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THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS WITH CHILDREN
IN AN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

A Thesis By:
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Submitted to Office of Graduate Studies
Texas A & M University-San Antonio
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts: Teaching in Diverse Communities

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Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

The Perceptions of Teachers and Parents with Children in An After School Program

(December 2023)

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This study addresses the critical issues of student disengagement and funding disparities in public schools, emphasizing the vital role of After School Programs. Researchers underscore the significance of these programs in enhancing academic performance and fostering positive attitudes toward education. The involvement of parents and equitable funding are factors impacting student success. The author, a Mexican American Latina, reflects on her limited after school educational experiences due to financial constraints, highlighting the importance of After School Programs in bridging the educational resource gap. The study investigates the impact of an After School Program (ASP) using both quantitative and qualitative methods, revealing that ASPs positively influence students' active lifestyles, academic connections, socialization, and provide parents with peace of mind. ASPs play a critical role in improving students' overall school experience, emphasizing their significance in education and child development. The text discusses the need for further research and potential policy implications regarding After School Programs.

Dedication

To my guardian angel, Mom,

Your unwavering support and boundless love have been the guiding light of my life's journey. This dedication is a heartfelt tribute to you, for you are the reason I stand where I am today.

When I had lost faith in myself to continue my education, you held onto it fiercely. In my darkest moments, you were my strength, my motivation, and my biggest believer. Your enduring commitment to my education, even when I had given up, is a testament to your resilience and love of which you instilled in me.

Because of you, I've discovered the ability to work with students daily, nurturing their potential and making a positive impact on their lives. You've taught me the value of perseverance, compassion, and the transformative power of education.

This dedication is a token of my immense gratitude and love. It serves as a reminder of the remarkable woman who has shaped me into who I am today.

Love you to infinity and beyond,

Your Favorite

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Table of Contents

Chapter1: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Research Question.....	4
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	6
The Essence of a School Experience	7
Student Engagement.....	7
Gender Differences.....	8
Parent Involvement.....	9
Funding.....	10
After School Programs.....	10
Active Play in After School Programs.....	12
Chapter 3: Method.....	13
Positionality.....	13
Context.....	15
Mixed Methods Research Design.....	17
Sampling.....	19
Data Collection.....	20
Instruments.....	23
Research Questions.....	24
Analysis Procedures.....	27
Mixing the Methods.....	30
Chapter 4: Findings.....	32

Active Lifestyle.....	32
Academic Connections.....	34
Socialization.....	39
Parent Peace of Mind.....	42
Review of Overall Findings.....	43
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	46
Further Research.....	49
References.....	52
Vita.....	55
Appendix A, Informed Consent	
Appendix B, Data Gathering Instruments	

List of Tables/Figures

Table 1: Questions for Staff and Administration.....	24
Table 2: Questions for Parents.....	25
Figure 1: Parent Interview Questions.....	26
Figure 2: School Personnel Interview.....	27
Figure 3.....	33
Figure 4.....	35
Figure 5.....	37
Figure 6.....	39
Figure 7.....	40
Figure 8.....	41

List of Symbols/Abbreviations

Texas Education Agency.....TEA

Century Community Learning Centers.....CCLC

After School Centers on Education.....ACE

After School Programs.....ASP

Boston Medical Center.....BMC

Building Enterprises of Learning and Living.....B.E.L.L

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.....TEKS

Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics.....STEAM

How People Learn.....HPL

Chapter 1

The potential importance of the study lies in its relevance to both current and future research in the field of education and After School Programs. With ongoing concerns about student engagement, academic performance, and overall student well-being in the educational landscape, this study could shed light on how After School Programs might positively influence these areas. In light of the persistent challenges in education, particularly in the context of ever-evolving teaching methods and technologies, comprehending the multifaceted benefits of After School Programs remains crucial. This understanding could equip educators, policymakers, and parents to make informed decisions regarding the potential implementation and support of such programs.

Introduction

Schools today face a number of challenges that impact student learning. From lack of resources, heavy emphasis on student performance and test scores, lack of student engagement, to pressures from outside entities, teachers, and administrators are looking for ways to do more with less. This is just the beginning of challenges that students, teacher and administrators, and parents have to face in efforts of providing a quality education to students.

Statement of the Problem

Student disengagement is among the main mechanisms leading to student academic failure and dropout throughout schooling (Fredricks et al., 2016). Student engagement reflects students' underlying motivation for their schoolwork and encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components of all which are necessary for active student investment in their schoolwork (Oliver, et al, 2020). Student engagement extends beyond the student listening to the

lesson or completing classwork in a timely manner, externalizing behaviors include an array of noticeable and disruptive behaviors for one's surroundings (Oliver, et al., 2020).

Funding is also a major problem in many urban classrooms that hinder educational experience. Typically, this can lead to students having a shallow understanding of subject matter or teachers digging into their pockets to provide supplies for curriculum in their classroom (Chen, 2022). This becomes a financial burden to teachers who have to provide their own supplies. In some cases, according to Ostrander (2015), experienced and well-credentialed teachers choose not to teach in these low paying districts that lack funding, and as a result talent moves to the districts that receive more funds. Ostrander (2105) found, "As the problem of funding disparity grows so does this unequal distribution of resources in schools, raising the question whether children are being adequately educated," (p. 271).

For example, according to Chen (2022), schools lack funds that give teachers the opportunities to purchase items or programs to give students hands-on experiences leading to deeper understanding. There are also struggles financially that prevent students from having access to engaging and helpful technology in the classroom (Chen, 2022). Funding is needed to provide students not only with technology, but devices that work efficiently (Chen, 2022). According to Ostrander (2015), under the new standards that allowed for schools to use technology to take standardized tests, critics who initially praised the standards for freeing school children and teachers of the burden of testing are now saying that the amount of actual testing time students spent taking those tests were much greater. The tests also require technological skills that many schools did not have access to because of limited resources. The lack of technology creates a larger gap between lower income and higher income student performance. Today's schools are more segregated than at any point in our recent history, and it is largely due

to problems with the disparity of funding between districts (Ostrander, 2015). For example, Carmel High School in Carmel, Indiana trended on Tic Tok according to Jackson (2023), because of the extravagant features the school has such as a jewelry store, a 10,000-seat stadium, and an Olympic sized pool. The videos of the school soon became a social media sensation where many discovered in addition to the stadium, the school also had professional TV and radio studios, planetarium, and numerous gyms.

A perfect example of the disparities between the funding of districts is explained by Gonzalez and Ntamere in an *Op/Ed* stated, “Right now, only 31% of Indianapolis Public School (IPS) buildings are in “good” condition. That means 69% of our buildings are not good enough.” How could this be possible when in the same state there is a school growing famous on Tik Tok for their lavishness. It can be suggested like stated in the article that the state is sending a passive message that academics are not a priority for and the lack of facilities for athletics tells students in those school that they should not bother with exploring passions that excite them. These disparities make it harder for teachers to champion their students to believe in their futures (2023). The differences in these schools is very appalling.

According to *Public School Review* website, Chen (2022) wrote, public school teachers have also expressed that student attitudes, such apathy and disrespect for teachers, as a major problem facing schools today. Other issues that the teachers face are tardiness, disrespect, and attendance issues. These were significant challenges for teachers (Chen, 2022). These issues were seen more frequently and have become a growing issue. They are also a major issue that leads to student gaps in their academic achievement (Chen, 2022).

To solve some of these issues, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) with funding assistance from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) sought to address these

challenges with After School Programs in Texas. These After School Programs have been designed to provide students with interactive, fun, hands-on learning aligned to the school curriculum. Local programs also provide homework help, tutoring, and other targeted needs-based assistance, in addition to enrichment activities such as sports, clubs, and youth development projects that build character, confidence, and leadership skills (Texas Ace, 2022). According to Texas Ace, Afterschool Center on Education, (2022), many students attending for more than 30 days experience measurable improvements such as increased grade promotion, fewer absences, improved grades, higher test scores in English and math in grades 9–12. Also, there are fewer disciplinary incidents in middle and high school that have these After School Programs.

Research Question

This mixed method case study asked if school personnel and families perceive that students who are currently participating in an after school program are more engaged and satisfied with their school experience. Specifically, this study investigated the following research question:

How do school personnel and families perceive the effects of an after school program on their student's school experience?

This case study asked if school personnel and families perceive that students who are currently participating in an After School Program are more engaged and satisfied with their school experience. This study helps to explain how After School Programs benefit families and how these programs provide resources to help bridge the economic disadvantages of title-one families. The study determined programs funded by CCLC such as ACE help breakdown

economically disadvantaged barriers for families that may not be able to afford such programs if they were not provided freely by the ASP.

In this research endeavor, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) collaborates with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) to allocate a substantial annual budget, exceeding 5 million dollars, to school districts meeting the criteria for After School Programs (ASPs). From my perspective as a researcher, it becomes evident that ASPs present a promising avenue for socioeconomically disadvantaged and Title 1 schools. The core of this study centers on the profound influence of ASPs on student engagement at the elementary level and their potential to alleviate barriers hindering student participation in activities that might otherwise be beyond their reach. This research, driven by my curiosity and dedication, aims to unravel the ways in which ASPs contribute to an enriched overall school experience for students. It also seeks to gather the perceptions and experiences of parents and campus personnel, acquired from insightful interviews.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

To researchers such as Davis and Farbman (2002), schools alone are not enough: After School Programs and education reform in Boston, used in this thesis have concluded that After School Programs are valuable. Davis and Farbman (2002) found that participation in after school and summer programs - whether they are activity focused, narrow tutoring sessions, or some combination-can help raise grades and scores on standardized tests and encourage positive attitudes toward school and learning. Educators and policymakers had begun to beat the drums of their After School Programs as integral to the success of the education reform movement (Davis & Farbman, 2002).

