Afterschool Helps Kids Graduate

High school graduation is an important gateway to success in college, career and beyond, including lifelong health and financial stability. Helping students persist through graduation requires multiple supports from a broad community and research shows that afterschool and summer programs can play a key role.

Students in afterschool programs† have better ABCs—attendance, behavior and coursework.

Research shows that students whose ABCs are “on track” have a lower risk of dropping out and links afterschool programs to increased graduation rates and skills critical to lifelong success.

Quality afterschool programs are safe, fun, academic, enriching spaces that take a whole-child approach to development during the time before school starts, after school between 3 to 6 p.m. when risky behaviors spike, and over the summer when academic progress can slip. Students who regularly participate in quality afterschool programs:

- Improve their self-perception and esteem.
- Have opportunities for physical activity, healthy snacks and nutrition.
- Take fewer negative risks and make better decisions.
- Are excited about and more engaged in learning.
- Behave better in the classroom.
- Can connect with adults and mentors to broaden their base of support.
- Are more likely to advance to the next grade and graduate high school.

†According to experimental and quasi-experimental studies
Afterschool programs can help ensure young people attend school, often by requiring students to be in school in order to attend programs after school. Several large-scale, multi-site afterschool programs have documented that participants improved school attendance, were less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to graduate on time.\(^2\)

Students who participated in The After-School Corporation (TASC, now ExpandED) had higher math test scores and high school Regents Examination scores, earned more high school credits, and had better school attendance than did their nonparticipating peers. The program emphasized academic enrichment, homework assistance, the arts and recreation.\(^3\)

Students who attended EduCare afterschool programs in Los Angeles, California, for four years during high school had a graduation rate of 91% compared with 61% for their non-participating peers.\(^4\)

LA’s BEST afterschool program helped to reduce high school dropout rates and the impact increased among students who participated for longer periods of time. Compared with their non-participating peers, students who attended the program at least 20 days a year for 2 years had lower dropout rates. Among students who participated for 3 years, the difference in dropout rates between participants and non-participants was as high as 14%. Overall, the strongest positive effects were among children from low-income families.\(^5\)

Many more studies show how afterschool helps address the ABCs, which are major factors that lead to dropping out. For example, students with high levels of participation in Texas’ 21st Century Community Learning Center programs missed fewer school days, had a decrease in disciplinary incidents and were more likely to be promoted to the next grade level than their non-participating peers.\(^6\)

Additional research about the benefits of afterschool is available at: afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm

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1. www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm