
Preface

A recent article in *Education Week* stated, “the push for higher academic standards and student achievement is now extending beyond the school day, fueling a growing demand for high-quality after-school programs” (Manzo, 2006). That is the central thesis of this book, a work that began in 2001 with a study of superintendents and their leadership of effective afterschool programs and grew into the present book.

From 2001 to 2003, as the issues analysis director at the American Association of School Administrators, I worked on a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to study how school superintendents could exert strong leadership to overcome common district-level bureaucratic barriers to effective afterschool programs (Lockwood, 2003a, 2003b). After coming to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory as a senior program advisor, I continued research on leadership and afterschool programs but shifted emphasis to focus on school principals and their connection to heightened student proficiency levels. Specifically, I was interested in how principals in K–8 schools could help increase learning in the afterschool hours.

This book revolves around the key question that developed from the second phase of my research: In what ways can principal leaders maximize student academic proficiency through afterschool programs—particularly for students most at risk of academic failure? Five main reasons prompted this question:

1. The principal’s singular opportunity to improve or enact a high-quality afterschool program with an academic focus—extending the regular school day with the intent of boosting student proficiency levels
2. The growing national emphasis, stemming from the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act,

on academic achievement as an integral and previously untapped part of afterschool programs

3. The changes in accountability that principals now confront in the wake of NCLB
4. The progressively severe sanctions principals in low-performing Title I schools must confront if their students do not meet the requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress
5. The presence of many, if not most, afterschool programs in Title I schools serving large percentages of high-poverty, minority students at risk of academic failure

The opportunity to mark progress is almost boundless, but challenges are multiple. As with anyone at the beginning of a road trip, it is good to have a map and a plan in your hands that will help you surmount barriers to success. The demands are so many, and include the following:

1. Involving the entire school improvement team in a strategy to use the afterschool hours seamlessly from the regular school day in a way that integrates the district's academic and curriculum standards, aligned with those of your state
2. Building a communications two-way plan with parents and other stakeholders that enlists them into the drive for heightened academic proficiency in the afterschool program their children attend
3. Devising a set of goals for engaged teaching and learning in tandem with your staff
4. Ensuring that curriculum and instruction in the afterschool program will be carefully planned, executed, and monitored
5. Designing evaluation of the program's outcomes so that the results of the evaluation are reliable, cost-efficient, and easy to administer.

The purpose of this book is to guide the principal through the process of either changing an existing afterschool program to one that includes a solid academics component, or creating an afterschool program with a substantive focus on achievement. It includes sections on setting up the program, overcoming potential barriers to success,

appropriate goal setting, implementing and operating the program, case studies of successful principals, devising an evaluation plan for your program, and a discussion of sustainability.

Any opinions, findings, or recommendations are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory or the American Association of School Administrators.