Not only can the After School Programs help students academically, but according to BMC (Boston Medical Center) Public Health, it is found that the interventions can lead to increased physical activity among the children (Riiser, et al 2020). Riiser (2020) also explained that young schoolchildren are mainly physically active through play that includes locomotory movements, manipulative movements, and stabilizing postures. With the combination of academic and physical activity that ASPs can offer, this information leads to the hypothesis that After School Programs can benefit the overall student school experience. Riiser's (2020) study determined the long-term effects that ASPs have on a student's school experience. It is predicted that faculty, administration, and parents saw an increase in the overall school experience for their students that have attended an ASP for at least 45 or more days.

To conduct research and gather data, the researcher must first understand what a school experience is, and the components that make up a school experience. These research questions

lead to understanding the essence of a school experience. Before diving into the research project there are a few items that need to be determined and defined such as student engagement, and the essence of a school experience.

The Essence of a School Experience

Student Engagement

Fredricks et al. (2016) suggests that engagement is a key contributor to learning and academic success: “A growing body of research has linked student engagement to higher grades, achievement test scores, and school completion rates,” (p. 1). The importance of engagement is evident and seems to be necessary for learning. The correlation with higher grades, better test achievement, and school completion is a positive reaction from student engagement. A main factor in obtaining this statistic of higher engagement according to Fredricks et al. (2016) stems from classrooms with students who have developed open and strong relationships with their teachers and peers, where teachers support students’ autonomy, teachers who hold high expectations, and give clear challenging instruction with consistent feedback.

Student Engagement can be broken down into three parts behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). “Student engagement reflects students’ underlying motivation for their schoolwork,” (Skinner, 2009, as cited in Olivier, 2020, p. 2327) Olivier et al. (2020) discusses that engagement encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components, all of which are necessary for active student investment in their schoolwork. Student engagement extends beyond if the student is listening to the lesson or completing classwork in a timely manner. Student disengagement in school is among the main mechanisms leading to student academic failure and dropout throughout schooling (Fredricks, 2016).

According to Fredricks et. al., (2004), behavioral engagement refers to students' conduct and actions, including active participation, attendance, as well as compliance with classroom rules and teacher instructions. Emotional engagement defines the students' affective reactions to the learning process and classroom environment, to include their interests, enjoyment, and happiness (Fredricks et al., 2004). Lastly cognitive engagement includes students' thought processes that promote their dedication of efforts to learning and mastery of school related tasks and content. Cognitive engagement develops the process of self-regulated and deep processing strategies to form ideas in one's own words, identifying important information, and trying different strategies to solve problems (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Gender Differences

Gender differences may play into reactions to internal and external stimulates that can affect student engagement. Externalizing behaviors can typically encompass hyperactivity, attention problems, and conduct problems such as opposition or defiant behaviors. Internalizing behaviors can be classified as worry, sadness, anhedonia, and other negative moods or emotions (Archambault et al., 2009). It is important to be able to identify these behaviors as educators to ensure that they provide the best response to help create not only relationships with students, but also to ensure that the educators' reactions to these types of behaviors do not hinder the students' relationship to the school. Moreover, boys are more numerous than girls to display externalizing behaviors, but girls tend to have a higher rate of dealing with anxiety and depression (Archambault et al., 2009). It is important to understand these external and internal behaviors because according to Archambault et al. (2009), these behavior problems can lead to a negative school-related out such as lower engagement.

According to Archambault et. al., (2009) student engagement remains stable across developmental for most children. In addition, girls tend to display slightly higher engagement levels than boys, regardless of development period considered, particularly for language classes (Archambault et al., 2009). Despite these levels of engagement, boys and girls seem to follow similar developmental paths (Li & Lerner, 2011). This leads to the question of how teachers can get these students to engage and take ownership of their learning. The research of student engagement answers the what, but leaves the question of how, still open.

Parent Involvement

In schools, not only is student and staff participation important, but parent involvement can act as a catalyst to student achievement and engagement. In schools the participation of students, parents, and staff is important because it increases ownership and improves performance (Svanbjornsdottir et al., 2016). Svanbjornsdottir et al (2016) found that parents can influence student achievement by supporting their children. Their study focused on the relationship between engagement of parents and achievement in more than 100 secondary schools in England. In the study, there are different perspectives of how parent involvement can influence students' engagement. Parents saw the engagement as support for students, students saw it as moral support, and teachers saw it as support for the school. Having parent involvement can lead to a sense of belonging to the school community, which leads to the parents feeling welcomed, students attending school regularly, and ownership of the student learning by both parent and student. Parents who are involved in their child(rens) education feel more informed about class meetings and praise and feel as if the school answered questions they had promptly (Svanbjornsdottir et al., 2016).

Funding

According to Fredricks and Simpkins (2012), there have been significant increases in government and foundation funding to support organized activities in low-income areas and low-performing schools through organizations such as Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, or other outside organizations that partner with the school. The original grant for the Boston After School Programs were initiated with a grant starting as early as 1998, and numerous other grants to support 30 programs and twenty - five hundred children, (Davis & Farbman, 2002). One way the Boston Community Learning Centers were able to focus their work on promoting academic achievement was to participate in these state-designed pilot projects which included compensation for teachers to spend time in the After School Program (Davis & Farbman, 2002).

This led to the incorporation of participation from various universities such as Harvard University, Harvard School of Law, and Boston College (Davis & Farbman, 2002). These universities assisted in creating After School Programs to assist in the creation of After School Programs. For example, the second program, the B.E.L.L. (Building Enterprises of Learning and Living) foundation was founded by a group of Harvard Law School students in 1992 (Davis & Farbman, 2002). The mission of these Harvard Law students and many of the other universities was “to increase the academic achievements, self-esteem, and life opportunities of elementary school children living in historically underserved communities,” (Davis & Farbman, 2002). The involvement from these universities helped jumpstart the development of After School Programming.

After School Programs

Studies such as Fredricks and Simpkins (2012) have shown that there is a greater interest in the potential participation in organized after school activities to promote positive youth

development that fall outside of the regular school curriculum and include school-based extracurricular activities. Davis and Farbman (2002) found that participation in after school and summer programs-whether they are activity focused, narrow tutoring sessions, or some combination-can help raise grades and scores on standardized tests and encourage positive attitudes towards school and learning. For example, in Boston, after a strong recommendation by Mayor Tomas M. Menino began a Boston Public School reform that incorporated the use of After School Programs. The Boston reform that included the use of ASPs incorporated homework help and literacy support into the program, by reinforcing specific curriculum the students learned during the school day (Davis & Farbman, 2022). The Boston programming incorporated tutoring and support programs for disadvantaged students, increased self-esteem, and life opportunities in underserved communities (Davis & Farbman, 2002).

Fredricks and Simpkins (2012) stated that youth participation in organized after school activities provides opportunities for growth and development, but unfortunately ethnic minority youth, especially those living in low-income communities, participate in these activities at lower rates and less consistently than non-minority youth. The growth in numbers of single-parent and dual-earner families has left millions of children unsupervised after school, which leads to an increase in risk behaviors, poorer outcomes, and more time spent in unstructured and unsupervised settings (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012).

Studies have been completed that show After School Programs can positively affect ethnic minority and low-income students correlated with increases of positive academic, psychological, and social adjustment (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). Organized activity participation among African American adolescents has been associated with lower drug and alcohol use, and among Latino adolescents it increased the students' self-esteem, social behavior,

emotional regulation, and ethnic identity (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). It was also found in several ASPs that low-income ethnic minority youth attending high-quality elementary and middle school participants have shown that participation in the ASPs can predict higher academic achievement and lower school dropout rates, (Fredrick & Simpkins, 2012).

Active Play in After School Programs

Active play is vital in after-school programs for several reasons, and it can significantly contribute to a positive school experience for students through providing physical health, motor development, and provide encouragement to the students, (Riiser, et al., 2020). Fredrick and Simpkins (2012) state those in athletic activities provided in ASPs have been linked to lower obesity levels, and overall reduced negative behaviors and drug use. Students who have an active lifestyle early on would most likely continue that lifestyle later on in life.

Encouraging kids to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle from a young age is immensely beneficial for their overall well-being. Regular physical activity may help maintain a healthy weight, and also promote strong muscles and bones Engaging in physical activities also fosters teamwork, discipline, and self-confidence, while reducing the risk of chronic illnesses such as obesity. In essence, cultivating healthy habits in childhood paves the way for happier, healthier, and more fulfilling lives as children grow into adulthood. The After School Program can give opportunities to students to have time to be active.

Chapter 3

Method

The focus of this study is on After School Programs and the effects that they have on the students over all experience. Although there have been great strides in the After School Program progress, there is still a struggle to ensure that the ASP is assists schools in closing achievement gaps. One of the ways that the study wants to deepen knowledge about ASPs is figuring out if it adds to the overall school experience.

Positionality

I am a Latina woman predominantly Mexican American with a splash of Spanish and Native American. I attended a private catholic school from grades Kinder through 12th grade. I know the stigma may be that I was a privileged private school student, however every monthly payment for my schooling was a financial struggle for my parents and they worked at school events to receive discounts on my tuition. I am the descendent of a retail working mother, and father who was a former military mechanic working a local grocery chain's mechanical system. By no means was I a child of lavish living, but all my basic needs and then some were provided for me. I was even provided with the opportunities to play sports as a child with leagues that my parents paid for in catholic youth organizations or San Antonio Sports Foundation. Both of which were reduced or no payment programs.

