MEASURING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: MOVING BEYOND MEASURING ACADEMICS

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BACKGROUND

There is great variation in the content of out-of-school time programs and in the outcomes that these programs may influence. While school success is often the focus, other outcomes related to children's well-being also matter and are the focus of many out-of-school time programs. These outcomes fall within four research-based child outcome domains: 1) educational achievement and cognitive attainment; 2) health and safety; 3) social and emotional development; and 4) self-sufficiency.[1] In this brief, we highlight outcomes in each of these domains and identify resources that may be of use to programs as they measure outcomes for children and youth in their programs. Forthcoming briefs will provide additional details on specific outcome topics.

WHAT ARE "OUTCOMES" AND HOW ARE THEY USED?

Outcomes are specific attitudes, behaviors, skills, or characteristics of children or youth that programs aim to positively influence. Examples of outcomes include reading skills, responses to conflict, self-esteem, work, knowledge of nutrition, and drug use.[2]

Programs can use outcome data for many purposes:[2] 1) to describe and understand the characteristics of participants; 2) to strengthen existing program services; 3) to help understand program success; 4) to target effective services for expansion; 5) to identify staff and volunteer training needs; 6) to develop and justify budgets; 7) to prepare long-range plans; 8) to focus board members' attention on programmatic issues; and 9) to attract funding to the program.

KEY OUTCOME DOMAINS

A list of four outcome domains, outcomes within each domain, and potential measures is provided in the table that follows. Domains are higher order categories, such as "health and safety," and are comprised of many outcomes. For example, as shown in the table, the health and safety domain includes the outcomes of drug/alcohol use, sexual behavior, violence, accidents/injuries, and good safety habits. Measures are the data used to assess an outcome. For example, as is also shown in the table that follows, the use of illicit illegal substances is a measure of drug/alcohol use. This list is still evolving as new or better measures are developed and tested.

OUTCOME DOMAIN 1: EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT & COGNITIVE ATTAINMENT

This domain has three sub-domains:

Achievement: Many funders want to know about academic achievement among participants. Academic achievement may be measured by years of schooling completed, degrees or certificates earned, and honors or awards received. Achievement can also be measured by school retention, such as grade repetition or being behind in a grade relative to one's age.[3]

Education-Related Skills: Reading, writing, and arithmetic are classic academic skills,[1] but oral communication, technology skills, and good study skills are of increasing importance. Study skills may be measured by problem-solving abilities and regular homework completion.[3]

Motivation; Approach to Learning: Achievement motivation is the desire to succeed in the academic setting.[3] Many programs seek to influence young people's motivation, engagement, and approaches to learning. Programs may measure approaches to learning through educational expectations, academic self-concept (perceived level of ability), curiosity, school engagement, and level of connectedness to one's school.

OUTCOME DOMAIN 2: HEALTH & SAFETY
This domain has three sub-domains:

Risky Behavior: A goal of many programs is to decrease young people's participation in risky behaviors that endanger their health or safety,[3] such as drug or alcohol use, having early sex or having sex without contraceptives, belonging to a gang or getting into physical fights, and sustaining injuries. Good habits may be measured by wearing a seatbelt, not driving recklessly, and not drinking and driving or riding in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

Health: Many programs seek to encourage good physical health among youth. Good health is important for young people's physical, social, and intellectual functioning and can affect their disease risk as adults.[3] Good health may be measured by young people's physical condition as well as the health-related behaviors they practice. Measures of physical health include healthy weight and the absence of sexually transmitted disease. Good health behaviors include having adequate exercise and sleep, a healthy diet, not smoking, good dental hygiene, and regular doctor's visits.

Mental Health: Mental health disorders impair young people's ability to function cognitively, socially, and emotionally, which may in turn make it difficult for young people to function independently as adults.[3] Mental health may be measured by the presence of depression, anxiety, anorexia and bulimia, as well as suicidal thoughts and excessive stress. Good mental health is often measured by the absence of these disorders, but can also be measured by positive qualities such as optimism.

