

Research You Can Use

Quality Afterschool Programs: More than an Alternative to Video Games

Karrie Aldrich, '06
Claremont McKenna College

Junge, S.K., Manglallan, S., & Raskauskas, J. (2003). Building life skills through afterschool participation in experiential and cooperative learning. *Child Study Journal*. 33(3), 165-174.

It is time to get your kids off the couch! Research shows that participation in afterschool programs that include frequent interaction with competent adults and experiential or cooperative learning significantly contributes to the development of children's life skills. Life skills are those which we tend to consider less academic but very important for success in society. An elevated sense of self-worth and competence develops as children work to attain these life skills. This concurrent development occurs through the practice of working with others, expressing feelings, and problem-solving.

Afterschool programs can also provide children with extra opportunities to interact with adults. With 69% of two-parent families and 71% of single-parent families with young children reporting work schedules that require parents to seek afterschool childcare, it is clear that quality afterschool programs can not only meet a supervisory need but also make additional contributions to the participants' social and academic development.

This study revealed that participants in similar afterschool programs in three different California counties experienced benefits that included improvement in emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, peer relations, and conduct in school. The average child in this study was 7.5 years and had been enrolled in their afterschool program for at least six months. Each participant showed significant improvements in their life skills over the course of their participation in the program in areas such as making healthy choices and taking care of one's belongings.

Such evidence should catch the eye of public policy officials because putting an end to the notion of the "latch-key kid" would be an important step for today's society. Catching their eye is important, too, for it is on those same policymakers that we will rely to provide the required funding for an increased availability of such programs.

***Take-home message:* High-quality afterschool programs are an important step toward developing children's life skills.**

Article submitted by Lisa Martelli, CMC '06

Research You Can Use is a translation of selected research on topics related to the intersection of work, family, and children. The research articles were selected by students in the Psychology of Work, Family, and Children class (Psyc 116) in fall 2005. The information in the research articles were rewritten into plain language by student research assistants at the Berger Institute. The Berger Institute also has a brief listing of exemplary research that supports our conclusions about best practices for public policies, employers, communities, and working families. We invite you to log on for more information: <http://berger.cmc.edu>. *This was published in the Berger Institute newsletter, Spring 2006, vol. 6.*

About the Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children

The Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children is a non-profit research institute at Claremont McKenna College, a selective liberal arts college that is a member of the Claremont Colleges – a university consortium. The Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children provides data-based research on the challenges facing individuals, working families, and employers to improve the quality of family life and enhance productivity and the bottom line.

Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children
Claremont McKenna College
850 Columbia Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
909.607.2928
Fax: 909.607.9672
bergerinstitute@cmc.edu
<http://berger.cmc.edu>