

**Quality After School Time: An Evaluative Study of The Eastside Story After
School Program in Austin, TX**

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Abstract

Research Purpose: As the need for quality after school care for school-age children grows, so does the need for a tool to measure the quality of after school programs. This study uses existing literature to develop a practical ideal type for after school programs. The model is then used to assess The Eastside Story; a program in Austin, Texas. Recommendations to improve of The Eastside Story program are drawn from the assessment.

Methodology: A thorough examination of literature pertaining to after school programs reveals five primary components of quality programs: strategic planning, partnership elements, staff elements, effective program practices, and child-centered location. Utilizing the case study research method, these five components are used to assess the Eastside Story program. The data collection methodologies in this case study include document analysis, structured interviews, and direct observation.

Results: The results of the case study illustrate Eastside Story's strengths and weaknesses. While current level of strategic planning at The Eastside Story fails to meet the criteria set in the practical ideal type, the criteria was met or exceeded for effective program practices and staff elements. Room for improvement within the partnership elements component was also identified.

About the Author

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Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose

The U.S. Department of Labor reported that over twenty eight million school-aged youth have parents who work outside of the home. Considering normal work-day and school-day hours, this means America's children of all ages must fend for themselves in the late afternoon. Studies show that youth are at greater risk of being involved in crime, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy in the hours directly following the school day. After school programs provide a gateway to enrich learning on many levels and offer a positive alternative to destructive behaviors during those critical hours.

Effective after school programs serve communities in two ways; they help children become the responsible, productive citizens of tomorrow while also helping their parents to be responsible, productive citizens today (Grossman et al. 2002). It is clear that public administration plays a crucial role in the creation and implementation of effective after school programs. The United States federal government offers an abundance of grant programs and other fiscal resources to support after school programs. State and local governments across the country also engage in program administration and funding. Within the past ten years 'after school program' and 'out-of-school time' have become increasingly important in the vernacular of government officials and legislation introduced in Congress (Weitzman et al. 2008).

After School Programs: A Historical Context

The institutionalization of after school time has occurred over the past two centuries. This paradigm shift, in which children are involved in adult-organized, adult-supervised activities, has been called a "phenomenon" (Adler and Adler 1994, 309). The emergence of

organized after school care is rooted in events of the late nineteenth century but was popularized by events throughout the twentieth century. There are new expectations for the field in the twenty-first century that are likely to continue as after school programming evolves. Those expectations for after school programs include documentation of positive program outcomes and overall community improvement. The most notable historical shift in after school programming is the growth of government support (Bodily and Beckett 2005).

The origin of organized after school programming in the U.S. is tied to several dramatic shifts in the American workforce. The dependence upon child labor in urban economies and working-class families' micro-economies diminished as immigrants poured into the country during the late nineteenth century (Halpern 2002). The agricultural sector, which employed a significant number of young workers, also experienced a lowered labor demand due to technological advances during this time (Lleras-Muney 2002). At the turn of the century approximately 25 percent of children in the U.S. were gainfully employed but this number decreased by half by 1930 (Halpern 2002). Also, strict regulations on child labor were enacted during the early 1900's. Child labor laws heavily regulated the employment of all minors and were in place in all states by 1914 (Lleras-Muney 2002). Additionally, new laws made school attendance compulsory and by 1918 all states followed such policies (Lleras-Muney 2002). This rise in school attendance required children to adhere to schedules during school hours and, in turn, created the notion of out of school time.

The entrance and expansion of women in the workforce that spanned several decades diminished the traditional role of mothers as after school care providers. The demand for labor during World War II, often recognized as the most formidable increase of women in the American workforce, pulled women out of the household during working hours. An increase in

divorce and the need for dual-income families during the mid and late twentieth century also required women to maintain jobs (Kleiber and Powell 2005).

The events mentioned above illustrate the establishment of out of school time; the emergence of *organized* out of school time has a corresponding historical timeline. Traditionally, the overriding rationale for filling out of school time has been to keep students off the streets once school is out (Halpern 2002). As early as the 1870's the first after school programs emerged in some cities with this intent and took the form of "idiosyncratic boys' clubs," occupying a room in a church or local building (Halpern 2002, 180). The settlement movement in the U.S. impacted the development of organized after school activities. By the turn of the century, settlements were developing after school clubs and including girls into the fold (Halpern 2002). Most of these early programs functioned as 'drop-in clubs' (Halpern 2002). Perhaps the most influential settlement house in the U.S., Chicago's Hull House, founded by Jane Addams in 1889, offered after school activities for children. Addams noted that after schools activities "consisted almost entirely of arousing a higher imagination and in giving the children the opportunity, which they could not have in the crowded schools, for initiative and for independent social relationships" (Addams 1912, 72). Clearly ahead of her time, Addams counted social development as an important advantage of after school care, a sentiment often cited by contemporary practitioners.

Until the mid 1930's after schools programs were overwhelmingly privately funded and either faith-based or philanthropic in nature. Several New Deal¹ programs following The Great Depression marked the first time federal funds were used to support child care service (Bodily

¹ New Deal refers to the economic packages initiated between 1933 and 1936 by Franklin D. Roosevelt. The programs sought to bring relief, recovery and reform to the U.S. following the devastation of the Great Depression. For in-depth information about the New Deal, see William Leuchtenburg's *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963).

and Beckett 2005). Funds supporting child care services became available through the Works Administration Program, the Federal Arts Projects, and the National Youth Administration (Halpern 2002). Later, in reaction to WWII, many local governments established Defense Day Care facilities and Defense Recreation Committees to productively occupy youth as parents were immersed in the war effort (Bodily and Beckett 2005).

There has been a surge of attention and funding for after school programs in the last thirty years due, in large part, to the recognition of positive outcomes for students and moreover, the community. The risks of unsupervised youth, which range from boredom to socially destructive behaviors, underpin the public awareness of after school programs (Halpern 2002). There have also been initiatives not necessarily aimed at after school care that have impacted it. Programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) provide federal funds to needy families with children and the child tax credit (credits 20-30 percent of qualified child-care expenses) have been applied to after school care. Other federal initiatives have been directly aimed at after school programming such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), Gear-Up, and the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative.

The 21st CCLC program was initiated in 1994 by Congress to utilize public schools for broader community use (Bodily and Beckett 2005). In 1998, the program was refocused to provide academic and recreational activities to youth and grew in the federal budget from \$40 million in FY 1998 to \$1.13 billion in FY 2009 (www.afterschoolalliance.org). The current structures of these programs represent a stepped-up objective from simply offering children refuge from the streets to academic achievement. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services currently maintains a website aimed at “connecting afterschool providers to federal resources” (<http://afterschool.gov/docs/about.html>). On these and other websites, the federal

government supports research that highlights the need for productive after school programs and also provides resources for organizations looking to implement after school programs.

Despite the encouraging increase in federal involvement in after school programming, government funding of such programs remains imperfect. Jane Quinn (2005, 480) echoes the hope of many authors of after school program literature aspiring for “a fully aligned set of public policies supporting high-quality after school programs.” The challenge there is proving the quality of programs. Funding decisions and accountability measures generally emphasize participation rates and compliance rather than meaningful measures such as participant experience, the impact of participation, or other quality indicators (Kahne et al. 2001). Funding structures which neglect qualities of the program, curriculum, and students’ experiences are problematic (Kahne et al. 2001). But because few after school programs are ever evaluated and even fewer are evaluated well (Bodily and Beckett 2005), informed funding decisions have proven difficult. As Chapter Two demonstrates, the inclusion of a comprehensive program evaluation is both an indicator of a quality program and necessary for appropriate funding decisions.

The Eastside Story

The Eastside Story after school program seeks to enhance educational opportunities focusing on school-aged children in the East and Northeast areas of Austin, Texas. The program promotes “homogenous, urbanized and self-empowered families thriving economically in a livable, sustainable and health community.”²

The program began in 1996 following a collaborative assessment including The City of Austin, The University of Texas, the State of Texas, Stanford University, Austin Independent

² See <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/eastsidestory/whoweare.htm>.

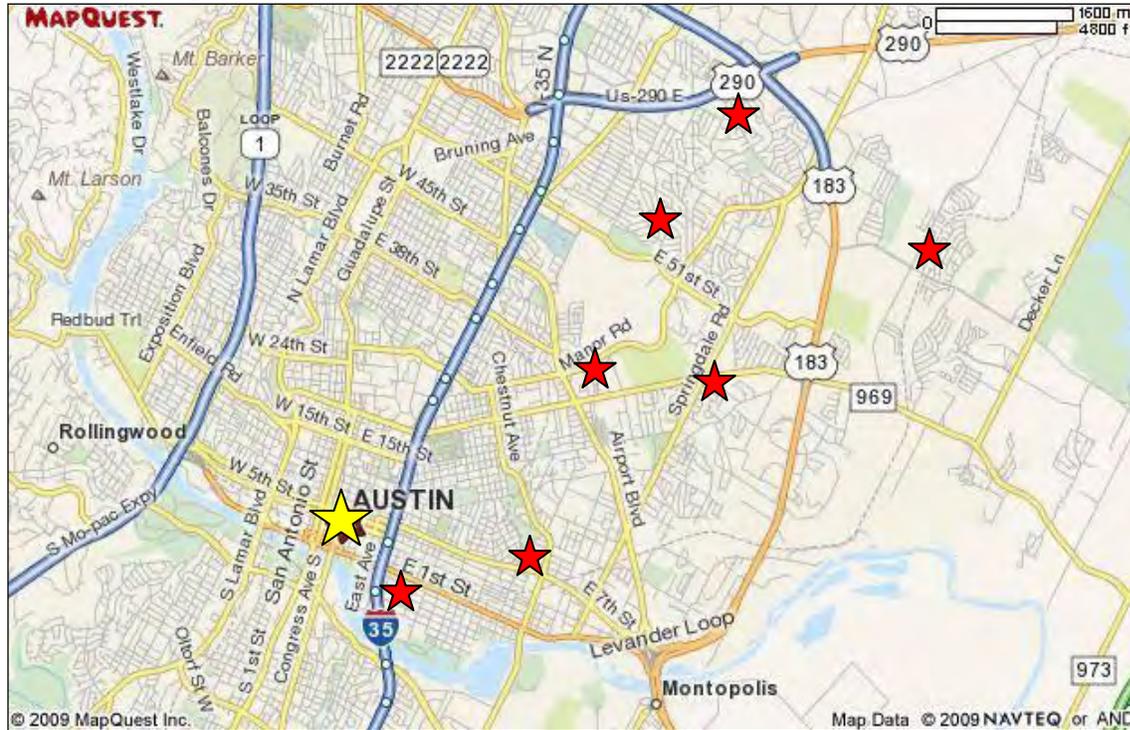
School District (AISD), and several other stakeholders. The assessment indicated disproportionately high levels of crime and poverty and below average educational achievement in the East and Northeast sections of the city (Witt 2000). The creation of the Austin Eastside Story Foundation, as a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, helped address these problems. Participation expanded quickly; the program began in 1996 with 50 Austin-area students enrolled (Witt 2000) and by the 1999 school year, the program served approximately 300 participants.

The program has endured a myriad of structural changes in its 13 years with the most significant being changes in the entity that administers the program. Initially structured as the non-profit organization, The Austin Eastside Story Foundation, the program was next incorporated into the City of Austin Police Department in 2003. The Eastside Story became fully administered by the City of Austin in mid 2009 and is under the jurisdiction of the City's Parks and Recreation Department.

The Eastside Story served over 400 students during the 2009-2010 school year. The popularity of the program is apparent in the current participation waiting list. The program is free for all participants. The ethnicity of Eastside Story participants is predominately African American and Latino. Approximately 72 percent of participant families live below the federal poverty line. To maintain a focus on the Northeast section of Austin the Eastside Story serves students in Austin ISD, Manor ISD, Del Valle ISD and some private and charter schools. Specifically, students living along the East 11th and 12th street corridors are targeted for participation as this area has been identified as the most in need. Five AISD elementary schools

and two City of Austin recreation centers currently serve as host sites; all are located in East Austin³. Figure 1.1 maps the seven locations.

Figure 1.1 Map of Eastside Story Program Host Sites



Eastside Story Locations:

★ (from top and left to right)

- Andrews Elementary
- Blanton Elementary
- Barbara Jordan Elementary
- Campbell Elementary
- Givens Recreation Center
- Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center
- Sanchez Elementary School

The Eastside Story operates each school day from 2:45 p.m. until 6 p.m. Transportation is provided to the program sites from approximately 34 schools. Site coordinators and aides staff the daily activities, with two program supervisors overseeing the program's daily functions. Classroom sizes vary from 20-30 participants and the program maintains a 1:10 staff participant

³ Interstate 35 is recognized as the East/West division line in Austin, Texas.

ratio. The educational services include tutoring, assistance with homework assignments, TAKS⁴ (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) exam tutorials, and access to computers.

Participants engage in cultural and recreational activities like yoga, tennis, and golf.

Additionally, The Eastside Story seeks to enrich the life skills of participants. An example of the life skills enrichment component is the organized lesson about friendship offered to participants.

The Eastside Story represents a microcosm of the objectives, challenges, and potential positive outcomes of after school programming in the U.S. and thus, made an attractive candidate for this research.

Research Purpose⁵

The purpose of this research is three-fold. The first purpose is to determine and describe ideal characteristics of a model after school program by examining existing literature. This information is used to construct a practical ideal type. These components identified in the literature lends themselves to the practical ideal type conceptual framework⁶ because the case study (the Eastside Story program) will be compared the this standard (Shields and Tajalli 2005). The second purpose is to use the ideal type components to assess The Eastside Story after school program. Lastly, the third purpose is to provide recommendations to improve the Eastside Story program.

⁴ The TAKS test is a standardized exam used to assess Texas students' attainment of state-mandated curriculum. For additional information about the TAKS test refer to the Texas Education Agency's website at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3693&menu_id=793.

⁵ For examples of other ARP's that deal with serious issues facing school-aged youth see Boukhris, 2007 ; Campbell, 2009; Collins, 2008; and Weathersbee, 2008.

⁶ A conceptual framework is a way of classifying pragmatic experimentation (Shields, 1998).

Chapter Overview

Chapter One illustrates the place after school programs hold in the broad spectrum of American public administration and clarifies the importance of organized activities during the post school day hours. The chapter also provides a historical context of after school programming by summarizing major events in the United States that spurred the development of after school programs. Additionally, the chapter chronicles the history of after school programming's popularization and introduces The Eastside Story. The tool used to evaluate The Eastside Story (practical ideal type) is developed in and explained in Chapter Two. Chapter Three outlines the specific methods of data collection for the case study. The results of the assessment of The Eastside Story are found in Chapter Four. The final chapter includes suggested ways to improve The Eastside Story.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

Chapter Purpose

Chapter Two introduces the model assessment tool⁷ for after school programs. The purpose of this chapter is to determine and describe components of quality after school programs, identified as such by the literature. Also included in the chapter is a justification for each component of the model. It is important to note that the model (practical ideal type) described here is most applicable to programs which incorporate strong academic elements. The ideal type drafted here is designed to assess existing programs and be used as a model in the creation of new programs.