This doesn't sound like a bad schooling experience at all, but what I lacked in my education was exposure to fine arts, access to up to date technology, or real-world experiences beyond the typical local museums. The biggest downfall as well was I wasn't provided an opportunity to attend the after school care provided at my catholic school, because it was expensive. I can recall on many occasions my mother having to pay one dollar per minute I

stayed in that ASP when she got off work late. I can only imagine what the parents paid for a child to go there daily or until their parents could pick them up after work.

As an adult now, being able to not have to choose between sports or arts, I get to explore as many extra-curricular options as I would like to. I can find an art class, join a sports club, or take myself on explorative trips beyond the neighborhood I live in, but as an adolescent I was not given such options. To this day in my adult life, I have not been to all parts of San Antonio. I am a native and feel like a tourist the minute I step downtown or in the hill country. For example, the catholic elementary school I attended did not have any art classes. The closest thing you could get to fine arts was a play I participated in during English class that was required to complete for a grade or bell choir which you had to be a 7th or 8th grader in while hoping you signed up before spots were filled. In high school, the private high school I attended had to choose between sports or arts. The campus made it nearly impossible to do both unless you took it as an elective, which again limited spots were available. The lack of opportunities that are now offered at ASP could have exposed me to fine arts when I was an adolescent versus now as an adult.

In addition, in elementary and high school, cliques were very normal and if you wanted to be an athlete you could only hangout with those friends or if you were artsy, you could only socially hangout with artsy friends. I believe that ASP programs especially those in elementary school give students the opportunity to explore options beyond the stereotypical types like gender, sexual orientation, etc. and give opportunities to show you can do what you want as long as you enjoy it! This is a huge step especially because boys don't have to feel like they only must join sports clubs, and girls don't feel pressure to join culinary or garden clubs. Clubs can be chosen freely, and fluid for all.

Although I have not attended a public school as a student, I have been an educator in elementary schools for seven years in three title one campuses. I have had experience with After School Programs. ASP experience has varied from simply being the teacher to drop them off at the cafeteria, to working recreation for the ASP summer school, and then a sports coach during the school year for an ASP. Finally, my current position in the education system is as a coordinator for an ASP that is funded by the state's education agency. I currently run the ASP program location on the Inspirational Youth campus. My current position as the site coordinator for the IYS may seem like it would be bias, however all families volunteered for the survey and were not handpicked for the study.

Additional concern for bias could come from my belief that ASPs are beneficial to students, but what I want to know is how. I can believe in and support ASP programs, but I want to look at the ASP through the lenses of the parents, teachers, and administration. I would like to see if there is growth in the overall school experience of students and their families, because of ASP participation. I want to determine the missing piece of student engagement through academic and enrichment activities after school hours. Finally, the ASP opportunities in sports, fine arts, or technology give students opportunities to develop their interests into well-rounded students in the future.

Context

The Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is a program funded by Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers and administered by Texas Education Agency (TEA) to provide quality after school activities to students in lower income schools throughout Texas. There are nearly 1,000 ACE sites across Texas serving at least 180,000 students daily after school, which is run by a site coordinator and overseen by a site director (Olivier, et. al., 2020).

Each of the 1,000 program sites has its own unique blueprint to fit the needs of the school. All, however, are required to have a portion of the out of school time dedicated to social emotional learning, academic activities or tutoring, community careers, military education, or enrichment activities driven by student interest (Olivier, et al., 2020).

The students engage in an hour of academic activities such as English language arts, science, and math. Academic activities are beyond the norm activities that students complete in the classroom. The site coordinator plans academic activities hands-on, innovative, and designed to feel more like play than classwork. These activities are based on the needs of each grade level and their mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills that are the state standard. The engagement portion of the day in the program is geared to the student's interests. Each site, including Inspirational Youth Elementary (pseudonym), conducts a survey or gathering of data for what activities and interests that the students have such as cooking, gardening, sports, and more! The enrichment activities are then led by teachers or school staff that have similar interests like the kids in their clubs or classes. Examples of the clubs and classes that are offered to students are gardening club in which students in grades kinder through 5th grade work together to design a garden for the school, grow vegetables, and maintain the garden for growth and to entertain the school's furry friends. There is also the Art Ambassadors club who is learning to draft and plan the school's mural for the garden and courtyard at the campus. Amongst these programs there is also Iplay that offers a series of sports sessions conducted by a coach that hosts a city-wide tournament against other schools in the program, the STEAM classes allow students interested in science the opportunity to engage in activities to think outside the box, and countless contractors that offer classes such as yoga or karate.

The access to the academic and enrichment activities in the ACE program is free to all students who attend a campus that have qualified to have the ACE program at their school. These opportunities become beneficial to parents with low socioeconomic status that may not be able to afford an After School Program or enrichment activities such as sports that the students participate in during the ACE program hours.

In addition to providing after school structure to title one schools, the ACE program also has a department specializing in family engagement. The family engagement specialist along with the site coordinator create family activities or participate in school activities to help increase parent involvement not only with their child, but with the school or district as well. Parent involvement in their child's life, education, and school is a key to increasing student achievement and raising students' overall self-esteem. Examples of activities provided by the family engagement portion of ACE include parenting classes that allow partnerships between ACE staff and parents while learning about new ways to connect with their children and more up-to-date ways that students may be using technology and how to keep them safe. The engagement portion of ACE also helps fund after school events ranging from family game nights to information services that offer access to necessities such as transportation, informative programs about future college expenses for parents, bilingual classes for parents to learn English, and opportunities to voice their opinion to district representatives. These opportunities give parents chances to not only become informed but become part of the community within the district and campus of their child(ren).

Mixed Methods Research Design

Mixed methods research is defined as a methodology and method to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative

(closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data integrates or combines the two, and then draws inferences from the integration that provides insight beyond what can be learned from the quantitative or the qualitative data (Creswell, 2022). According to Waysman and Savaya (1997), this recognition of “mix methods” stems from the understanding that complex social phenomena are often best comprehended by looking at them through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. Also stated by Waysman and Savaya (1997), complex multiple-purpose organizations require clarity of mission, solid managerial practices, solid managerial practices, long range planning capacity, a healthy organizational culture, and many specific skills to ensure long-term functioning, growth, and development.

Mix Methods Research Design has value in the use of the different approaches such as the trends and personal experiences, which can contribute to understanding the research problem. Research has very many formats that can be followed, but in the case of looking at the benefits that ASP have on students, staff, and their families it is important to gather, but become immersed in interviews of willing participants as well to become familiar with personal experiences of ASP beyond a survey. Results from one method type are intended to enhance, illustrate, or clarify results from the other (Caracelli, & Greene). Quantitative methods frequently play the leading role in assessing program outcomes, while qualitative methods are chosen for the supporting role of examining program processes (Caracelli, & Greene).

This research study did take an exploratory sequential design. The quantitative measures or assessments were designed to capture the culture and understandings of the participants being studied. This research project was designed to dig deep into how the After School Programs play a role in increasing the school experience for students and parents.

Using a mix method design helped to develop a culturally sensitive survey instrument by allowing a survey to be conducted for parents and staff to complete as well as interviews of the parents and teachers whose students participate in the After School Program at their campus.

Sampling

The thesis is focused on one After School Program funded by the TEA Agency in the state of Texas. TEA decides to grant funds to Texas school districts one of which is where I am employed. This allowed me to receive permission from the district assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction to conduct my study of the ASP at Inspirational Youth Elementary.

These After School Programs have been designed to provide students with interactive, fun, hands-on learning aligned to the school curriculum. Local programs also provide homework help, tutoring, and other targeted needs-based assistance, in addition to enrichment activities such as sports, clubs, and youth development projects that build character, confidence, and leadership skills (Texas Ace, 2022). According to Texas Ace (2022), many students attending for more than 30 days experience measurable improvements such as increased grade promotion, fewer absences, improved grades, higher test scores in English and math in grades 9–12. Also, there are fewer disciplinary incidents in middle and high school campuses that have these After School Programs.

An ACE center located in South Central Texas at a school I refer to as Inspirational Youth Elementary runs an ACE After School Program that caters to the academic needs of the students and their interests. In this study, I conducted surveys and interviews with the use of a sample from the IYE parents, faculty, and staff. All staff who have worked at IYE for at

least 1 year and all adults in families of enrolled students in the After School Program were asked to participate.

The survey of close-ended questions included a section at the end of the survey that provided the faculty and parents the option to add additional comments, agree to be considered for a focus group or individual interview, and provide contact information if contact by researcher is needed.

Teachers' criteria for participation in interview process of the study are as follows:

- Work at IYE
- Parent Criteria for participation in the interview process of the study are as follows:
- Student is an active registered student in the ACE program at IYE student participation for at least 45 days in program

Once the surveys were completed, the researchers used the quantitative survey results to choose five families whose parents volunteered to be interviewed along with two teachers (one of whom works for ACE/one who does not). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions to survey the faculty and parent information on ASP impact on themselves and the student(s). The purpose of the interviews is to gather the participants' perceptions, concerns, and effect on school experience. This qualitative information gave additional information from what data was collected from the quantitative survey, and insight through the lens of faculty and parents.

Data Collection

The data collection consisted of focusing on the program at Inspirational Youth Elementary. The data collection consisted of a mixed methods approach balancing the use of

quantitative and qualitative data. This approach for gathering data gave the best unique approach to the breakdown of numerical data with narrative stories from the group of parents and school personnel that volunteered for the interview process.

School personnel such as teachers, administration, and parents or guardians of students in the ASP would be necessary to complete quantitative data with a survey and qualitative data with interviews with the parents specifically of children that participate in an After School Program, and staff personnel such as teachers and administration.

