

Your Question:

You asked about research focusing on return-on-investment (ROI) or cost-benefit analysis for after school or out-of-school programs.

Our Response:

With afterschool networks existing in all 50 states and with [10.2 million children participating in afterschool programs](#) as of 2014, afterschool or out-of-school time (OST) programs are a substantial component of the education landscape. These programs may have varying settings (schools, community centers, nonprofits) and varying areas of focus (academic programs, multipurpose programs, special interest programs).

In establishing, evaluating, and seeking to improve OST programs, both state advisory committees and academic research may be useful to guide recommendations on program effectiveness and implementation strategies. Below are examples of legislatively mandated advisory committees and their reports, and examples of older (prior to 2015) and more recent (2015-present) research studies on OST programs.

State Advisory Committees

Several states have established advisory committees on OST programs, similar to what is directed by Pennsylvania [H.R. 180](#). Below are examples of states with legislatively mandated advisory committees on the effectiveness of OST programs and the reports produced by those committees (when applicable).

- **Delaware:** [H.R. 39](#) (2015) created the Statewide Afterschool Initiative Learning Task Force to assess existing OST programs in the state and to make recommendations on the effective use of OST programs. The task force released their [final report](#) in March 2017.
- **Indiana:** [S.B. 251](#) (2016) created the Indiana Out-of-School-Time Learning Advisory Board to research and report on existing OST programs and to recommend policies, procedures, funding levels, and eligibility. In summer 2018, the board released their [report and recommendations](#).
- **Nevada:** [A.B. 362](#) (2011) created the Interim Task Force on Out-of-School Time Programs. The task force released its [final report](#) in 2012.
- **Rhode Island:** [H.B. 92](#) (2019) created an Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to provide research, recommendations, and coordination on OST programs. The council has not yet released a report of findings.
- **Texas:** [S.B. 503](#) (2013) created the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to study OST issues and make a statewide plan with recommendations for expanded learning programs. The council published their recommendations in a [2016-17 strategic plan](#) in November 2014.
- **Washington:** [S.B. 6163](#) (2014) created the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to provide guidance on the improvement and expansion of summer learning opportunities, increase partnerships to deliver expanded learning opportunities, and other tasks. The council released a [report on expanded learning opportunities](#) most recently in 2018.

Recent Research and Resources (2015-Present)

While an Education Commission of the States scan of research in the field did not find many studies, recent or otherwise, that explicitly conducted a cost-benefit analysis or measured return-on-investment, the following examples of research studies explore potential benefits and implementation barriers for OST programs. Common

benefits cited are academic achievement, improved behavior, and increased attendance. Common challenges cited include ensuring consistent program quality, funding, and ensuring enough program slots are available to meet demand.

Research

RAND Corporation, [The Value of Out-of-School Time Programs](#) (2017)

This research report reviews existing OST program evaluations and research, providing recommendations based on various program types. Key findings or recommendations include:

- **Aligning program content with desired outcomes:** Researchers found evidence that “OST programs typically produce the primary outcomes expected by the content of programming delivered.” That is, benefits in academic achievement are shown in academic OST programs and safety/supervision benefits are shown in multipurpose OST programs. However, researchers found that many program evaluations may attempt to measure secondary rather than primary outcomes.
- **Program quality and intentionality influences outcomes:** Important correlations exist between program quality and benefits for students. Additionally, a meta-analysis of programs found that “when programs explicitly targeted specific skills, participants demonstrated positive outcomes.”
- **Importance of attendance or participation:** Studies of both academic and multipurpose OST programs “consistently demonstrate that greater benefits accrue to those with strong rates of participation.” Less evidence of this is available for middle school students.
- **All benefits of OST programs should be considered:** The authors recommended that policymakers take into account all benefits that programs can provide in order to ensure continuity and quality of programs. The authors suggest that “OST programs for low-income students are worthy of public investment and should be funded at levels that support high-quality programming.”

A [blog post](#) and an [infographic](#) highlighting key elements from the report were released in 2018.

Wallace Foundation, [Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth](#) (2016)

This study conducted analysis and developed findings on program implementation, student attendance, and causal and correlational estimates of program effects. Findings from the study suggested that students with high attendance in the summer programs demonstrated benefits in achievement in math and language arts.

- “Students who attended at high rates in summer 2014 **outperformed control group students in both math and language arts** both in the fall and the following spring. They were also assessed as having stronger social and emotional competencies than the control-group students. The academic boost for these students translates to between 20 and 25 percent of typical annual gains in mathematics and language arts.”
- “Students who received at least 25 hours of mathematics or 34 hours of language arts instruction (defined as high levels) **performed significantly better on the language arts and mathematics tests** in fall 2013 and fall 2014 than control group students. After the second summer, these positive effects persisted into the spring.”