The Model Assessment Tool: An Overview

After school program literature contains common themes when identifying indicators of a quality program. Those themes are synthesized into a practical ideal type which applies to the most crucial aspects of after school programs. The after school program practical ideal type is comprised of five primary components determined to be the most decisive in quality programs:

1. strategic planning
2. partnership elements

⁷ For other ARPs that utilize a practical ideal type see Campbell, 2009; Collins, 2008; and O’Niell, 2008.

3. staff elements
4. program practices
5. child-centered location

Stated succinctly, quality programs implement and follow strategic plans, utilize essential partners, make careful and thorough staff considerations, and follow best practices in implementing the service: the components listed here mirror this logic. It must be noted that categories broad enough to apply to programs of various size and scope are included in this practical ideal type; quality programs usually have additional components dependent upon nuances distinct to that program. Replicability evidences program success (Fahsola 2002), thus elements described in this paper are general enough to produce similar results within different programs.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is defined as a disciplined effort to “produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it” (Bryson 2004, 28). For most public organizations strategic planning is integral in determining the quality of the services offered; this certainly applies to after school programs.

Being a relatively new notion, many public sector entities are still learning how to embrace strategic planning. Poister and Streib (2005) assert that strategic planning was

introduced to the public sector only twenty years ago. Despite this challenge, research shows that practicing public administrators have accepted strategic planning and that it “has become a centerpiece of orthodox public management” (Poister and Streib 2005, 45). John M. Bryson (2004) describes strategic planning as a leadership and management innovation that, unlike other recent innovations, will last because it mirrors the nature of political decision making in raising and resolving important issues.

For publicly-funded after school programs (especially those aimed at under-privileged children like the Eastside Story) including the community in strategic planning is essential. The overall planning process should include community input and also be promoted locally (Gordon 2005). Community awareness and involvement are important elements within the ideal type components. Regarding strategic planning, community involvement can be achieved through open meetings, public hearings, and local media (Gordon 2005).

The main tenets of strategic planning discussed in this practical ideal type include establishing program goals and using ongoing program evaluations. These two have been chosen as they are most often cited in the literature as integral to after school program quality. Because goal setting and ongoing evaluation are the core components of strategic planning, they can serve as building blocks for additional strategic planning such as goal sequencing or action

plans. The two should work in congruence with one another and the processes of each should be integrated.

Establishing Clear Program Goals

“Strategic planning begins with strategic thinking” and thus, an important step in strategic planning is determining a direction for the future (Gordon 2005, 8). This direction can be expressed in a program’s mission and goals. Establishing goals applies to both setting goals and also articulating them. Fashola (2002) maintains that the precision and accuracy of program goals determines how well participants will be served. Although the establishment of clear goals and evaluation of goals has its roots in accreditation, quality programs embrace these practices even when accreditation is not an issue (Beckett, Hawken, and Jacknowitz 2001).

To effectively set clear goals, a distinction should be made between a program’s mission and program goals. The mission should be a succinctly stated statement of purpose. The goals are smaller in scope but bolster the mission and together they should serve as the basis for the program’s vision for the future. While the goals will change depending on the needs of various stakeholders, the mission should generally remain grounded for the life of the program.

The literature concurs in regards to goal setting: A quality program must not only continuously engage in goal setting but the goals should meet certain criteria⁸. The criteria suggests that goals should be attainable, specific, and measureable (Bryson 2004; Gordon 2005). Goals should express measureable outcomes that will result when the goal is met(Gordon 2005). If goals are not measurable, there is no real way to determine their success or failure. Sanders (2008) argues that basing goals on existing data creates an understanding of the context in which a program operates and can prevent the creation of unattainable goals. Research on goal setting indicates that an important determinant of goal achievement is the clarity of the goal (Bryson 2004). Specificity in wording achieves goal clarity.

When goals meet the aforementioned criteria they provide program staff a guide to daily and long-term activities (Gordon 2005). In this way, goals make all staff accountable to desired program outcomes. Data should be utilized to set program and performance goals, thus creating clear expectations that hold program staff responsible for goal attainment (Sanders 2008). Seijts et al. (2004) also found that setting challenging but attainable goals maximizes staff performance.

⁸ See Dryfoos 1999; Eccles and Templeton 2002; Fashola 2002; Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002; and Woodland 2008.

According to Fashola (2002) program goals should be set through team effort to leverage the expertise of many people. Often committees are formed to determine appropriate goals and most importantly, how to execute them. Subject-matter experts, which can include community leaders, program staff, parents, and community members, should have a role in the process as their knowledge can be invaluable in determining attainable goals and implementation plans (Beckett, Hawken, and Jackowitz 2001).

Using Ongoing Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is the crucial follow up to establishing clear goals. Evaluation results provide assessment material by which goal attainment can be measured. 'Evaluation' is an umbrella term that encompasses many program evaluation formats and components. After school programs, with important objectives like educational improvement and improved community safety, must employ methods that prove their value (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002; Spaulding 2008). Effective evaluation design varies depending on the mission of the program but all program effective evaluations always include the systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of information to assess a program. Additionally, a commitment to *ongoing* program evaluation is ideally included in the strategic plan.

Program evaluation serves as a vital information exchange between program administrators, funders, policymakers, and the public (Fashola 2002). An evaluation component is especially important to a program that relies on outside funding for several reasons. An increase in the number of after school options available has given rise to an increased expectation for outcomes and accountability (Sanders 2008). The stakes are high and without effective evaluation data to document program outcomes and impact, funders may turn their attention to other priorities (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002).

An effective evaluation of an after school program measures outcomes on several levels. The literature expresses that after school programs have a broad purpose within the communities they serve.⁹ While participant outcomes are clearly an integral focus of program efficacy reports, so are family and community outcomes (Bailey et al. 1998). Since most program goals include improvement of or service to a community, achievement of that goal should be included in the program evaluation.

It is advisable for programs to legitimize their existence with data (Sanders 2008). “In the USA, specifically, ‘data-driven decision-making’ is the new educational mantra” (Sanders 2008, 530). Program outcomes and the evaluation are expected to be expressed via numerical

⁹ See Fashola, 2002; Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs, 2002; Spaulding ,2008.

data. Bailey et al. (1998) suggest that in a results-based era, program administrators must demonstrate benefits to the family or community as opposed to simply documenting practices that might lead to beneficial outcomes. To most effectively use data, Sanders (2008) offers three suggestions to program leaders. (1) Define data broadly, using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. (2) Seek assistance in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data from both inside the program and external organizations. (3) Make data accessible to a broad audience to encourage family and community involvement. In these three suggestions, Sanders (2008) spotlights the main components of after school program evaluations: data collection, data analysis and reporting.

Data Collection

Before data is collected for a program evaluation, stakeholders should determine what they hope to measure and what they hope to learn about the program (McElvain and Caplan 2001). Varied methods for the collection of evaluation data strengthen the overall evaluation and can be qualitative and quantitative in nature. Possible sources of evaluation data include participants, parents, staff, teachers, volunteers, community members and various program documentation (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002; Spaulding 2008).