OUTCOME DOMAIN 3: SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
This domain has two sub-domains:

Social/Community Relationships: Many programs seek to influence the way young people relate to other individuals and are involved in their communities.[3] Social and community development may be measured by the presence of relationships with parents, other adults, peers, members of the opposite sex, and friends. In addition, social/community behavior includes civic engagement (such as community service), leadership of organizations, cultural sensitivity, caring and compassion, civility, and regard for the environment. Social/community relationships also include risk resistance skills, such as non-violent conflict resolution.

Emotional/Personal Development: Emotional and personal development outcomes are important precursors to more long-term outcomes in areas such as education, health, and employment.[3] Many programs attempt to affect emotional and personal development outcomes, measured as the productive use of non-school time, intimacy, trust, adaptability, emotional coping skills, spirituality, motivation to do well, sense of identity, initiative, positive risk-taking, cooperation, and character, which includes such qualities as respect, integrity, and moral reasoning.

OUTCOME DOMAIN 4: SELF-SUFFICIENCY (FOR OLDER YOUTH)
This domain has two sub-domains:

Work: Self-sufficiency is the ability to support oneself and any dependents financially.[3] A goal of many programs is to help youth prepare for or attain employment. Self-sufficiency can be measured by employment status, age-appropriate number of hours worked, work ethic (including promptness and attendance), and disconnectedness (that is, not being in work, school, or the military).

Family: In addition to work, self-sufficiency entails acting responsibly in regard to one's family. Many programs seek to encourage such behaviors, including responsible childbearing and management of finances.[3] Responsible childbearing can be measured by not having unwanted/unintended children, supporting one's children, and having regular interaction with one's children. Responsible management of finances can be measured by personal debt and savings behavior.

NEXT STEPS: MEASURING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN YOUR PROGRAM

The following resources may be useful in measuring outcomes for youth participants in your programs.

- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., Hawkins, J. D. (1998). *Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs.*
  Available online at: **http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/PositiveYouthDev99/index.htm.**

- Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Hunter, D., & Kaye, J. W. (2001). *Youth outcomes compendium.* Washington, D.C.: Child Trends and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.
  Available online at: **http://www.childtrends.org/files/Compendium_Phase1_Intro.pdf.**

- Harvard Family Research Project (2005). *Measurement tools for evaluating out-of-school time programs: An evaluation resource.*
  Available online at: **http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot6/.**

- Moore, K.A. and Brown, B.V., with Scarupa, H.J. (2003). *The use (and misuses) of social indicators: Implications for public policy.* Research brief, Publication No. 2003-01. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.
  Available online at: **http://www.childtrends.org/Files/SocialIndicatorsRB.pdf**.

- Search Institute (2006). *40 development assets.*
  Available online at: **http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.html.**

- United Way of America (1996). *Measuring program outcomes: A practical approach.* Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.
  Available online at: **http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/.**

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[1] Moore, K.A., Lippman, L., & Brown, B. (2004). Indicators of child well-being: The promise for positive youth development. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591*, 125-145.

[2] United Way of America (1996). *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach.* Alexandria, VA: United Way of America. Available online at http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/.

[3] Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Hunter, D., & Kaye, J. W. (2001). *Youth outcomes compendium.* Washington, D.C.: Child Trends and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Outcomes for Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time Programs