Data collection for research had 4 objects to complete:

1. The research began with a quantitative data study that used a Likert survey completed by school faculty, staff, and administrations who attend After School Programs.
2. After completion of the survey, the researcher reviewed what faculty agreed to participate in the qualitative interview process and begin interviews. Faculty, staff, and administration provided two options, a focus group or personal interview.
3. A second survey was provided to the families of the elementary school that attend the after school center, ACE.
4. Once the parent survey is completed, the researcher reviewed what parents agreed to participate in the qualitative interview process and began interviews. Families were provided two options, a focus group or personal interview.

The data collection for the quantitative portion of the survey consisted of two formats: a google document that can be emailed to faculty and student's parents to complete, a flier with a QR code, or a physical paper copy that was filled out by the faculty and student's

parent. Questions for parents and school personnel are listed in the table in the *Quantitative Tools* section below.

The qualitative portion was moderately inserted in the survey with open-ended questions giving the opportunity to add additional information, indicate if they would like to be interviewed, and contacted to be interviewed. If they decided to participate in the qualitative interview process, they were contacted by the researcher. If the participants met the criteria, the researcher interviewed the participant.

Targeted district employee groups that the researchers interviewed were as follows: one classroom Teacher who also teaches for the ASP, and one classroom teacher that does not teach in the ASP after school. The aim of the interviews with the faculty were to gather insight on the image of ACE and their components that may lead to how students respond to the program, if it assists in the student's overall attitude, and if the ASP plays a role in the overall impact (negative or positive) on the student's overall school experience.

Interviews with the students' parents or guardians were conducted to gather qualitative information. The researcher interviewed parents whose child participates in the ASP. The goal set for these interviews determined not only if families benefit from the ASP program such as ACE financially, but what experience(s) did the parents and students have during interactive/participation in ACE that have may positively influence the child's school experience. A total of five families were interviewed. ASPs were contributing to the students' attitude toward school, behavior, and parent involvement. To get a more in-depth the qualitative data collection was necessary to gain perspective and understanding of the effect of the ASP.

In summary, this study investigates the extent to which ASPs, like the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program, contribute to students' school experiences, behavior, and parental involvement. Combining quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, this mixed-methods approach offers a holistic view of the impact of ASPs on students, families, and school personnel. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods, using surveys and interviews. Surveys are completed by school faculty while interviews involve parents and guardians of ASP students. These interviews aim to gather insights into the impact of ASP on students and their families' school experiences, including academic performance, behavior, and emotional development. The research also explores the financial benefits for families who may not afford extracurricular activities outside of the state-funded ASP. The author conducts interviews with a specific focus on different participant groups, including the school principal, teachers involved in the ASP, and those not participating, allowing for a comprehensive comparison of perspectives within the school community.

Instruments

Quantitative Tools

Ordinal (Likert) Survey

The use of the survey assisted in identifying specific components and goals such as gathering data to efficiently see the effectiveness of the program through a level of measurement. The ranking order used in the survey helped see the degree of variation between range of extreme negative to extreme positive effect on the overall school experience survey questions. Once the survey participants answer these questions, they were able to express information in a qualitative format on the survey or volunteer for the interview process.

The survey was based on a value system of 0-4 that did ask specific questions based on engagement such as: cognitive, behavioral, and emotion. Example questions for the Likert survey can be found in the tables above with the value 0 extreme negative and 4 being changed for positive. This survey allows the faculty and parents to determine where their student/child school experience has ranged from change from positive to extreme negative, which allows more than a yes or no answer variance.

Table 1
Questions for faculty:

Question	0-Extreme negative	1- Slightly negative	2- No change	3- Slight change for positive	4-Change for positive
Have students who attend an ASP shown an increase in their academics? (cognitive)					
Have students who attend an ASP have shown growth in handling their behavior skills?					
Have students who attend an ASP have developed a more positive emotion especially in problem solving skills?					
Does the student show more interest in coming to school since attending an ASP?					
Is there any other information you want to add?					
Are you interested in being interviewed about your survey questions?	Yes		No		
If yes, please provide your name and preferred email address.					

Table 2
Questions for parents:

Question	0-Extreme negative	1- Slightly negative	2- No change	3- Slight change for positive	4-Change for positive
Does your child show more interest in coming to school since attending an ASP?					
Has your child shown an increase in school activities?					
Has an ASP provided activities that you may not have been able to afford without a state funded ASP program?					
Has your child's overall emotional and behavioral actions changed?					
Is there any other information you want to add?					
Are you interested in being interviewed about your survey questions?	Yes		No		
If yes, please provide your name and preferred email address.					

Qualitative Tools

The survey of close-ended questions did include a section at the end of the survey that provided to the faculty and parents the option to add additional comments, agree to be considered for a focus group or individual interview, and provide contact information if contact by researcher is needed.

The quantitative data was gathered to seek five families whose parent or guardian would participate in an interview along with the total of two teachers. The interview participants were chosen on a volunteer basis. However, the volunteers did have to meet minimum requirements. Teacher's criteria for participation in interview process of the study were as follows: work at Inspirational Youth Elementary as well as work at campus for a minimum of one year. The parent or guardian criteria for participation in the interview process

of the study are as follows: student is an active registered student in the ACE program at Inspirational Youth Elementary and the student participated in the ASP for at least 45 days.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions to survey the faculty and parent information on ASP impact on themselves and the student(s). The purpose of the interviews is to gather the participants' perceptions, concerns, needs, satisfaction with the program, desires for new services, and effect on school experience. This qualitative data gave additional information from what data was collected from the quantitative survey, and insight through the lens of faculty and parents.

Overall, the study was concerned with these questions: 1- Do After School Programs help enhance the other all school experience for students and their families? 2-Do After School Programs break down economical barriers families may face when looking for supplemental tutoring or extracurricular activities for their students? 3-What is the overall perception and experience in After School Programs according to parents and campus staff?

Figure 1
Parent Interview Questions

Additional questions that were asked depending on parent responses.

What is your and your child(ren) personal experience with ACE?

What activities have your child(ren) participated in since attending ACE? How does that positively or negatively affect their school experience?

What activities have your child(ren) participated in since attending ACE? How does that positively or negatively affect their school experience?

If a child(ren) is not currently participating in clubs, why? What other activities do they participate in that have them continue to come to ACE?

Figure 2**School Personnel Interview Questions**

Additional questions that were asked depending on parent responses.

Do you currently work for the ACE After School Program? If yes, what is your role?

What is your overall perception of ACE?

Do you think the program positively or negatively affects the students of [Inspirational Youth] Elementary? Why or why not?

In your opinion, what is the influence that ACE has on your campus?

Analysis Procedures**Qualitative Analysis Procedures**

This phase of the study used open-ended questions both in the survey and interview to examine the experience that of the teachers and parents experience while attending the ASP. It is a gathering of their personal needs, experiences, and opinions on the overall impact that the ASP has on their students' school experience.

Data analysis consists of:

- examining the personal experiences of faculty, staff, and parents that have affected the students' school experience,
- categorizing needs of faculty, staff, and parents needs to positively affect a students' school experience,
- tabulating was done by breaking down the interview answers into categories and creating tables and charts to organize the data,
- Recombining helped merge all the information from the interviews to better understand the data.

During the data analysis, I identified and categorized recurring themes or patterns in the data, such as socialization. I coded the data according to these themes, which are derived from repeated observations or ideas from the interview transcripts. As I combed through the transcripts, a common reoccurrence was mention of behaviors, attitudes, emotional growth, awareness, participation in groups, teamwork, and being social with peers. These trends helped me conclude that socialization was a major theme in the importance of the ACE ASP. Another example of the conclusion of theme, parent peace of mind, was the reoccurrence of the mention of students not just at home playing video games, a safe place, program helped working moms (single parent homes), children in a safe area, and knowing that they are in good hands at ACE. These are just examples of how I was able to determine themes in the qualitative process of this study.

Quantitative Analysis Procedures

Quantitative research deals in numbers, logic, and an objective stance. Quantitative research focuses on numeric and unchanging data and detailed, convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning.

Its main characteristics are:

- The data is usually gathered using structured research instruments.
- The results are based on larger sample sizes that are representative of the population.
- The research study can usually be replicated or repeated, given its high reliability.
- Researchers have a clearly defined research question to which objective answers are sought.
- All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected.

- Data are in the form of numbers and statistics, often arranged in tables, charts, figures, or other non-textual forms.
- Projects can be used to generalize concepts more widely, predict future results, or investigate causal relationships.

Researchers use tools, such as questionnaires or computer software, to collect numerical data. This research study collected data from faculty and parents via a survey using a Likert scale. The survey was then translated into a google form that was sent to parents and teachers via a flyer with access through a QR code that allowed the participants to complete the survey where they felt most comfortable. Using this survey in a google form assisted me in creating bar graphs to review and breakdown the data to interpret results.

Once the surveys were completed by the teachers and parents who chose to participate, I began to clean and organize the survey data from any missing or incoherent responses. I also had to determine which surveys provided the permission to use the responses of willing participants. Once cleaned, bar graphs were created for each Likert scale question to provide a visual representation of response frequencies. This helped me quickly identify the most common responses. This approach provided a straightforward and accessible way to analyze Likert scale survey data, making it easier to understand and communicate the results in this thesis. The survey also included open-ended questions, which were read through to look for recurring themes or patterns to be added to the qualitative portion of the findings. These open-ended questions were then summarized to complement the quantitative findings.

In this educational thesis focusing on after-school programs, the use of descriptive statistics was important for summarizing survey findings presented through bar graphs. These statistics offered an overview of the data's essential characteristics. For instance, they can

illustrate the frequency of participation in various program types using bar graphs, providing a visual representation of the distribution.