Some qualitative practices include, but are not limited to, one-on-one interviews, group interviews and surveys of program staff, participants and parents. Creativity and innovation are important in data collection methods. One alternative form of data is participant journals that chronicle personal experiences in the program and another is photographs. But program participants should always be made aware when material will be used to assess the program (Spaulding 2008). Direct observations provide valuable information on how programs are actually operating on a day-to-day basis. Unfortunately the direct observation method is underutilized in after school program evaluations (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002). Quantitative methods are usually based upon cognitive and affective measures and often employ achievement test scores and pre and post-tests as measures (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002; Spaulding 2008). Effective evaluations consider both academic and non-academic data such as socioemotional factors (Grossman et al. 2002). Quantitative data collection is especially important to achieve an evaluation that utilizes experimental or quasi-experimental designs. This is discussed below.

Data Analysis

Evaluations are only as good as the methodologies used to analyze the findings (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002). Raw data yielded by evaluation investigations is difficult to

make sense of but statistics that reduce the data to an interpretable form mitigate this challenge (Popham 1993; Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002; Bailey et al. 1998). A program evaluator with familiarity in statistical options is more efficient than one without (Popham 1993).

Researchers have typically used two strategies, non-experimental descriptive study strategies and quasi-experimental program evaluation studies although experimental data analysis is preferable (Eccles and Templeton 2002). Experimental research designs better connect outcomes to the program, illustrating conclusively the overall impact a program has. Therefore, evaluators should utilize this method to provide credible evidence about program impact (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002). The classic experimental design, which incorporates before and after measures, comparison groups, and random assignment to comparison groups, is considered the strongest design for establishing cause-and-effect (Johnson 2002). Experimental design relies on variation to detect the effects of treatment (the after school program) upon experimental units (program participants). Measurement instruments can rate participant performance in comparison with some standard, usually a normative group or pre-determined criterion for success (Bailey et al. 1998). Quasi-experimental designs can also provide credible data on program effectiveness but do not use random assignment which makes the connection of positive outcomes to the program weaker (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs

2002). When random assignment is not feasible, evaluators should, at minimum, employ a careful matching process or statistical controls to ensure a high degree of comparability.

Reporting

A quality program evaluation report clearly summarizes basic information about the study's findings and results. Someone reading an evaluation report should be able to easily discern the merit of the reported findings. One method to achieve this is the use of graphs. Employing graphic presentation schemes like histograms and frequency polygons is advisable (Popham 1993). An astute evaluator knows the level of sophistication of the report's intended audience and creates graphic presentations accordingly (Popham 1993). A thorough report prefaces the body of the report with an executive summary, an introduction and a methods section (Spaulding 2008). Exemplary evaluation reports include components such as: the design used, the sample size, the means and standard deviation, the type(s) of statistical tests used, the test values generated, the degrees of freedom and the level of statistical significance (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002). Also, program quality indicators should be clearly identified in the report. In disseminating findings regarding program outcomes, evaluation reports increase the knowledge base about effective after school programs, and specifically, what makes them effective (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002).

Another consideration of a program's evaluation component is conformity to evaluation standards and common requirements for research design. The Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation's *The Program Evaluation Standard* serves a model for program evaluations. This document supplies programs with a unified benchmark for implementing, conducting, and analyzing the evaluation. The standards offered in the document cover four categories; utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy. Compliance with the principles of this model legitimize the evaluation (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002). In conclusion, an effective program evaluation lends credibility to program and thus, increases sustainability over time (Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002).

Partnership Elements

The second main component category deals with the partnerships an after school program engages in. The federally mandated Extended-Service Schools Initiative (ESS) comprehensively reviewed several programs that were deemed quality. The assessment included key common features amongst the programs. A partnership between the program and various public and private entities is an essential feature of all the programs reviewed. Those leading the initiative viewed partnerships as important enough to implement the concept into the goal of creating 60 after school programs in 20 communities across the nation (Grossman et al. 2002). As the need

for after school programs continues to grow, financing successful programs continues to emerge as a challenge. This necessitates creativity, planning, and strategic thinking about ways of mobilizing and combining public and private resources to support programs (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999). Partnerships increase the range of solutions of program challenges, both financially and otherwise (Christenson 2002).

Strategic partnerships that bolster after school programming also encompass the family and community of a child. Sandra Christenson (2002) describes the climate of learning for school-aged children in terms of a total learning context which encompasses most aspects of a student's life. This system, comprised of student, home, school, peers and community, is an "interwoven structure of circumstances and people that surround the child" (Christenson 2002, 5). The entirety of the context for development either impedes or facilitates educational outcomes (Christenson 2002). The still-emerging focus on increased family involvement in education underscores the importance of such an alliance. In partnering with other entities and individuals, a program engages in shared ownership and commitment to desired program outcomes.

Collaborating with Parents

Of all the collaboration a program engages in, it is partnering with parents that is most integral to the daily functions of the program. The ability to work seamlessly with parents furthers the goals of most after school programs in several important ways. Parental collaboration promotes the effectiveness of a program; often a program's livelihood depends on parents. According to Fashola (2002), the success of a program is contingent upon the reputation it has with parents. A key element in garnering such a reputation is trust (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999). One study links underutilization of existing after school programs to parents' assessment of the program. Parents said they would utilize the program upon improvements in quality (Weitzman, 2008). Although much of the research focusing on parental involvement centers on the normal school day, the findings are applicable to after school child care as well.

There is a consensus within the reviewed literature that strong connections between families and educators are integral to educational outcomes (Epstein 1985; Mitra 2006; Rosenthal 2006). Specifically, parental involvement is positively associated with grade and test score improvements, attitudes toward school work, assignment completion, and class participation and attendance (Christenson 2002). Because these outcomes often mirror after school programs' goals, the concepts are fully applicable in out-of-school time. The connection

between families and educators (which bolster the two aforementioned contexts of development, home and school) can be viewed as student competency enhancement. This enhancement focuses on such competencies as academic, social, emotional and behavioral skills (Christenson 2002). In addition, discontinuity between school experiences and at-home experiences is a factor of low overall school performance (Phelan, Davidson, and Yu 1998).

Parental collaboration also unlocks great potential for important information sharing between program staff and parents. Enhancing communication and coordination affords both parents and staff a clearer conceptualization of the situations and complexities facing students (Christenson 2002). Other beneficial outcomes include circumventing blame when students exhibit learning and/or behavioral challenges, pooling of resources from home and within the program, and building social capital for students through shared efforts (Christenson 2002). Developing a family-centered approach requires a relationship between parents and staff built upon trust, mutual respect, open communication, follow through, and interpersonal skills (Bailey et al. 1998).

The efforts to partner with parents should focus on systemic processes with a program's overall design and implementation. The structure and frequency of parental interactions are most effective when integrated into the strategic plan of the program. It is beneficial to maintain

opportunity-focused rather than problem-focused attitudes and actions when implementing collaboration practices (Christenson 2002).

Joyce Epstein's "conceptual framework of family-school partnerships" is often utilized within the literature to exemplify the positive effects of parent collaboration (Mitra 2006, 456). Her model of parental involvement incorporates three overlapping collaborative spheres; family, schools and community (Epstein 2001). Her findings can also be incorporated into after school practices. Epstein identified six major types of parental partnerships which range from weak to heavy involvement and can thus, be thought of as levels. They include; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community (Epstein 2001). Program administrators can utilize these levels of involvement to assess parental collaboration within the program.

The specific activities that create and maintain parental collaboration will vary depending on the program but certain comprehensive concepts are applicable across the board. A quality after school program should embrace collaboration as a central mode of operating, foster a climate which aims to build trust amongst parents, and invoke a welcoming climate for parents.