Domains & Sub-Domains	Outcomes	Potential Measures
1. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND COGNITIVE ATTAINMENT		
Achievement	Educational attainment	-Years of formal schooling completed - Credentials/degrees (diploma, GED, BA/BS), licenses, apprenticeships - Receiving honors or awards
	Repetition	- Grade repetition/behind age in grade
Education Related Skills	Basic cognitive skills	- Reading/literacy (test/assessment scores/ grades) - Writing skills (test/assessment scores/ grades) - Mathematical skills (test/assessment scores/ grades)
	Good study skills-executive functioning	- Do homework regularly - Good problem-solving skills - Good study habits
	Data collection and analysis skills	- Test/assessment scores/ grades
	Oral communication skills	- Test/assessment scores/ grades
	Language skills	- English proficiency (test/assessment scores/grades) - Foreign language fluency (test/assessment scores/grades)
	Technology skills	- Proficiency test scores/grades - Typing speed - Internet research ability
	Arts, dance, music	- Knowledge and practice
Motivation; Approach to Learning	Achievement motivation	- Personally motivated to succeed academically (scale)
	Educational expectations	- Degrees or years of school expected
	Intellectual/Academic self-concept	- Academic self-concept scale
	Curiosity	-
	School engagement	- School engagement scale - School attendance - Values school
2. HEALTH AND SAFETY		
Risky Behavior	Drugs/Alcohol	- Does not drink at all or excessively, depending on age - Does not use illegal substances
	Sexual behavior	- Responsible sexual behavior - Contraceptive use - No sexually transmitted diseases
	Violence	- Belonging to a gang - Getting into physical fights or fights with weapons
	Accidents and injuries	- Motor vehicle-related injuries or injuries due to a physical fight - Other unintentional injuries, at home or at school (e.g. burns, falls) - Injury due to family violence
	Good safety habits	- Uses a seatbelt, helmet - Does not drink and drive or ride with someone who has been drinking
Health	Good health and health habits	- Health status - Adequate exercise - Adequate sleep - Healthy diet - Does not smoke - Dental hygiene - Recent health care exam (not for sickness or injury) - Not obese
Mental Health	Good mental health	- Not depressed - Not anxious - Optimistic - Not anorexic or bulimic - Not suicidal - Not stressed
3. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
Social/Community Relationships	Civic engagement	- Civic leadership (participates as leader in community organizations) - Participates in one or more school or community organizations - Donating money to political, religious, or community cause or organization - Votes

3. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (cont'd)		
Social/Community Relationships (cont'd)	Civic engagement (cont'd)	- Reads newspaper, magazine or watches TV news - Involved in community service activities (i.e., neighborhood clean-up; home visits) - Participates in social activities (sports, clubs) - Participates in cultural activities
	Leadership	- Leader in sports, youth, or church organization
	Positive parent-child relationships	- Closeness and communication with mother/father
	Connectedness to extended family	- Closeness and communication with extended family network
	Positive relationship with an(other) adult	- Feels cared about by adults, teachers, relatives - Feels that adults in programs are helpful
	Friendship skills	- Empathy, sympathy - Skills to resist negative pressures, models
	Behavior problems	- Not suspended/expelled, tolerance - Does not commit delinquent or criminal acts - Not referred to school administrators for discipline problems
	Risk resistance skills	- Risk resistance skills with peers - Nonviolent conflict resolution
	Cultural sensitivity	- Positive race/ethnic identity - Respect for other cultures, religions
	Caring and compassion	- Empathy, forgiveness
	Civility	- Treatment of others, forgiveness, reconciliation
	Positive environmental behaviors	- Neighborhood clean-up, recycling, conservation
Emotional/Personal Development	Productive use of non-school time	- Reads for pleasure - Hours spent viewing television, videos, playing computer games - Extracurricular activity participation
	Intimacy	-
	Trust	-
	Adaptable/Flexible	-
	Emotional coping skills	-
	Spirituality	- Attendance at services or activities - Prayer - Importance
	Motivated to do well	-
	Character	- Respect - Integrity, honesty - Moral character - Moral reasoning - Fulfills commitments
	Sense of personal identity, mattering	- Self-esteem, identity
	Realistic goals and awareness of goals and steps to achieve goals	- Plans ahead; able to make choices; self-regulation
	Initiative, purpose	-
	Cooperation	- Sharing, helping
4. SELF-SUFFICIENCY		
Work	Employment	- Employed/unemployed; hours of work
	Age appropriate employment	- Does not work over 20 hours
	Disconnectedness	- Not in school, work, the military or married to someone who is
	Work ethic	- Promptness, attendance
Family	Responsible childbearing	- Does not have an unwanted or unintended child - Supports children, if any - Regular interaction; contact/visitation with nonresident children
	Entrepreneurship	-
	Responsible management of finances	- Receipt of public transfers (TANF, food stamps) - Personal debt (except for house and education, less than or equal to 20% of income)
		- Savings Behavior

Source: Modified from Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Hunter, D., & Kaye, J. W. (2001). *Youth outcomes compendium*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.