Beyond visuals, concise and well-structured textual summaries should accompany the statistical analysis, offering context and interpretation. The descriptive statistics shed light on the survey data's central tendencies, variations, and patterns, enabling readers to grasp the key findings without diving into complex statistical techniques. By incorporating these statistics into the educational thesis, it empowered readers to understand the after-school program landscape, its strengths, areas for improvement, and implications for educational practice and policy, making the research more accessible and impactful.

Mixing the Methods

Use of any single methodology would have limited the study in such a way that findings would have been narrow, simplistic, or unrepresentative. Quantitative researchers perceive truth as something which describes an objective reality, separate from the observer and waiting to be discovered. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the changing nature of reality created through people's experiences—an evolving reality in which the researcher and researched are mutually interactive and inseparable (Sale, et al., 2002).

The two research methods use the strengths of each method to bolster the weaknesses of the other (Sale, et al., 2002). By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, or capturing various aspects of the same research process, the study was able to obtain a broad, rich, and representative picture of the participants' thoughts, concerns, and experiences (Waysman & Savaya, 1997). By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, it integrates both types of data at the level of analysis to provide “more powerful insights about the change process than either could have produced alone,” (Caracelli, V. J., & Greene, 1989). It is also possible to

regenerate new themes or patterns from a merged analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and then use them in further qualitative analyses (Caracelli, V. J., & Greene, 1993).

This study followed an explanatory sequential design. An explanatory sequential is defined by Creswell (2022) as the following:

“A design the researcher connects the quantitative and qualitative data by having one database built on the other, the procedure is to first collect quantitative data and then follow-up with qualitative data to explain from personal experiences the quantitative results in more detail.” (p. 7)

Using the explanatory sequential design helps to understand any surprises that may arise when understanding quantitative and qualitative methods. The mixed methods research design helped study in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates or combines the two, and then draws inferences from the integration that provides insight beyond what can be learned from the quantitative or qualitative data (Creswell, 2022).

The research of this study began with the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, incorporated procedures in a mix method design, integrated the quantitative and qualitative data in the design, and included integration of worldview and theory (Creswell, 2022, p. 31). With two different perspectives (quantitative and qualitative) the study has had a more comprehensive view on the study of After School Programs' effect on a student's overall school experience.

Chapter 4

Findings

The findings of the study were produced by the completion of a survey for teachers and parents as well as the interviews of two teachers and five parents. Overall, the perception of After School Programs on the students and families' school experience can be divided into four themes: **Active lifestyle, academic connections, socialization, and parent peace of mind.**

Active Lifestyle

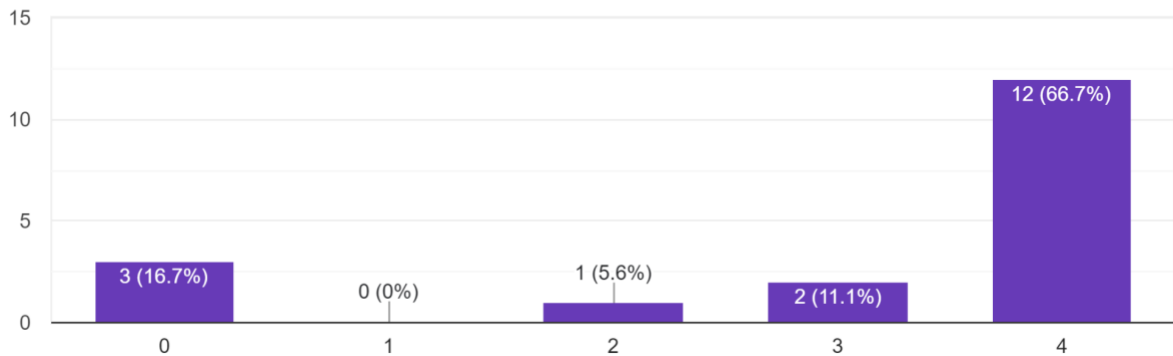
Several ASPs consist of low-income ethnic minority youth. Participants have shown that participation in the ASPs can predict higher academic achievement and lower school dropout rates. Those in athletic activities provided in ASPs have been linked to lower obesity levels, overall reduced negative behaviors, and drug use (Fredrick & Simpkins, 2012). Parents found that student attendance in the ACE After School Program has increased the activity level of their child(ren). Parent one stated, "I like it because they have something to do. They're not going home. They're not going home playing video games or nothing. Here they're learning something: how to play games, activities, playground, outside, just everything." When asked what kind of activities the program has to offer parents had various responses. Parent one also mentioned "The new supervisor plans games and has something different for the students to do such as arts and crafts, they do library time, they do reading time, just a lot of things that she has our kids doing." As stated in the research article *Active play in ASP-a matched-pair cluster-randomized trial investigating the effectiveness of an intervention in After School Programs for supporting children's physical activity*, "One major challenge for Physical Activity (PA) interventions in schools is that PA possibilities are often limited to short access and physical education classes. Thus, children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to be physically

active in school and After School Programs (ASP) are vital settings for promoting PA among children,” (Riisler, et al., 2020, p. 2). Based on this excerpt from the research article, the ASP programs are beneficial to the students that attend the ACE program, because it creates opportunities for activities that allow for the students to be up and moving. Some After School Programs may have the ability to provide student choice or activities that may not already be provided by the school. In addition, another reason to why the students were more active is displayed in the table below:

Figure 3

Has an ASP provided activities that you may not have been able to afford without a state funded ASP program?

18 responses



Of the 18 parents that completed the survey, 66.7% of the parents stated that the After School Program provided activities that parents may not have been able to afford without the state funded program providing those opportunities to the students and families. Program examples that the parents stated were Iplay, Garden Club, Pet Technicians, and Kindness Clubs. Iplay, as described by the parents that were interviewed, is a program where students learn about new sports such as soccer and basketball, which helps them with learning about the rules of the game, skills the sport needs, and teamwork. The Pet Tech Club provided access to animals that

parent two stated, “Helped at growth in her loving animals.” The Kindness Club described by a teacher is a club where students would spread kindness by giving random hearts and messages to teachers and students in hopes of brightening their day. Teacher one mentioned “They felt good about themselves being kind to somebody else.”

The clubs in the ACE program assisted in the students being active, learning, and participating in programs that are not typically provided by the school or affordable for parents. Teacher two stated, “They are being provided with fun learning, which is not saying they don’t get that during school, they are thinking and learning, but here (in ACE) they’re thinking and playing, and they don’t realize they’re learning while they’re doing it.” She continued to explain, “They’re excited (students) to be there, they know they’re going to get to do something special, get opportunities to see and hear other programs from outside as well as participate in sports or extra activities, cheerleading, other things that the actual program can bring in.” The research shows that the importance of early PA adoption by children is well documented and, in addition to its influence on numerous health factors, research shows that PA participation during childhood can predict PA levels in adulthood (Riisler et al., 2020). The discovery in this research conducted at Inspirational Youth Elementary helps show the importance of creating After School Programs that have various active activities so that it can influence healthier active choices in their adulthood and lessen a sedative lifestyle in their future.

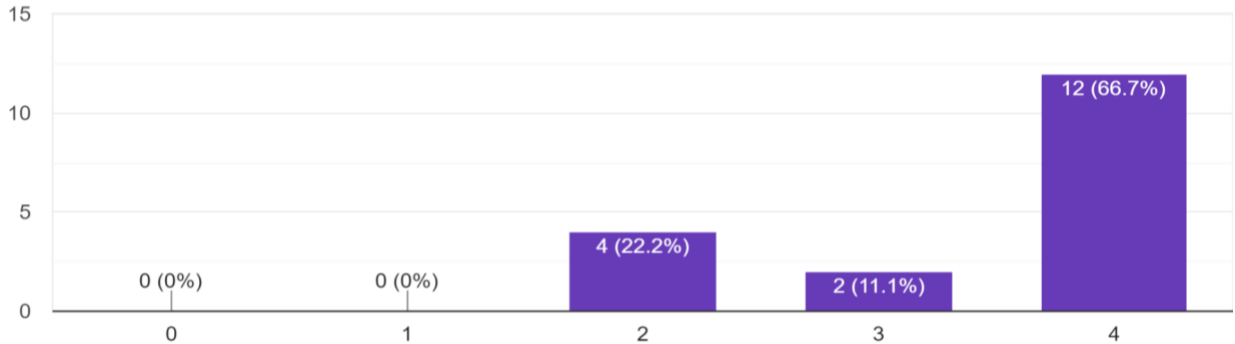
Academic Connections

One finding that attributes to academic connections in the school day is that the students who attended the After School Program ACE at their campus showed more interest in coming to school. Of the 18 parents who completed the survey 12 out of 18 or 66.7% reported that their

students had a slight change or change for the positive interest in coming to school since attending the After School Program.

Figure 4

Does your child show more interest in coming to school since attending an ASP?
18 responses



According to Ready (2010), “Although they continue to achieve at lower absolute levels, socioeconomically disadvantaged children who have good attendance rates gain more literacy skills than their higher SES peers during kindergarten and first grade” (p. 274) The After School Program has assisted in raising the attendance of students, because they look forward to coming to do the various activities in the ACE program, which according to Ready (2010) it should assist in academic gains.

In addition to the Garden Club providing ways for students to be active as stated in the section above, the students also were able to build background knowledge and create connections in their classroom. Teacher one stated how the students would get excited in the classroom, because they had built a connection in ACE. Teacher one expressed she often had students in her classroom state, “Miss, we’re doing this in the Garden Club, and I can connect to that.” She went further on to state, “I guess I can say as an adult teacher, I wanted to join the Garden Club or

Kindness Club after all the connections they were reading in a text. They constantly were making connections back to these clubs.”