Collaborating with Community

A diversity of expertise and resources is often a result of community collaboration (Christenson 2002). The concept of community collaboration is built upon the idea that a program's mission can best be achieved by collective action. Community collaboration can take the shape of partnering with non-profit organizations, businesses, and also individuals. Cross-section partnerships can be defined as networks in which previously unrelated organizations work together to implement solutions to complex social issues. They have been shown to produce positive results (Epstein 2001; Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). The notion of cross-section partnerships can typically be divided into two types; those that produce pre-defined outcomes and those that produce co-defined outcomes. Pre-defined outcomes are determined by the main stakeholder before a partnership is established and co-defined outcomes are decided upon by partners through mutual consultation. Pre-defined outcomes can also be more easily attained with alternative partners (Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009) but co-defined outcomes can also be beneficial for after school programs. With any community collaboration, partners should be chosen strategically with desired outcomes always outlined.

After school programs can partner with individuals by offering volunteer opportunities. This serves two purposes; funding costs can be minimized and new perspectives can be shared as volunteers are able to contribute to the program. A well-structured program utilizes volunteers in

areas where they are most needed and appreciated. A program can retain volunteers by making them feel welcome and useful (Fashola 2002). Rhodes (2004) suggests that program administrators should tap into large pools of volunteers such as retired adults and college students. Retired adult volunteers are recognized for an ability to provide tutoring and emotional support to program participants by sharing their areas of expertise (Rhodes 2004). Also the reciprocal nature of a well developed partnership is evident in another volunteering scenario: universities often require students to participate in service-learning opportunities in which students volunteer for an after school program (Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). The university connects the program to the larger community while also providing individual volunteers. In return the university students are provided with invaluable real-world experience in their area of study.

Programs should also leverage the expertise of community based organizations (CBOs) and other civic organizations by partnering with them. The level of partnership usually varies depending on the needs of the program. It is possible for programs to utilize existing mentoring programs within CBOs which can be highly advantageous in that they take on the task of recruiting, screening, and even training. Such partnerships have shown considerable promise (Rhodes 2004). The literature reveals this collaboration as common practice which has successful results (Beckett, Hawken, and Jackowitz 2001; Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). For

an after school program to implement an effective program, many avenues should be examined.

Other organizations that seek to serve school-aged children academically might have similar goals and could therefore make a substantive partner. But there are many organizations with goals that include enriching the lives of young people that should not be overlooked.

Private foundations also provide promising partnership opportunities for after school programs. Notable foundations like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and W. T. Grant Foundation have a long history of supporting after school programs (Knott and McCarthy 2007; Weitzman et al. 2008). After school programs are often an attractive outlet for foundation funds because child care issues cut across several policy areas such as employment, education and poverty (Knott and McCarthy 2007). Because quality child care impacts these policy areas to such a high degree (quality after school care enables more women to join the work force, reduces poverty from one generation to the next and arms students with stronger academic skills), after school programs present an opportunity for foundation funds to have lasting effects. These organizations often see, in after school programs, goals that align with broad foundation initiatives that focus on families and neighborhood development or a logical extension of existing youth programs (Knott and McCarthy 2007).

Communication underscores all types of collaboration with parents and the community.

Quality programs should strive to initiate and maintain meaningful dialogue with parents and the community. Parents and the community must first be made aware of a program's existence.

Several means to accomplish this have been cited by the literature and include websites
community fairs in which programs can be showcased (Weitzman 2008). Outreach efforts aimed
at program expansion or improvement can be made accessible to a broad audience via public
reports and posters (Sanders 2008). Outreach efforts must also be ongoing (Weitzman 2008;
Sanders 2008).

Other factors that enable strong partnerships include visibility and perceived relevance of
the partnership (Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). The frequent use of "channels of
communication" should be used to express the partnerships' purpose (Dorado, Giles, and Welch
2009, 372). In short, the sustainability of any programs' partnership is dependent upon the
ability of the program administrators to express why the partnership is important.

One factor identified as a hindrance to a program's overall quality is an inability to be
flexible, as discussed later in this chapter. Programs prevent or hinder partnerships with rigid
adherence to their standard procedures (Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). Failure to be flexible
or to consistently comply with partnership agreements can destroy mutual trust among partners

and stymie development or ruin partnership opportunities (Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009). As the literature illustrates, when utilized appropriately, partnerships help a program blossom in a multitude of ways.

Staff Elements

The organization and development of program staff is the third feature identified in a model after school program. Critical program staff elements are a decisive indicator of a quality after school programs. For purposes of this research, staff elements include staff organization, staff standards and staff development.

Staff Organization

The leader of a quality program typically ensures appropriate staff organization. Although the number of staff employed by a program will vary, a basic construct applicable to most programs is reliable. Several programs identified as quality by the ESS utilized a staff structure that includes a program director, site coordinator(s) and activity providers (Grossman et al. 2002). For any quality program, each role within the construct has defined duties expressed clearly in a program's handbook or manual.

Generally, the program director is tasked with broader external functions including managing the budget, forming and maintaining partnerships and overseeing other staff. Site coordinators are typically charged with implementing and administering the program on site and also the daily oversight of the program. Some of the duties for this role include: leading recruitment and enrollment efforts, planning and scheduling activities, communicating directly with parents, and arranging transportation needs. The third tier within the construct is the activity providers. They ideally include staff from partnering agencies, teachers, independent professionals, college students and community residents. With the duty of administering the many activities a program might implement, these individuals in this role bring the program to life (Grossman et al. 2002).

Staff Standards

Because the notion of after school care is very broad in nature, there is no definitive consensus within the literature regarding the specific qualifications of program staff. Nevertheless, this research focuses on after school programs that seek to improve the academic skills of participants; thus a more pointed suggestion emerges from the literature.

Having higher staff standards mitigates turnover, which can be detrimental to a programs overall quality. Low salaries and limited hours contribute to staff turnover rates reported to be as

high as 40 percent (Grossman et al. 2002; Rhodes 2004). One remedy is to professionalize and, in so doing, stabilize the staffing of after school programs (Rhodes 2004).

A 1996 study conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Deborah Lowe Vandell (1996, 2434) found that “negative staff-child interactions were more frequent when the staff had less formal education.” In addition, the literature reveals that staff with certain positive attitudes and attributes carries more weight than credentials. Staff from community based organizations showed the same propensity for leading quality program activities as did certified teachers (Grossman et al. 2002). The attributes associated with positive staff-participant interactions are discussed at length later.

Rhodes (2004) advocates using the staff-participant ratio when programs consider staffing standards. Establishing a ratio benchmark is a challenge because they need to be flexible enough so that precious staff resources are used effectively but also based on the needs of a program’s particular participants. In general, a low participant-staff ratio allows for warmer, more sensitive and more supportive interactions to flourish (Rhodes 2004). Reaching the appropriate ratio should be based upon a needs assessment which examines the ages of program participants. The staff-participant ratio also effects participants’ view of a specific program. Large enrollments are associated with children’s perception that staff is less emotionally

supportive (Rosenthal and Vandell 1996). Low participant-staff ratios also have been shown to effect parental perceptions of after school programs as well. The Rosenthal and Vandell (1996, 2444) study revealed that “when child-staff ratios were smaller, parents rated the program more positively. Both parent and student perceptions of a particular program are indicators of program success and are correlated with attendance rates.

