does the program engage families?
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the program allow students to choose the activities in which they would like to participate? ▪ Does the program provide opportunities for academic support as well as non-academic enrichment? ▪ Does the program provide free time for participants?
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the program have specific goals? ▪ Has the program established short- and long-term outcomes for participants? ▪ Has the program established metrics by which to assess progress toward desired goals?
Summer Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the program provide a variety of academic and non-academic activities? ▪ Does the program hire qualified teachers for academic lessons? ▪ Does program content complement school-year content?

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