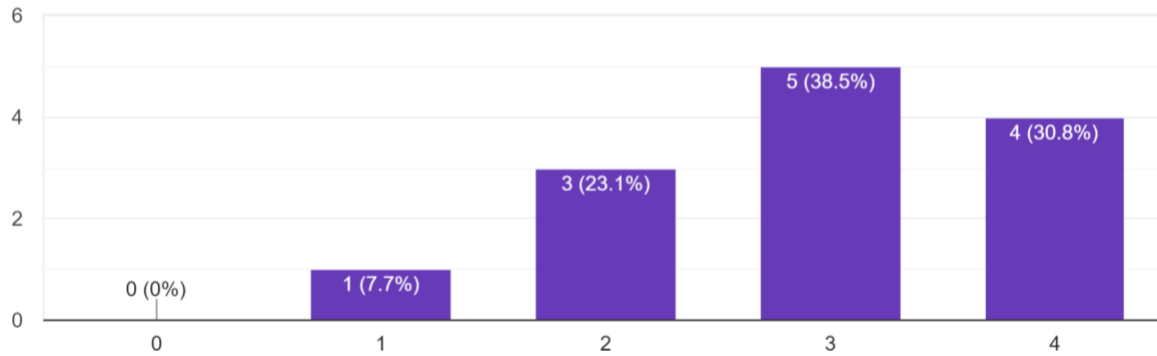
Parent four expressed some of the benefits of having her two girls attend the ACE after school summer program in the following statement, “They learned about the ocean. They went on a fieldtrip. They learned about different animals that live in the ocean, so they got a lot of knowledge during the summer on things that they were not knowledgeable about.” This gives students the opportunity to continue their growth through the summer when typically, students lose gains that they gained during the school year. Research shows that participation in after school and summer programs-whether they are activity focused, narrow tutoring sessions, or some combination-can help raise grades and scores on standardized tests and encourage positive attitudes towards school and learning (Davis & Farbman, 2002). This demonstrates that even the few hours that students attend after school can be beneficial to growth in not only a student’s academic experience, but life experiences as well.

According to the 13 teachers who completed the survey, 9 out of 13 stated that there was a positive effect on student academics, whereas 4 out of 13 responded that there was a neutral or slightly negative affect on the students' grades.

Figure 5

Have students who attended ACE shown an increase in their academics?

13 responses



A finding in this can be found in the interview with Teacher one where she stated, “Parents have stated, ‘oh I out them in ACE just because they want to go and it’s fun.’ They don’t have an actual reason to be there.” This can lead to the negative effect on grades due to the want from students to just have fun versus go for the educational time or tutoring provided by the program.

Around 69% of the teachers stated that the students did show growth, in an interview teacher one added a concern that she would like to see more troubleshooting done when conflict arises in the After School Program, because it can take up classroom time to resolve any issues in the ASP the previous day. She stated in the interview that “The kids come back the next day and I’ll notice tension between a couple of students. I’m like, you all were fine yesterday what happened? Then 17 other kids are like, “Miss, that went down in ACE.” She continued stating that, “I think for the day there’s an impact on their learning...then going to the counselor to get it all figured out.” Conflicts occurred when students attended more hours of school. However, the teacher did also mention that it should be expected that there’s going to be more conflicts in

more hours at school and overall ACE students tend to have a better awareness and functionality with peers.

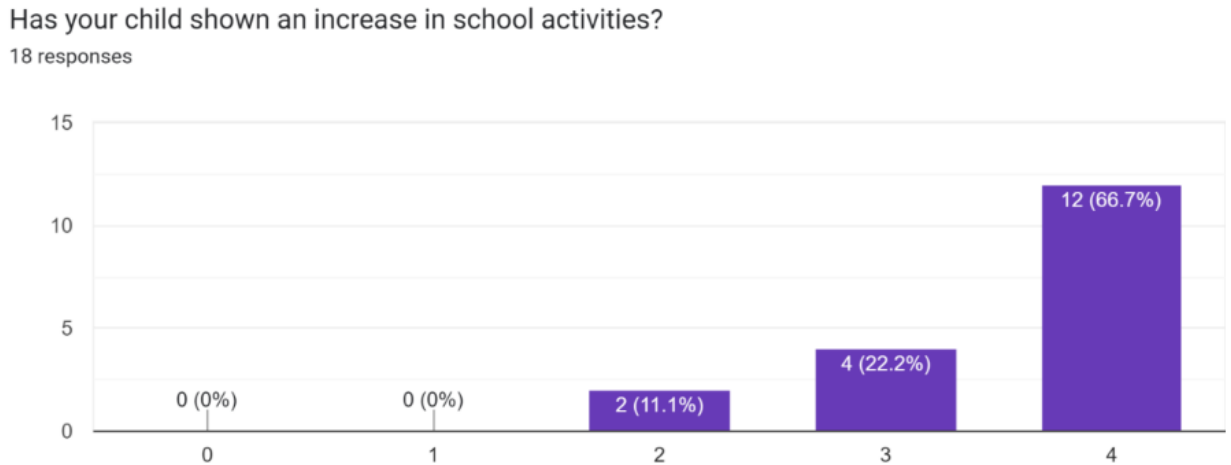
The data shows that there are many pros and cons to the extra time students spend at ACE that can increase or decrease the academic connections and student growth. Many of the pros for the time spent in ACE come in the form of socialization of students with peers and students of other grade levels, which leads to social emotional learning, and working in teams. Another positive affect is that students are not just at home playing video games or alone. Ace has proven to provide a safe space for students to be.

A few negative aspects come with the fact that many of the students who have behavior issues during the school day are coming to ACE where staff see a continuous stream of the same undesirable behaviors. The effect of this can often lead to additional behavior issues or tension in the classroom that can take away from the class' learning. Lastly as parent five mentioned in her interview, one thing she would change about ACE is the grant requirements that have the students required to stay at least three days out of the week until 5:30pm. She stated that she would like to take her children home sooner, and assist them with homework that sometimes the students do not do their homework in ACE. Additionally, the parent also brought up that she would like to see more homework assist from the ACE staff. These pros and cons of the ACE program help us understand the needs of families that are being met or needs that need more attention from the IYE ASP.

At the Inspirational Youth Elementary, not all grade levels or classes are given homework. However, academic activities at ACE are still being completed and go beyond the norm activities that students complete in the classroom. The site coordinator plans academic activities hands-on, innovative, and designed to feel more like play than classwork. These

activities are based on the needs of each grade level and their mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that are the state standard. Parents who answered the survey answered that 16 out of 18 parents have seen a slight positive or change for growth in the students' academics as well.

Figure 6



Parent 2 from the interviews stated, “At first, she was struggling with some of her reading and her writing. She was telling me that she was learning it during ACE on how to write more and more. She was able to get her name down.” This is one of the examples that ACE can provide academic growth with students and the activities that the program provides.

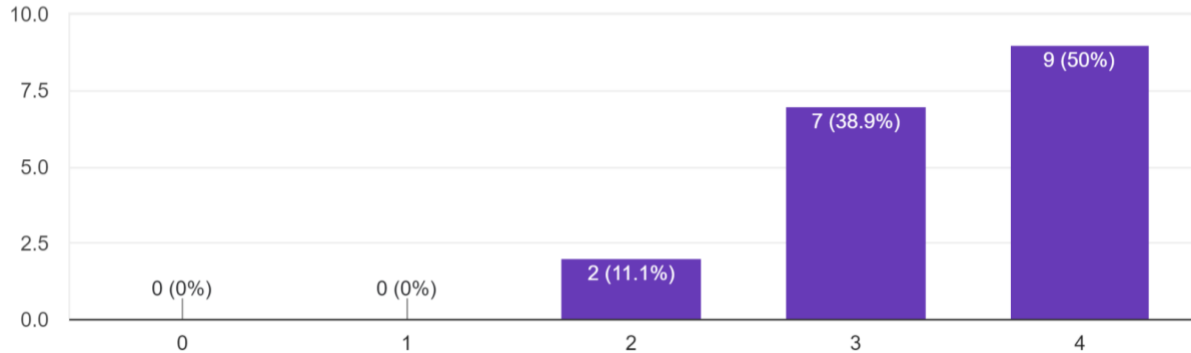
Socialization

Inspirational Youth Elementary is a campus of over 800 students of which 150 attend ACE on a daily basis. This creates an environment that can increase social emotional skills through the after school ACE program by socialization. When completing the survey, 16 out of 18 parents answered that the overall emotional and behavioral actions in their students has shown a slight change for positive or a change for positive in their behavior since attending the ACE program.

Figure 7

Has your child's overall emotional and behavioral actions changed?

18 responses



Parent two mentioned that his daughter has learned to become more outspoken. He stated, “She’s learned to show that if she doesn’t like something, she is going to speak it out and speak her mind.” He continued to share, “She’s talked about one of her problems that she’s had with a friend. One of her friends told her not to do this or that, but she was like ‘If you don’t like me the way I am, you don’t have to be my friend.’” Studies have been completed that prove After School Programs can positively affect ethnic minority and low-income students correlated with increases of positive academic, psychological, and social adjustment (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). After reviewing this interview and conducting further research, it is evident that there is a confidence increase in students like parent two’s daughter. This can be carried on in the future, can create opportunities that the students may have been reluctant to do, or help them handle peer pressure before building that confidence.