Staff Development and Training

Equally important to the qualifications of program staff is the training received during the duration of their employment by the program. Staff qualifications and staff development should complement one another and specifying qualifications will not result in a quality program unless staff has appropriate training opportunities (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999).

Increased attention to staff training could go a long way toward improving the after school experience of the nation’s youth (Rhodes 2004). Staff development and training sessions better equip staff to work with children, negotiate difficult situations and adapt to the needs of children of different ages. Training sessions are also a positive way to resolve potential problems before they arise (Fashola 2002).

One study noted that the quality of a specific program activity was more dependent upon the ability of the staff leading the activity rather than the activity itself (Grossman et al. 2002).

Quality programs orient staff, especially activity providers toward positive youth development philosophies and practices (Grossman et al. 2002). Operating program activities inside the parameters of those philosophies and practices is not necessarily intuitive but can be achieved through training and ongoing staff development. Fashola (2002) asserts that problem-solving strategies will not be developed in children without environments being set up in a way that challenges this knowledge. Program staff should be trained to create incidents, conversations and activities that address such abilities of participants.

Sound staff training includes all levels of a program's employee base. While specialized training addresses skill sets affiliated with specific jobs, all staff members should operate under the same notion that bolsters the program goals. Although often overlooked, training volunteers is necessary for advancing an environment of positive youth development. Volunteer training can be two-pronged. Volunteers can be trained directly, similarly to program staff. In addition, full-time staff should be trained to recruit, supervise and provide ongoing instruction to volunteers (Fashola 2002).

In addition to initial training, quality programs should provide procedural manuals to staff and volunteers. Having a document available for staff to reference ensures that protocols and practices are concrete. Conflict resolution protocols should be clearly communicated in a

document available to all staff such as an employee handbook to reinforce training. According to Fashola (2002), staff development is a defining factor in programs that retain employees for extended periods.

Develop Quality Relationships

The quality of relationships forged between staff and participants¹⁰ directly influences the developmental benefits youth derive (Rhodes 2004). Intrapersonal in nature, after school programs are fertile ground for influential relationships as staff are afforded unique opportunities to engage in informal conversation and enjoyable activities while providing a safe context for support and guidance (Rhodes 2004). Program staff should know how to provide these interactions (Grossman et al. 2002).

There is a consensus in the reviewed literature that characteristics of the staff influence overall program quality.¹¹ Relationships between program participants and staff garner positive results when a caring and supportive environment exists. By providing motivation and high expectations, program staff help facilitate positive youth development. Quality programs rely upon staff to create positive social environments in which relationships are warm and friendly.

¹⁰ Participants refer to the youth enrolled in an after school program.

¹¹ See Fashola, 2002; Grossman et al, 2002; Kahne et al, 2001; McElvain and Caplan, 2002; Rhodes, 2004; and Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002.

Staff should master the ability to balance supportive attitudes with a challenging intellectual environment in which participants are actively motivated and pushed to achieve beyond their initial expectations (Grossman et al. 2002). Such relationships better equip program participants to avoid risky experiences, pursue desirable opportunities, and recover from negative experiences (Kahne et al. 2001). Rhodes (2004) reported similar benefits resulting from close staff-participant relationships. Her research cites improved communication skills in particular. Supportive relationships provide a model of effective adult communication and also help program participants to better understand, more clearly express, and regulate their positive and negative emotions. Furthermore, the staff's person's capacity to refrain from harsh judgment, effectively cope with difficulties, and express optimism and confidence improve the overall nature of the mentoring relationship.

In addition to improved communication skills, quality staff-participant interaction improves cognitive skills of youth through meaningful conversation. Rhodes (2004, 152) describes this as “a trusting relationship with a mentor that can provide a framework in which adolescents acquire and refine new thinking skills.” Moreover, Rhodes (2004) indicates that quality relationships greatly influence the social and intellectual climate of the overall program (Rhodes 2004).

Program Practices

As with the other elements contained in this model, the program practice elements listed below are definitive but broad enough to apply to programs of all size and mission. The elements included in this practical ideal type emerged from the literature as most essential in creating an environment which fosters positive youth development. Those include program flexibility, development of quality relationships, complementarity with school-day curriculum and program comprehensiveness.

Program Flexibility

Current literature addresses program flexibility and the opportunities presented within (Oakes et al 1999; Rhodes 2004). Flexibility is beneficial because it allows for responsiveness to the particular needs of participants. Although some structure is necessary, close adherence to packaged programs can short-circuit staff members' spontaneity, empathy, and judgment in ways that undermine the formation of close ties (Rhodes 2004). This illustrates the interrelatedness of the ideal type components.

Flexibility also allows the program to evolve in ways most beneficial to participants. Allowing the program to change brings about meaningful structural changes in and beyond the setting (Rhodes 2004). The idea that certain structures are applicable to all programs is

problematic; the strengths of one program might not flourish under other circumstances. Oakes et al. (1999, 98) describe uniform applicability as “watered down wisdom [that] makes its way into packaged materials [which] nearly always blocks the deep inquiry and learning that fundamental shifts in norms and practices require.” Effective program design and implementation builds from an open and responsive design structure, allowing for necessary evolution and attention to participant voice (Nocon, 2005).

Complement School-day Curriculum

Most after school programs list academic achievement as a main goal. One means of achieving this is complementarity with the formal school day curriculum in order to supplement the process of learning. The development and implementation of after school program curricula tied to district, state, and national academic goals has led to promising results for the Voyager and Explore programs (Fashola and Cooper 1999). A complementary curriculum is beneficial to program participants and program staff.

Complementary curricula provide students with tested approaches and resources, obviating the need for program staff to “reinvent the wheel” (Fashola and Cooper 1999, 132). Complementing school-day curriculum is beneficial because individualized help is offered to participants that may not be available during the normal school day (Howes, Olenick, and Dir-

Kiureghian 1987). The challenge then becomes maintaining complementarity while not simply duplicating (Howes, Olenick, and Dir-Kiureghian 1987). Joint planning by after school care staff and school staff can lead to effective complementarity. Moreover, staffing after school programs with schoolteachers and aides is a promising strategy for increasing continuity (Rhodes 2004). The nature of the after school setting also allows for new approaches to school-day studies. Examples of this experimental approach include project-based learning in the arts, sports, and other areas which can provide opportunities to practice classroom learning (Rhodes 2004).

Interestingly, the literature points out that complementarity can run both ways. Kahne et al. (2001) asserts that academic opportunities and successes can be great in the after school setting. Thus, after school program techniques that produce desirable outcomes should be identified by researchers and incorporated into students' school-day curriculum by working with teachers, school administrators, and other relevant staff members (Kahne et al. 2001).

Ensure Program Comprehensiveness

Quality programs offer varied activities to participants for an array of reasons. Each activity of a quality program cultivates, in some way, a child's academic or social abilities. This seemingly obvious notion is key to combat the all-to-common practice of simply keeping

children occupied. Research indicates that programs which simply strive to maintain attendance rates and disproportionally focus on enjoyable activities do not provide supports for youth development (Kahne et al. 2001).

The literature generally makes a dichotomous distinction between the two basic types of after school program activities; academic and recreational. Balancing academic activities with those of a recreational nature has been shown to be most effective. Even if academic enrichment and remediation is the primary focus of a program, social activities should be incorporated to achieve a balanced approach (Fashola and Cooper 1999). Academic activities like homework assistance and tutoring are ubiquitous within after school programs but, when done effectively, have the potential to provide value beyond the immediate purpose of academic strength by supporting students with strong adult support. In addition quality academic activities present opportunities for cooperative peer interaction and collaborative learning (Grossman et al. 2002).

