

מַיִירָס - גְּזִינֶט - מִכְוָן בְּרוֹקְדִּיל
MYERS - JDC - BROOKDALE INSTITUTE
مايرس - جلينت - معهد بروكديل



ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

After-School Educational Programs: Goals, Work Practices and Best-Practice Indicators

Dalia Ben-Rabi ◆ Sharon Amiel

The study was commissioned and funded by
the UJA-Federation of New York



RESEARCH REPORT

RR-567-10

Executive Summary

Background

The main goal of after-school educational programs is to help low achievers and disadvantaged students to fulfill their academic potential. In pursuing their goal, the programs play a part in the effort to reduce educational gaps. The rapid growth rate of such programs in Israel and abroad has led to increasing efforts to define and measure their quality. At the request of the UJA-Federation of New York, the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute conducted a mapping of the main educational programs implemented in Israel in an attempt to discover the extent to which the practices perceived to contribute to the quality of the programs are being implemented. This report is intended to support decision-making regarding new directions and priorities in the development of after-school educational programs.

Study Goals

The study's ultimate goal, as noted, was to provide information to support decision-makers regarding new directions for the further development of after-school educational programs

The study focused on the following questions:

1. What are the key best-practice indicators in the literature?
2. Which are the outstanding programs implemented in Israel?
3. To what extent do these programs reflect best practice?
4. What difficulties do these programs experience? Which best-practice indicators are difficult for them to achieve and what issues do they have to address in the course of the implementation?

Study Method

The study was based on a list of the main educational programs in Israel (42 relevant programs were identified) and an in-depth mapping of 25 of them, which were representative of a range of characteristics of programs and age cohorts. The data were collected from self-report questionnaires completed by directors or representatives of the programs between May and September 2009. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals at the Ministry of Education and planners and implementers of after-school educational programs. The mapping did not include an examination of the actual method of implementation or the outcomes of the programs regarding the students' situation.

Main Findings

The mapping of programs in Israel revealed a diversity of programs and implementation strategies, including comprehensive support programs, group academic assistance programs and mentoring programs. The programs' work was examined in terms of best-practice indicators identified in the literature as promoting effective work.

In the literature, best-practice indicators are divided into structural indicators (relating to the program goals, quantity and quality of personnel, measurements and evaluation), indicators relating to the learning process (which relate to program aspects with a direct impact on the students' learning experience) and the program's relationship with the school, the parents and the community.

This study found that there were some areas in which implementation methods considered effective were being used to a great extent and other areas in which little use was made of methods considered effective. In these areas, best-practice methods should be further strengthened and utilized.

The principles of best practice that were *usually* implemented included the following:

- ◆ Declaration of clear goals
- ◆ Provision of academic assistance as well as enrichment activities
- ◆ Support for students for at least three years
- ◆ Appointment of a staff member for liaison with the students regarding academic and social matters
- ◆ Monitoring of student attendance and achievements
- ◆ Appointment of a staff member for liaison with the school
- ◆ Training on how to work with low achievers.

The study also showed that important principles of best practice *were not often implemented*. These included:

- ◆ Extensive involvement of schools in all aspects of decision-making regarding the program
- ◆ Inclusion of youth in planning activities and decision-making
- ◆ Significant work with the parents.

Finally, there were principles of best practice that were *sometimes* implemented, notably the following:

- ◆ Frequent opportunities for individual learning
- ◆ Most of the teachers have a teachers certificate or B.A. degree
- ◆ Individualized learning plans
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity is an important element of the teacher training.

The main difficulties that the program directors reported they had to contend with were: budget constraints and the constant struggle to find funding; difficulties in recruiting quality teachers in the periphery and teachers who met the program's criteria; difficulty finding college students and volunteers willing to make a long-term commitment (in programs working with college students and volunteers); coping with additional needs of the students (emotional problems, behavioral problems, learning difficulties and financial difficulties); difficulty contending with attendance problems and dropout from the program; difficulty adapting the program activities for a range of ages; and difficulty working with parents, particularly when there was a need to cope with cultural differences.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Scholastic Achievements of Israeli Students	1
1.2 How the Israeli Education System Copes with Students in Need of Academic Assistance	2
1.3 After-School Programs	3
1.4 Best-Practice Indicators in the Literature	5
2. The Study – Goals and Methods	6
2.1 Study Goals	6
2.2 Study Methods	7
3. Main Findings	7
3.1 Main Background Characteristics of the Educational Programs	7
3.2 Program Goals	9
3.3 Best-Practice Indicators	9
Bibliography	25
Appendix I: Criteria for Selecting Programs for Inclusion in the Mapping	31

List of Tables

Table 1: Sample of After-School Educational Programs According to Operational Model and Target Population, by Participants' Age	8
Table 2: Number of Years the Programs have been Implemented, Number of Localities and Frameworks/Locations of Activities	8
Table 3: Goals, Structuring of Curriculum and Use of Special Study Materials	9
Table 4: Number of Students per Group (excluding Monitoring Programs)	10
Table 5: Opportunity for Private Instruction	10
Table 6: Member of Staff Responsible for Student Liaison and his/her Duties	11
Table 7: Teachers in After-School Educational Programs – Composition and Training	12
Table 8: Teachers' Training	13
Table 9: Monitoring Quality of Teachers' Work and Feedback Discussions with Program Teachers	13
Table 10: Programs, by Percentage of Teachers Working in the Program This Year for the First Time and by Gross Hourly Pay	14

Table 11:	Monitoring of Attendance and Academic Achievements	15
Table 12:	Evaluation of Programs	15
Table 13:	Contact with Services in the Community	16
Table 14:	Program Co-Funders	16
Table 15:	Annual Cost per Student	17
Table 16:	Average Number of Years Students Participate in Program and Dropout Rate	18
Table 17:	Frequency of Sessions, Number of Weekly Hours, Study Marathons and Number of Subjects	19
Table 18:	Subjects in which Program Participants Receive Academic Assistance, by Age Group	19
Table 19:	Contents of Academic Assistance and Additional Academic Inputs Provided to Participants	20
Table 20:	Enrichment and Empowerment Activities	21
Table 21:	Involvement of Youth in the Programs (Programs in which Youths over 12 Participate)	22
Table 22:	Programs in which the Teachers are from the Same Cultural Background as the Participants	22
Table 23:	Responsibility for Selecting Participants, Management of Relations with the School, Attendance at Staff Meetings at the School and Nature of the Relationship with the School	23
Table 24:	Parents' Involvement	24
Table I-1:	Intervention Strategy and Target Population of After-School Educational Programs, by Participants' Age Group	32