



Indicator: The school provides all students extended learning opportunities (e.g., summer bridge programs, after-school and supplemental education services, Saturday academies, enrichment programs) to keep them on track for graduation. (5129)

Explanation: The evidence review suggests that every student can benefit from extended learning opportunities. To increase success likelihood, these out-of-school time (OST) offerings must be strategically aligned to and support the current in-school day curriculum and instructional programs. Because these opportunities occur outside of the required school day, it is imperative that the LEA/school identify and address issues that may prevent students from attending the OSTs. In addition, the staff must plan for instruction and content that maximize engagement so to attract and ensure full and active student participation.

Questions: What process will the school employ to establish effective out of school learning opportunities for every student? How will the school support staff in instructional planning that maximizing learning engagement for all students? How will the school ensure that OSTs are accessible to every student who wishes, or is advised/required to attend? What process will the school use to align OST content and instruction to the regular school day curriculum? How will the school measure the success of the OSTs?

With students spending nearly double the amount of time out of school than they spend in school, differences between how higher-income and lower-income students spend this unstructured time are quite stark, as is their resulting differential academic achievement. While the historical and common use of out-of-school time (OST) is to ensure that students are safe and engaged, schools and program providers are now seizing this extra time as an opportunity to narrow the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Beckett, et al., 2009).

These interventions are not limited to after-school time. Saturday academies, summer school, and extended school years, as well as traditional after-school time, all fall under the umbrella terms of OST. During these times, extended learning opportunities (ELO) can be made available to students who need enrichment, academic intervention, and social supports. The providers of these services are not limited either; in addition to schools, it is common to see OST programs run by community centers, churches, and non-profit agencies (Closing the Gap, 2008). For schools running these programs, it is highly recommended to engage these types of community partners to provide enrichment programming and youth supports.

Beckett, et al. (2009) present a set of recommended strategies for maximizing the effect of OST and ELO. Although these recommendations are primarily for programs serving elementary and middle school students in disadvantaged communities, the wider applicability of these recommendations can be helpful for high school programs as well. Additionally, it is important to note that their recommendations aim to improve only the academic nature of after-school, summer time, and supplemental educational services (SES) programs. However, it is likely that these could also be applied to the social-emotional and enrichment supports provided to students. Their recommendations are:

1. Ensure that the OST program is connected to what and how learning happens during the school day.

2. Adapt the program to meet the needs, preferences, and attendance habits of students and parents to maximize engagement,
3. Provide students with highly trained instructors and opportunities for one-on-one or small group support.
4. Use real-life examples, collaborative activities, and positive relationships to increase student engagement and interest.
5. Evaluate program performance through ongoing data collection and summative assessments.

The Afterschool Alliance (2009) also found that the nature and structure of many after-school programs naturally provide many of the elements that have been shown to better engage at-risk youth in school, such as individualized tutoring and mentoring and a wide range of curricular areas. Charmaraman and Hall (2011) found that many OST dropout prevention programs used academic activities to develop:

the intermediary skills that are critical to academic success, such as developing positive relationships with others, learning how to communicate effectively, and appreciating diversity, [which] are critical for nurturing young people who need a positive and supportive environment to bring their assets to the foreground and become productive citizens (p. 4).

Hartmann, et al. (2011) support this quotation. They talk about how many elements of after-school programs—positive relationships with caring adults and peers, opportunities for small successes, and academic improvement—encourage the concept of positive identity development for teens, which in turn leads to more resilience and success in high school and beyond. The program they are reviewing, *Éxito*, has open access to all students, but specifically recruits students who are displaying early warning signs, such as poor attendance, behavior, and/or academic performance, to help foster the aforementioned positive supports for them.

The opportunity for students to gain enriching experiences in OST, in terms of service learning, vocational activities, and recreation, were found to be reasons for higher levels of student engagement (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Charmaraman and Hall (2011) also highlight that the inclusion of the arts in after-school programs can have a profound effect on student outcomes. Students engaged in the arts, even those who are most at

risk, were found to have higher grades, more positive relationships and behaviors, and improved self-esteem.

Little (2009) talks about the almost symbiotic relationships that schools and OST programs can have. OST programs provide opportunities that schools cannot afford, can review and reinforce material that is taught during the school day, and may ease transitions from middle to high school for students. On the other hand, schools are able to help OST programs target the students most in need of services, allow programs access to facilities and materials, and help the program curricula align with that of the school day.

However, it is important to note another set of critical relationships—between the family, school, and OST provider. When students are disengaged from school, their families are as well. Many of the programs found to have a larger impact on dropout prevention and student engagement were focused on involving families in the process, helping families learn to better support their children's academics at home (Charmaraman & Hall, 2011).

There is fairly widespread acceptance of the major categories of risk factors shown to predict student dropout; these are known as the ABCs. Students who have challenges with attendance, behavior, and course performance are significantly more likely to leave high school before graduation. Additionally, students who lack familial support or who are generally disengaged with school are also at distinct disadvantages. Extended learning opportunities provide a positive solution for many of the well-known risk factors for dropouts, often simultaneously. The collaboration of adults in day school, OST, and family is critical to align programs, interventions, and positive supports for student success.

References and Resources

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