Recreational activities, such as music, dance, and sports give some children an opportunity to experience activities they might not otherwise have (Posner and Vandell 1994). The value of these activities is overlooked as they are often deemed less important than academic endeavors, lumped together under the name 'extracurricular'. Often victim to "austerity

budgeting,” recreational activities have the potential to expand a child’s educational experience beyond fundamental skill acquisition (Howes, Olenick, and Dir-Kiureghian 1987, 95).

Allowing a child to discover what interests them and what they excel in is an important focus for after school programs. School-age years are a critical growth period in which children will discover and develop individual talents and thus, should have the opportunity to choose activities which will prepare them for satisfying lives as adults (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999). The after school setting is a venue for self discovery in “a separate environment in which children can explore new skill areas, discover talents within themselves, and experience the thrill of doing something just because they love doing it” (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999, 7). In this self discovery youth also experience increased self-esteem (Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999).

In addition to balancing academic and recreational activities, a quality program finds innovative ways of garnering participants’ interest. Programs that design activities in a more flexible and varied manner attract older participants (which has been identified as a challenge facing most after school programs) and also those with diverse interests (Grossman et al. 2002). Broadening activities to capture the interest of both males and females is important (Rosenthal and Vandell 1996). Certain after school programs shown to be quality excelled in innovative

activities as varied as community service projects, career preparation, conflict resolution, and lessons on respecting elders (Fashola 2002; Grossman et al. 2002).

These activities which address life-enhancing skills should be based upon the needs of program participants. One program exemplified this innovation with an activity called the Sweet 13 Club. Because the program catered to many school-aged immigrants, the activity was designed by program staff to mitigate the challenges of assimilation faced by girls in allowing time for the students to make food, crafts and jewelry and also meaningfully converse about transition experiences (Grossman et al. 2002).

One study found that when a larger number of varied activities were offered by programs, more positive/neutral staff-child interactions were observed and also that observers rated the program as more flexible and age appropriate under these circumstances (Posner and Vandell 1994). Activity variation also effects participant attitudes about the program overall. Program variety clearly benefits participants in ways not always discernable to them but the Rosenthal and Vandell (1996) study did show a positive correlation between greater variety and children having more positive program perception.

As mentioned, activities should be varied in design and intended objectives but should all have the common goal of fostering positive youth development. The literature reveals that one

way to accomplish this is structure and organization within activities. It is clear that the structured activities offered during an after school program benefit participants at school. Positive correlations exist between structured activities after school and children's conduct, grades, and positive peer relations (Posner and Vandell 1994). Conversely time spent in outdoor, unorganized activities was negatively related to children's academic grades, work/study skills and emotional adjustment (Posner and Vandell 1994).

Child-Centered Location

The location of a program that serves youth is of particular importance.¹² Several factors must be considered; the facility should promote learning and offer equipment that promotes development and the facility should be safe. The location of the program relates to many of the aforementioned ideal type components. A child-centered location will contribute to parental trust and also serves a good venue to encourage participation in the program.

Facility and Equipment Promote Development

A child-centered location promotes development in many areas. Academic development should clearly be sought but development in the arts and sports is also important. Some of the equipment needed to promote academic learning includes appropriate work spaces, supplies and

¹² For additional information on the importance of child-centered locations see Campbell, 2009.

computers. This may require program administrators to think outside the box. McElvain and Caplan (2001, 40) illustrate this by suggesting program staff to offer access to technology in “nontraditional ways.” They provide the example of one high school which had access to a community radio station and television equipment and allowed students to use those resources to design various programs and to mentor younger children (McElvain and Caplan 2001).

Polatnik (2002) identified public schools as the preferred location for programs. In addition to boasting much of the needed equipment for child development and learning, it spares parents and/or program administrators the problem of transportation. Community centers were also seen as an effective location for after school programs (Rodriguez and Conchas 2009). Utilization of existing space that promotes child learning such as public schools requires that program staff respect those spaces and communicate with the individuals who use them during school hours. McElvain and Caplan (2001) compiled a list to achieve this. It includes several suggestions including working out a schedule with physical education staff for use of the gym and outdoor equipment, communicating with teachers about activities for their classroom, bringing their own supplies to activities, and decide before hand what will happen if something is damaged (McElvain and Caplan 2001).

McElvain and Caplan (2001) assert that youth appeal is the most critical factor contributing to the success or failure of an afterschool program. As mentioned above, quality programs should have a variation of activities available to participants. To meet participants' expectations, a program must offer variation but also be able to support it.

Safe Facility

One of the traditional advantages in after school care is keeping youth safe by keeping them 'off the streets' and out of trouble (Halpern, 2002). Effective programs should live up to that expectation internally. "Getting kids in the door safely" is often considered to be the "nuts and bolts" of maintaining a quality after school program (McElvain and Caplan 2001, 37). Utilizing public schools for after school care is also advantageous in regards to safety as it mitigates transportation dangers (Polatnik 2002).

A safe facility can be achieved by various means at several levels. Quality programs elicit a safe environment among participants by enforcing strict rules guiding peer interactions. Rodriguez and Conchas (2009, 231) suggest that programs provide a "space where stimulating discussion revolve[s] around themes particularly pressing" to youth but that violence should never be tolerated. Also facilities should be equipped with fire emergency items and first aid kits.

It's clear that productive use of school-aged youth's time is essential for creating a constructive society. The question has become how to achieve that. Quality after school programs serve this purpose on two levels. First, programs provide a safe haven for youth by removing them from the street or other dangerous environments. Second, quality programs provide youth with learning enrichment and life skills, allowing them to become the foundation for thriving communities.

If programs adhere to the elements outlined in this paper, the level of quality is enhanced. Without incorporating these factors, programs will fail to stimulate youth to their highest levels of skills-building. All programs, big and small, can embrace the tenets of this model to inspire students have effects on local communities far greater than ever expected.

The conceptual framework (Table 2.1) below table gives a succinct overview of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The ideal type categories are listed along with the corresponding literature. The Operationalization Table (Table 3.1) included in Chapter Three uses a similar structure to illustrate the data collection methods for The Eastside Story case study.

Table 2.1 – Conceptual Framework Table

Ideal Type Categories	Supporting Literature
Strategic Planning	Bryson 2004 Gordon 2005 Poister and Streib 2005
<i>Establishing Clear Program Goals</i>	Beckett, Hawken, and Jacknowitz 2002 Bryson 2004 Dryfoos 1999 Eccles and Templeton 2002 Gordon 2005 Fashola 2002 McElvain and Capalan 2001 Sanders 2008 Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002 Seijts 2004 Woodland 2008
<i>Using Ongoing Evaluation</i>	Bailey et al. 1998 Eccles and Templeton 2002 Fashola 2002 Grossman et al 2002 McElvain and Caplan 2001 Popham 1993 Sanders 2008 Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002 Spaulding 2008
Partnership Elements	Christenson 2002 Grossman et al. 2002 Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999
<i>Collaborating with Parents</i>	Christenson 2002 Epstein 1985 Epstein 2001 Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999 Mitra 2006 Phelan, Davidson, and Yu 1998 Rosenthal 2006 Weitzman 2008
<i>Collaborating with Community</i>	Beckett, Hawken, and Jacknowitz 2001 Christenson 2002 Dorado, Giles, and Welch 2009 Epstein 2001 Fashola 2002 Knott and McCarthy 2007 Rhodes 2004 Sanders 2008 Weitzman et al. 2008
Staff Elements	
<i>Staff Organization</i>	Grossman et al. 2002

