



WHAT IS OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME?

What do you call a regularly recurring block of time full of discretionary opportunity, choice, and flexibility? For young people it's out-of-school time – time away from school – and it occurs on weekends, school holidays, evenings, early mornings, late afternoons, and in the summertime. It's a time when youth can be constructively engaged and learning or struggling with trouble or simply bored. It is a series of time periods around which communities and adults need to become more intentional.

According to one study, out-of-school time refers to the waking hours young people have each week not already filled with school, homework and personal maintenance activities (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).

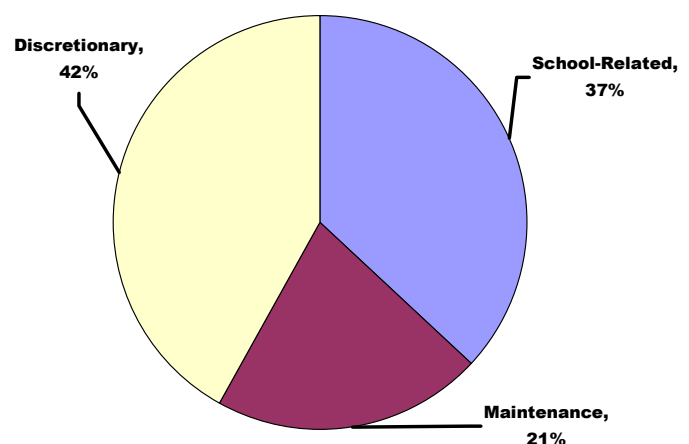
Out-of-school time captures perhaps the essence of what we think of as childhood – time filled with stimulating make believe, reading a great story, playing with friends, working alongside parents, solving problems, camping out, hanging out with grandparents, visiting neighbors, exploring, discovering, and investigating. Today these discretionary hours are often filled with after-school programs, extracurricular activities, music lessons, sports activities, television, the internet, hanging out with friends, exercising, shopping, reading, caring for younger siblings, and being at home alone. Organized community youth programs play an increasingly important role during these non-school hours because they offer safe places and structured activity for young people who might otherwise be home alone unsupervised or on the streets.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

For young people and their families, out-of-school time provides a golden opportunity for

intentional learning and positive development. These blocks of time can be focused to stimulate youth with age appropriate opportunities for mastery of skills and interests, for social interactions and emotional growth, and for explorations of themselves and their world. Just as important, structured and supported out-of-school activities open the door for youth to actively contribute to their own families and communities and to make a difference in their neighborhoods and communities through civic engagement and service.

Time Use by 9-14 Year Olds During Waking Hours



Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992

WHY IS OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME IMPORTANT?

Young people productively engaged in out-of-school hours gain valuable chances for growth and development. The odds are high that youth with nothing positive to do and nowhere to go will find things to do and places to go that negatively influence their development and futures (McLaughlin, 2000). Recent research reinforces the positive power of youth programs to impact school performance, social development, work habits, future aspirations and successful young adult outcomes.

IMPACT: Youth programs and activities are rich environments for positive development and learning.

- The well-known “Beeper Study” found that young people reported significant concentration in the school classroom and significant motivation in casual hanging out with friends. However, they reported higher levels of both concentration and motivation in the structured youth program of their choice (Larson, 2002).
- High school students who participated in a youth program which targeted low-income teenagers in several large American cities, were more likely to be high school graduates (63%) compared to non-participants (42%), and more likely to go on to post-secondary school (42%) compared to non-participants (16%) (Lattimore, Mihalic, Grotspeter, & Taggart, 1998).
- A national longitudinal study of adolescent health, one of the largest of its kind, found that how youth spend their free time was a more powerful predictor of risk than demographic variables like race or family resources. For example, simply hanging out with friends increased risk behavior, while engaging in after-school programs significantly decreased risk behavior (Blum, Beuhring, Shew, Bearinger, Sieving, Resnick, 2000).

IMPACT: Meaningful involvement and challenging opportunities in the non-school hours pay off for young people in powerful ways.

- Youth with opportunities to experience challenging, engaging activities early in high school have a 71% higher probability of having good developmental outcomes as

young adults (Gambone, Klem & Connell, 2002).

- Participation in after-school programs has been linked to better school attendance, better grades and test scores, more positive attitude towards school work, higher aspirations for college, better work habits, better interpersonal skills, and reduced drop out rates (Clark, 1998; Hamilton & Klein, 1998; Huang, et al, McLaughlin, 2000; Posner & Vandell, 1994, 1999; Schinke, 1999; U. S. Dept. of Education, 1998).
- A longitudinal study of after-school programs found that *higher* levels of participation in after-school programs led to better subsequent school attendance and was related to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of math, reading and language (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000).
- Search Institute’s developmental assets include constructive use of time and show a positive relationship with thriving behavior and a negative relationship with risk behavior (Benson, 1997).

SOCIETAL FACTORS

- Approximately 8 million children ages 5-14 spend time without adult supervision on a regular basis. This number includes 4 million children between the ages of 5 and 12 (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998).
- Each year young people have, on average, a minimum of 1,900 hours of discretionary time without structure or supervision (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).
- In 69% of all married-couple families with children ages 6-17, both parents work outside of the home. In 79% of single-mother

families and 84% of single-father families with children ages 6-17, the custodial parent works outside of the home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

- Minnesota has one of the highest percentages of working parents of school-aged children in the nation (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS

- Voters - A nationwide poll indicated that 9 of 10 voters, who believe their states are facing serious budget deficits, still continue to believe that there is a need for some type of organized activity or place where young people can go after school. 7 of 10 voters believe these programs are an absolute necessity for their communities. 71% of voters say it is difficult for parents to find after-school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2002).
- Mothers - A nationwide random survey of 1000 mothers indicated that 88% of mothers are most concerned about their children's safety during the hours after school and before parents get home from work (Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, 2003).
- Teens - Nationally, more than half of teens (54%) say they wouldn't watch so much TV or play video games if they had other things to do after school. More than half of teens wish there were more community or neighborhood-based programs available after school, and two thirds surveyed said they would participate in such programs (Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, 2001).
- Police Chiefs - By more than a 4 to one margin, over 1000 randomly surveyed police chiefs and other leaders in law enforcement chose providing after-school programs for school-age youngsters rather than hiring more police officers as having the greatest impact in reducing youth violence and crime (Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, 2002).
- Parents - A 1998 survey of parents conducted by the U.S. Department of Education indicated that 74% were willing to pay for after-school

programs, although only a third of those parents reported that their child attended a program (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

THE HIGH COST OF DOING NOTHING

- At least 25% percent of adolescents in the United States are at serious risk of not achieving "productive adulthood" and face such risk as substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure, and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).
- The best chance for lasting, positive change in young people lies in investments that promote a community culture that values, supports and involves young people and that promote the willingness of these communities to invest in long-term solutions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).
- Communities rich in developmental opportunities, including a diversity of program opportunities, are more likely to support broad array of development outcomes and meet the needs of a greater number of youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)
- Based on a conservative estimate, an investment of \$2.55/hour per youth (average cost for youth programs) for 1,200 hours per year (ensure adequate development and varied experiences) to develop youth into economically and socially viable adults plus a developmental education can result in a gain of \$10.51 for every dollar invested (Newman, Smith, & Murphy, 2001).

The Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time (MnCOST) is an action project of the University of Minnesota Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth and Families. The Commission convenes in January 2004 and will meet five times over the next year.

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