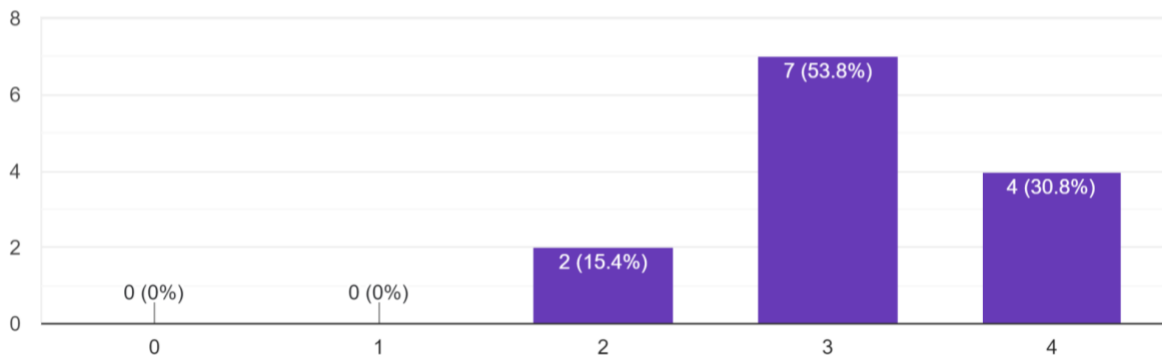
From the five parents that participated in the qualitative interviews four out of five of the parents discussed positive effects of their students having the opportunity to socialize with students outside of their class or their grade level. The positive effect that the ACE program has was clearly represented in the interview with parent five. She stated that her students were able

to learn more by being able to interact with more students. Parent five said, “They are able to form more friendships with students from different grade levels. I think it helps them deal with different kinds of people because they’re not just in their classroom with children of the same age.” Parent four, discussed during the interview when asked how ACE has affected his school experience, “I think it broadens his horizons or his to meet new people that he wouldn’t necessarily talk to on a daily basis, not only his own grade level, but other grade levels.”

The socialization theme found from the qualitative data has also shown evidence that students in the ACE program have been able to make adaptations to working with peers that increased their ability to work in groups, function better socially and emotionally with peers, and an increase in conflict resolution. The table below represents the results in the quantitative survey that show that there is about 63% of growth in handling their behavior skills based on the 13 teachers that answered the survey.

Figure 8

Have students who attended ACE shown growth in handling their behavior skills?
13 responses



Parent four in further detail mentioned that this socialization time is convenient for her while she is at work because they don’t really have time for other social clubs since his baseball takes up a lot of their time. As a result of these opportunities for her son to socialize with others

outside of school hours, she stated that her son has shown growth in problem solving with his peers, “I think it’s made him more aware to ask other peers for help instead of just running to the first adult he sees.” Teacher one’s responses supported parent four’s in the manner of how socialization can assist with better personable skills. Teacher one mentions that the ACE students seem to be a little savvier, a little more “street smart”. They know what to do when they get into conflicts, because they’ve had to deal with it before. She added that the students know how to work with peers, how to talk to an adult, and they are better at walking away and not getting offended when asked by the interviewer what type of skills the students have grown in from their time in ACE.

Parent Peace of Mind

As I looked for common themes in the interviews of the teachers and parents, I came across many answers from their interviews that related to each other. For example, parent one mentions that the campus has many working moms, and Ace is a help for them because they know their child is safe. Another example, in an interview with teacher two she stated that many families have both parents working which can result in students noting having a place to go. Teacher two continued to say that ACE is not only a place to go, but a way to ensure the children aren’t getting into trouble, victimized, or traumatized in one way or another. Several of the interviewees gave similar responses which led to discovering parent peace of mind as a central theme in this study. Research has illustrated there is an increased risk of unwanted behaviors and poorer outcomes for youth who spend this time in unstructured and unsupervised settings (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). Teacher two discussed how the ASP assists parents in ensuring an income by stating, “Majority of it is needed, mostly because of our demographic, since we are 98% Hispanic school in double working parents or single parent areas. In order for their family

to make their income and have a place to live, they need somewhere for the kids to be so they can keep doing that.” This branches to the parent's peace of mind because they know that their child is supervised by district staff and in a safe space. As stated in the interview with parent 5 she mentioned that the program helps her as a parent so that she didn't have to worry about her child knowing that they are in good hands at ACE.

The growth in numbers of single-parent and dual-earner families has left millions of children unsupervised after school, which leads to an increase in risk behaviors, poorer outcomes, and more time spent in unstructured and unsupervised settings (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). In conversation with Parent one, she stated, “I think we got a lot of working moms and I think ACE is a big help. It's a big help for them and they know that their children are in a safe area here at school.”

Parents do not have to worry about finding childcare from a family member such as grandparents or affording after school care in addition to all other expenses the families have. Parent five stated, “Any daycare program, After School Program, it's always very costly. Here it is free, which is great. Everyone's on a budget and a fixed income, so it helps me a lot that we don't have to pay for it.” Although not all After School Programs are free, this one in particular is funded by the Texas Education Association through grants to the schools with the ACE program. The safety and affordability were the main reasons that the parents were able to feel comfortable leaving their students in the ASP, which makes it easier for parents to ensure that they go to school.

Review of Overall Findings

Based on the students of the Inspirational Youth Elementary after school program, the presence of After School Programs benefit the overall school experience. However, the

conclusions of this study are of one of the many ACE and After School Programs that are offered to students and families. Each program varies by campus, by district, by city, or by state. The better connected with the students and partnership created between the program and the campus administration will directly affect the effectiveness of the program. The lasting impressions that the After School Program leaves on a child may lead to the children to taking what they learn and applying it to beyond the elementary school experience.

The information presented in the study is of importance both in the present and for future research in the field of education and After School Programs. In the current educational landscape, student engagement, academic performance, and the overall well-being of students are pressing concerns. The study sheds light on how After School Programs can positively impact these aspects of a student's life. Given the continued challenges in education, especially in the context of evolving teaching methods and technologies, understanding the multifaceted benefits of After School Programs is critical. It allows educators, policymakers, and parents to make informed decisions regarding the implementation and support of such programs.

The study also discovered a common theme that was not anticipated in the development of the study. The theme found was an active lifestyle through After School Programs is especially pertinent in today's age of increasing sedentary behavior among children. With the prevalence of screen time and limited physical activity, the findings emphasize the value of programs that engage students in physical activities. This has important implications for health and well-being, especially when addressing concerns such as childhood obesity and the need for regular exercise. In the future, further research on how After School Programs can contribute to healthier and more active generations will be vital.

Additionally, the study's findings of After School Programs on academic connections and socialization is critical in the context of modern education. As technology continues to reshape the educational landscape, understanding how these programs can complement traditional learning and promote interest in attending school is essential. For future studies, exploring the long-term effects of such programs on academic outcomes and social skills development can provide valuable insights for educational reform and policy decisions. Moreover, the information about parents' peace of mind highlights the role of these programs in supporting working families and alleviating the challenges of finding affordable and safe childcare solutions. As family structures and work dynamics continue to evolve, this aspect remains highly relevant for both current and future studies, providing a foundation for creating supportive environments for both students and parents.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study is dear to my heart, because I personally believe that After School Programs are a huge piece to the puzzle of ensuring a quality education to students especially in schools with lower income. Personally, working in an After School Program I have seen students grow leaps and bounds in their academics with the opportunities provided by the ACE program. The program has access for students to choose between the arts, culinary, sport clubs, gardening, technology clubs, STEAM enrichment, and more. The participation in these clubs can help students have an extra outlet to use what they learn in the classroom and apply it to real-world experiences outside of schools.

Tomlinson (2014), “What children bring to school from home cannot be left outside the classroom door, similarly for a lesson to be truly powerful, it must go home with the child,” (p 54). If facilitated and funded correctly, an ASP can create endless possibilities for students to extend their learning through their choice of interests. For example, in a gardening club, the students will use their math and science skills to create a community garden. The students and teachers could build shelters to create areas to grow seedlings, and plant beds that will become the growing place for vegetables, and flowers that will carry on pollination to generate a harvest.

This study is important because it showcases how parents and students need the after school opportunities to not only provide a safe space but provide students with a growth mindset that allows them to see a future beyond their surroundings. How People Learn is a study conducted by science, behavioral, and cognitive specialist to study how people conduct collaborative projects, are able to complete higher-order thinking exercises, and how they obtain the mastery of material. In How People Learn, volume II, it states, we have emphasized that

each individual learner occupies a unique place in time and space and responds throughout life to a set of circumstances, influences, and experiences that shape both what and how he learns, (National Research Council, p. 33). With this in mind, ASPs can create programs that can provide learning that students can use in their futures as well as instill ideas of what they want their futures to look like. For example, the ACE program has partnerships such as Science programs that will train staff members and supply the programs with all their equipment to teach girls the power of science and technology. The teacher will work with small groups of girls in STEAM and coding activities to promote careers in science and technology for girls. ASPs have the opportunities to provide resources to give student unique experiences that can help influence their future.

As stated in HPL volume II, “The developing brain is sensitive to physical influences that also affect other aspects of health and development, including nutrition, exposure to environmental toxins, sleep, and exercise. These physical influences can vary dramatically across context and are often shaped by cultural practices” (p. 31). The ASPs have advantages to create partnerships with community resources to address nutrition and basic needs. There are programs that exist where students will learn to make simple dishes and be exposed to various fruits and vegetables that many students may not be familiar with. In addition to learning how to create simple dishes, the students will also have classes explaining the benefits of nutritional food, recommendations for healthy living, and alternative foods that they can try instead of candy or other junk foods. The students will also receive a weekly supply of fresh fruits and vegetables from these programs to take home to their families. These classes and resources will help beyond the traditional academic learning, provide nourishment for families, and hopefully break any of the poverty barriers that keep them from discovering their true selves. This is why my passion

lies with the study to truly understand the importance of what After School Programs have to offer.