Afterschool Alliance, [America After 3PM](#)

America After 3pm is a project spanning over a decade, chronicling and evaluating how students spend the hours after school. The initiative “highlights the trends of afterschool program participation, documents the benefits

associated with participation in afterschool programs, and measures public support for afterschool programs.”

Notable findings and resources include:

- The initiative’s [data dashboard](#) highlights findings on the demand for, benefits of, and support for afterschool programs, nationally and by state. The benefits section measures parental satisfaction with programs and **parental responses to impacts on their child’s excitement for learning, behavior, and skill attainment.**
- The report [Afterschool in Communities of Concentrated Poverty](#) finds that a majority of parents living in communities of concentrated poverty report that afterschool **programs provide opportunities for physical activity, homework assistance, STEM learning opportunities, reading or writing opportunities, and beverages, snacks, or meals.** Additionally, the report finds that 83 percent of parents in such communities agree that organized afterschool activities or programs should be made available.

State Resources

Iowa Afterschool Alliance, [Afterschool in Iowa: By The Numbers](#) (2020)

The state’s afterschool alliance maintains a [resource catalog](#) containing reports, policy updates, and other resources related to OST programs in the state. The infographic linked above shows that of students participating in Iowa’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers, 53% improved in reading, 51% improved in math, and 61% showed improved behavior. Additionally, the Council Bluffs police department reported a 51% decrease in juvenile arrests between the hours of 2pm and 5pm since the afterschool program began.

- A separate resource, [State of Afterschool and Summer Programming in Iowa](#) (2016), discusses the impacts of afterschool programming, provides an overview of the state of OST programming in Iowa, and presents a case for OST programming as a cost-effective education investment.

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, [After-School and Out-of-School Grants](#)

This website provides a funding history of after-school and out-of-school grants in the state. Additionally, a report to the legislature on such grants for FY20 can be found on [this webpage](#).

Older Research (Prior to 2015)

The following examples of research studies conducted prior to 2015 are often cited in more recent reports and research studies on OST programs. Some of them contain a cost-benefit component, and all touch on various benefits or approaches to consider in establishing and maintaining OST programs.

Wallace Foundation, various research studies

Prior to 2015, the Wallace Foundation published several key research studies and reports on OST programs.

- A comprehensive 2009 study, [The Cost of Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs](#), measures the full cost of quality OST programs serving elementary or middle school students and teens. Costs are estimated for programs held during the school year and during the summer for each student group. Further, costs are broken down to show the average annual, daily, and hourly cost per slot in each program type.
- A 2009 report, [Financial Strategies to Support Citywide Systems of Out-of-School Time Programs](#), highlights a variety of options for funding OST programs and highlights cities and programs that have implemented such approaches.

Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project, [Research Update: Afterschool Programs Close Achievement Gaps](#)

In addition to other work, the [project](#) highlights a handful of studies from Dr. Deborah Lowell Vandell and researchers at the University of California-Irvine School of Education. Key findings from the research team show that consistent participation in afterschool programs may lead to:

- Improvements in students' overall academic performance.
- A reduction in school absences.
- Improvements in behavioral outcomes.

The webpage links to a variety of resources on Vandell's work, including a graphic on afterschool programs as a [solution linked to closing the achievement gap](#), presentations on [longitudinal studies of participation in OST programs](#) and youth development outcomes, a research paper on [participation in out-of-school settings and student academic and behavioral outcomes](#).

Healthy City CA and Advancement Project, [The Benefit of After School Programs](#)

This handout compiles a wide variety of research findings on the benefit of afterschool programs, highlighting impacts on educational performance and achievement, health and public safety, financial well-being and economic impact, individual, family, and community impacts, and equity.

[Related Organizations](#)

The following organizations work primarily on issues related to OST programs and maintain a variety of resources on the topic.

[50 State Afterschool Network](#)

The 50 State Afterschool Network “fosters partnerships and policies to develop, support, and sustain high-quality opportunities for children and youth.” In addition to other research and resources, the website maintains a map with information on afterschool networks, partnerships, and organizations in all 50 states.

[Afterschool Alliance](#)

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization seeking to increase youth access to affordable, quality afterschool programs. The alliance maintains a [state policy page](#) on the issue, which features links to and examples of legislation, budget processes, taskforces and commissions, and other approaches used to support afterschool programming. The page also includes a link to other state-level resources and data.

[National Summer Learning Association](#)

The association maintains a [knowledge center](#) with reports, webinars, and other publications on the issue, including a State of [2019 State Policy Snapshot](#) which tracked 128 bills in 36 states related to summer learning.