

Afterschool Programs: A Long-Term Investment in Our Children's Future

New Research Findings: Youth who consistently participate in afterschool programs from elementary school through adolescence show significantly better outcomes in adulthood, including higher educational attainment, income, and occupational status by age 26.

Immediate and Long-Term Effects Benefitting Youth who Participate in Afterschool Activities

Elementary School

Ages 6-10



Building the Foundation for Success: Children who consistently participate in afterschool activities in elementary school show academic success and positive social behaviors.

- ↑ Higher Grades
- ↑ Improved Social Skills
- ↑ Positive Relationships with Peers and Adults
- ↓ Reduced Behavior Issues

Secondary School

Ages 11-18



Keeping Youth Engaged and Connected: Youth engaged in middle-level afterschool programs are more confident and engaged. Youth involved in high school activities are more productive and safer than their peers.

- ↑ Higher Grade Point Averages
- ↑ Better Academic Performance
- ↑ Higher Test scores
- ↑ Engagement in Challenging Coursework
- ↑ Civic Engagement
- ↑ Pro-social Behavior
- ↓ Reduced Risky Behavior
- ↓ Reduced Substance Use

Young Adulthood

Under Age 26



Promoting Positive Outcomes: Young adults who participated in afterschool programs show improved life skills and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

- ↑ Earn More
- ↑ College Degrees
- ↑ Healthy Lifestyle
- ↓ Reduced Substance Use
- ↓ Reduced Arrest

Research based on the groundbreaking 26-year longitudinal study, Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD)*

Research sources: <https://50stateafterschoolnetworks.org/research-library/>

Key reference: Vandell, D. L., and Simpkins, S. Organized Afterschool Activities as a Developmental Context for Children and Adolescents. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*. 2024;67:1-. doi:10.1016/bs.acdb.2024.07.005

The research is clear: Afterschool programs are a wise investment that supports the well-being, academic achievement, and future success of all young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) has followed nearly 1,000 individuals from birth in 1991. The sampling started in 10 states and was designed to ensure adequate representation of major socio-demographic niches. The project, initially funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and then funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has provided an opportunity to study the short-term, mid-term, and long-term effects of organized afterschool activities in a large, diverse sample.

Hundreds of studies on this data set reveal **enduring and meaningful effects of organized afterschool activities for children and adolescents. As of 2025, the latest research reveals lasting effects through age 26.**

Elementary School

Ages 6-10

Consistent participation in activities predicted **gains in math achievement at the end of 1st grade**, controlling for family factors, school, and math achievement before kindergarten (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2004)

Findings from elementary school (K-5), were consistent – more periods of organized activities predicted **higher math and reading scores**, even after controlling for other experiences and academic achievement measured before kindergarten (Auger, et.al., 2013).

Secondary School

Ages 11-18

Secondary School: The high school transition —9th grade — is tough for many students. The research found that children's organized activities in elementary school continued to **predict higher academic achievement (both math and reading scores)** in adolescence (age 15). Organized activities in elementary school also predicted adolescents' reporting greater social confidence.

Once participants were in high school, participation in organized activities was **predicted less alcohol and marijuana use between 9th & 12th grade.**

Young Adulthood

By Age 26

Even after controlling for family factors and early education, the research found consistent participation in activities during elementary school predicted **higher educational attainment, income, and occupational status at age 26.** It also predicted less risk-taking behaviors and fewer arrests.

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