The text highlights the critical challenges in the education system, particularly the problem of student disengagement and funding disparities in schools. Student disengagement is identified as a major factor leading to academic failure and dropouts, encompassing various behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Inadequate funding in urban classrooms results in a lack of resources, hindering students' access to technology and hands-on learning experiences, contributing to educational inequalities and school segregation. Additionally, student attitudes, including disrespect for teachers and attendance issues, are noted as growing concerns affecting academic achievement.

To address these challenges, the Texas Education Agency collaborates with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers to implement After School Programs designed to enhance student engagement and break down economic barriers for Title I families. A research study examines the impact of these programs, finding that they promote student engagement, academic growth, and family involvement while mitigating economic disparities. Overall, the text underscores the importance of addressing student disengagement and funding issues through initiatives like After School Programs to improve the educational experience for students and bridge the resource gap.

The study's findings, derived from surveys, interviews with teachers and parents, and both quantitative and qualitative data, revolve around four key themes that illustrate the impact of the Inspirational Youth Elementary ASPs on students and their families' school experiences. This ASPs promotes an active lifestyle among students, with various activities and clubs that encourage physical activity and engagement. This positively affects the health and behavior of

the participants, reducing negative behaviors and promoting healthier choices. The programs provide opportunities for students to participate in activities not typically available at school, enhancing their learning experience while keeping them active and engaged. Students who attend ASPs show increased interest in coming to school, as reported by both parents and teachers. The programs offer academic activities that are hands-on, innovative, and aligned with state standards, which lead to positive academic growth. Participation in ASPs has contributed to improved attendance and academic gains for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programs foster socialization among students, creating opportunities for them to interact with peers of various ages and backgrounds. This leads to enhanced social skills, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution. Social activities in ASPs often lead positive impact on students' behavioral actions, promoting positive emotional and social behavior. Although, it is evident in the interview process that tension could also be developed. Parents value ASPs as a safe and affordable option for their children while they are at work. Knowing that their children are supervised by district staff in a secure environment provides parents with peace of mind. ASPs help working parents ensure their income and housing stability, and they appreciate the safety and affordability of these programs. In summary, the study's findings emphasize that ASPs play a crucial role in promoting an active lifestyle, enhancing academic connections, fostering socialization, and providing peace of mind for parents, all contributing to a positive school experience for students and families.

Further Research

Studies are needed to assist communities in obtaining funding to provide additional after school services to families in need. As mentioned in an interview, Teacher 1 stated, “I know it takes away from parents who need the program. They don’t know what to do and they are

checking out their kids early at like 2 or 230pm. They're missing core instruction." Finding creative ways to better assist families like these all over the city, state, or U.S. can help increase parent peace of mind and create a positive school experience.

Studies that oversee the After School Program can branch off to various further research subjects that will benefit the growth of the programs and the funding such as the effects of academics, the longevity of the program influence on high school students and beyond, or the mental awareness and effects the program has on students with learning or physical disabilities.

Researchers can design longitudinal studies that track the academic, social, and health outcomes of students who have participated in After School Programs over an extended period. This approach will help determine if the positive effects observed in the short term persist in the long run. Researchers can compare the outcomes of students who participated in After School Programs with those who did not. By examining a control group, they can assess the long-term impact of these programs on academic performance, social skills, and overall well-being.

Further research can explore the influence of parental involvement and attitudes. Understanding how parents' perceptions of After School Programs and their continued support impact a student's long-term success can be a valuable area of study. In-depth studies can dive into the long-term health outcomes associated with an active lifestyle promoted by these programs. Assessment of whether students who engage in after school physical activities have lower obesity rates, better physical health, and long-lasting habits of healthy living can also be done.

In addition, researchers can explore how different program designs and activities impact long-term effectiveness. Understanding which types of programs have the most significant and lasting effects can guide the development of more efficient After School Programs. This can lead

to investigating whether participation in After School Programs correlates with students' future career success, life skills, and overall life satisfaction. Longitudinal research can trace the paths of these students to determine if their early engagement led to better outcomes later in life. Finally, researchers should consider the policy implications of their findings. They can investigate how government support, funding, and regulations affect the long-term sustainability and impact of After School Programs.

By conducting these types of studies, education researchers can build a comprehensive understanding of the long-term effectiveness of After School Programs. This research can inform future program development, educational policy decisions, and better support students in their academic journey and beyond. This study was designed out of my own personal experience being a teacher in an ASP and my desire to investigate its effectiveness.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

**Texas A&M University-San Antonio
Curriculum and Instruction - College of Education
CONSENT FORM**



TITLE OF STUDY: How do families perceive the effects of an afterschool program on their student's school experience?

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2023-45

DEAR STUDY PARTICIPANT:

You are invited to participate in a research study of **How do families or school faculty perceive the effects of an afterschool program on their student's school experience?**

You were selected as a potential participant due to the criteria of being adults who work on a campus that offers the afterschool program ACE, a parent who has a child(ren) that have participated in at least 45 days of the ACE program or is an administrator of a school that offers the after-school program ACE.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Dr. Michael Boucher, PI, Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University-San Antonio and his graduate student, Co-Principal Investigator, Selena Alonzo.

Background Information

The purpose of this research project is to determine the effects that afterschool programs such as ACE have on a student and their family's school experience.

Procedures:

The project consists of a survey completed by faculty, Administration, and parents of student's that have participated in at least 45 days of the ACE program. After completion of the survey, 5 families from ACE, 2 teachers (1- not actively working for ACE, 1-actively working for ACE), and 1 administrator, who decide to voluntarily participate in an interview, will be interviewed in a small group or 1-1 interview.

You are being asked to participate in this project if:

- you are an adult (18 and up)
- you work on a campus that offers an after-school program, ACE, or you are a parent of a student that has participated in the ACE afterschool program for at least 45 days .

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- (1) Fill out the short survey (approximately 5 minutes). Once the survey is submitted, your

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-SAN ANTONIO INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
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Phone: (210) 784-2317, Graduate Studies and Office of Research

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CONSENT FORM**



participation in this research study is complete, unless you decide to volunteer for the interview portion of the research study.

(2) If you are asked to participate in an interview, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Semi-structured Individual Interviews- You will be interviewed by Ms. Alonzo for approximately 30 minutes.
- The interviews will be conducted in person in a convenient and private location away from your place of work and the school.
- You will be asked a series of questions to gauge the impact of the ACE program and afterschool programs on your student(s).
- You can choose where to conduct the interview anywhere that is private where no one else can see or hear you, for example in your home.
- The interview will be recorded, and Co-PI, Ms. Alonzo will not use your name or place of employment on the recording.
- Co-PI, Ms. Alonzo will provide interview questions in advance so you know what will be asked. Some follow-up questions will also be asked, however if you are not comfortable with any question you are not required to answer.
- You may end the interview at any time without consequences.

The recordings will be stored on a password protected external drive. Only the researchers for this study will have access to the account. All field notes and written reflections will be scanned using A&M-SA secure scanner. Any documents scanned will then be immediately shredded after scanning. All recordings will be deleted after 5 years.

Risks and Benefits of participating in the Study

There is no more than minimal risk associated with participating in this project and there is no individual benefit to participation in the project. In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the project, you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

If changes to the potential or actual risks or benefits to you occur, you will receive a report of significant new findings and/or be asked to re-consent.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this project.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. Reports resulting from this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Any data or records gathered from your

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participation will be kept private. Any identifiable data gathered will be redacted to protect your identity. Any personal information collected from the survey, such as your name and email address, will be erased from the study for your privacy and protection. In any report of this project that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be securely stored at A&M-SA and only accessible to the researchers.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Harlandale Independent School District or Texas A&M University-San Antonio. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the Co-Principal Investigator, Selena Alonzo at k00331101@jaguar.tamu.edu, or Dr. Michael Boucher, PI at Mboucher@TAMUSA.edu, or the IRB of Texas A&M University-San Antonio, at the following address: One University Way, San Antonio, Texas 78224

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB Chair at irb@tamusa.edu, or by phone (210) 784-2317.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

The signature below affirms that you are at least 18 years old, have received a copy of this consent form, have understood the above information, and agree to voluntarily participate in this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____
(If minors are involved)

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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CONSENT FORM**



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Appendix B
-Paper Survey
-Online Survey
-Semistructured
interview questions

School Personnel Survey- Afterschool Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements?

0- Extreme Negative 1-Slightly Negative 2-No Change
3- Slight change Positively 4- Extreme Positive

	0	1	2	3	4
Have students who attended ACE shown an increase in their academics?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have students who attended ACE shown growth in handling their behavior skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have students who attended ACE developed a more positive emotion especially in problem solving skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does the student show more interest in coming to school since attending an ACE?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Is there any other additional information you would like to add?

Are you interested in being interviewed about your survey questions?	YES	NO
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If yes, please provide your name and preferred email address in the space below.



Parent Survey- Afterschool Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements?

0- Extreme Negative 1-Slightly Negative 2-No Change
3- Slight change Positively 4- Extreme Positive

	0	1	2	3	4
Does your child show more interest in coming to school since attending an ASP?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has your child shown an increase in school activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has an ASP provided activities that you may not have been able to afford without a state funded ASP program?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has your child's overall emotional and behavioral actions changed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Is there any other additional information you would like to add?

Are you interested in being interviewed about your survey questions?

YES

NO

If yes, please provide your name and preferred email address in the space below.



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO

Greetings!

Thank you for volunteering your time. By participating in this survey and allowing me to collect the data, you are helping me on my path toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Please know that your personal information and survey responses will not be shared with anyone. Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationships with the ACE program or with Harlandale ISD. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Please note that there is no compensation for your involvement in this study. Thank you again for your time and your support.

Sincerely,
Selena Alonzo

School Personnel Survey



Parent Survey



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