<i>Staff Standards</i>	Grossman et al., 2002 Rhodes 2004 Rosenthal and Vandell 1996
<i>Staff Training and Development</i>	Fashola 2002 Grossman et al. 2002 Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999 Rhodes 2004
<i>Develop Quality Relationships</i>	Bailey et al. 1998 Grossman et al. 2002 Kahne et al., 2001 Rhodes 2004 Scott-Little, Hamann, and Jurs 2002
Program Practices	
<i>Flexibility</i>	Nocon 2005 Oakes et al. 1999 Rhodes 2004
<i>Complement School-day Curriculum</i>	Fashola and Cooper 1999 Howes, Olenick, and Dir-Kiureghian 1987 Kahne et al. 2001 Rhodes 2004
<i>Program Comprehensiveness</i>	Fashola 2002 Fashola and Cooper 1999 Grossman et al. 2002 Howes, Olenick, and Dir-Kiureghian 1987 Kahne et al. 2001 Larner, Zippiroli, and Behrman 1999 Posner and Vandell 1994 Rhodes 2004 Rosenthal and Vandell 1996
Child-centered Location	
<i>Facility and Equipment Promote Learning</i>	McElvain and Caplan 2001 Polatnik 2002 Rodriguez and Conchas 2009
<i>Safe Facility</i>	McElvain and Caplan 2001 Polatnik 2002 Rodriguez and Conchas 2009

Chapter Summary

This chapter review literature regarding after school programs. The literature identified contemporary best practices within the field. Although the after school program literature

covers a vast array of topics, the components listed in the Conceptual Framework Table (Table 2.1) are identified in this research as most integral to effective programs. The components of the practical ideal type constructed in this chapter are operationalized in the follow chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to assess The Eastside Story after school program. The chapter illustrates the various data collection methods included in the research design and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each. The evidence is collected using criteria developed from the model after school program components expressed in Chapter Two.

Case Study

The research design utilized for this project is case study. The case study approach is commonly used in political science (Yin 2009) because it allows for comprehensive insight into complex social issues by examining an existing example. Triangulation, or the use of multiple data collection methods in one study, legitimizes findings because several data sources have been leveraged (Yin 2009) and also helps prevent bias and skewed data. Moreover, triangulation also decreases the weaknesses inherent in one research method by supporting evidence drawn from another method. After school programming can certainly be classified as a complex social issue and thus, the case study approach is appropriate for researching and assessing The Eastside Story. Document analysis, direct observations, and structured interviews are represented in this case study and triangulate the data collected.

Operationalization Table

Table 3.1 below connects the conceptual framework (Table 2.1), research methods, and data sources by specifying the operational relationship between each practical ideal type component and the corresponding methodology used to gauge it.

Table 3.1 Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence
Strategic Planning		
Clear Mission and Program Goals	Document Analysis /Parent Handbook, Staff Handbook, Eastside Story website, Eastside Story Program Info Packet	Program mission is stated clearly and consistently as a broad statement of purpose. Goals are stated clearly and consistently as more narrow objectives which bolster the mission. All stated goals are related to the mission.
Incorporated ongoing evaluation	Document Analysis /Evaluation of the Eastside Story After-School Program, Student Pre-Evaluation, Student Post-Evaluation, Student Pre-Survey, Student Post Survey, Staff Review Form and Site Visit Tool	Evaluation material current. Variety of data for utilized for evaluation. Data is combined and analyzed to yield insight into program outcomes. Experimental or quasi-experimental study designs are used for data analysis.
	Structured Interview	Is the program evaluated on a regular basis? How is this achieved? Who are findings reported to? Is a standard research evaluation research design used?
Partnership Elements		
Collaboration with Parents	Document Analysis /Parent Handbook	Parental responsibilities/expectations clearly stated. Parents are encouraged to engage with program staff. Means for parental feedback are clearly stated.
	Structured Interview	What is your philosophy regarding parental engagement? How would you describe the level of involvement with parents? What is the ideal amount of parental involvement?
Collaboration with Community	Document Analysis / The Eastside Story Website, Partners Presentation, Russian Delegates Presentation	Current partners listed Protocol for choosing partners expressed

	Structured Interviews	How does The Eastside Story Partner with other public and private organizations? How are those organizations' attributes leveraged? How do the partnerships advance The Eastside Story's mission?
Staff Elements		
Staff Organization	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Clearly defined positions within the staff are expressed. Roles for each position are expressed.
Staff Standards	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Russian Delegation Presentation	Staff are required to foster positive youth development.
	Structured Interview	What attributes are you looking for when hiring staff? What experience and/or education requirements exist? Is a background check required for each new hire?
Staff Development and Training	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Requirement to attend regular training sessions expressed. Protocols for conflict resolution exist.
	Structured Interview	What types of mandatory training exist? Do staff members have an opportunity to participate in conferences, meetings and/or other staff development methods?
Development of Quality Relationships Between Staff and Participants	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Staff regulations which support positive social environments are expressed.
	Structured Interview	How are positive staff-participant relationships encouraged? Are staff members provided with techniques to foster positive social environments? How are program participants mentored by the program staff?

Program Practices		
Flexibility	Document Analysis/ 2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Public Safety Police Operations	Does staff have flexibility in daily operations? Has the program been required to adapt to major change?
	Structured Interview	Is flexibility valued within the program? Has the program ever been changed in response to feedback from staff, parents or participants?
Complementarity with School-day Curriculum	Document Analysis/ 2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Russian Delegation Presentation	Standards exist for program curriculum exist that mirror school-day curriculum. Documentation connects the program to schools (i.e. report cards).
	Structured Interview	In what way does the program link to school-day activities? How often do you meet with school staff to discuss curriculum?
Program Comprehensiveness	Document Analysis/ Russian Delegation Presentation	Examples of program activities are listed. Variation exists in the examples provided.
Child-centered Location		
Facility and Equipment Promote Learning	Direct Observation	Facility includes a variety of age-appropriate instruments for arts and recreation. Sports apparatuses available. Computers available for participants.
Safe Facility	Document Analysis/ Texas Education Code,Austin City Code	Safety regulations are mandated.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is one of the three data collection methods performed in this research. This research method has several advantages that all center on its stability. Data derived from document analysis is built upon recorded evidence visible to any reader and is thereby generally regarded as reliable. All of the documents for the Eastside Story case study are available upon request. Documents can be reviewed repeatedly and tend to span a long period of time and events. Document analysis not only supports assertions made by researchers but also supports findings from other methods. Robert Yin (2009) purports that documents corroborate and augment evidence gathered from other. Irretrievability and limited access are disadvantages of document analysis. This is especially true when minors are included in research as with after school programs. These hurdles are easier to overcome with government documents where an expectation of public knowledge exists and Freedom of Information Act applies as with this Eastside Story case study. The other major disadvantage of document analysis is reporting bias by the originating author. This occurs when the researcher fails to report the information within the documents objectively.

Sampling: Document Analysis

Most of the documents used for this research were made available by the supervisory staff at The Eastside Story with the exception of the website. The documents were presented in their entirety and offered important information regarding the program's procedures. A list of all documents analyzed are included in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 List of Documents Analyzed

Documents:
2009-2010 Staff Handbook
Austin City Code
Eastside Story Program Info Packet
Eastside Story Website
Evaluation of The Eastside Story by Peter A. Witt
Parent Handbook
Partners Presentation
Public Safety, Police Options
Russian Delegates Presentation
Site Visit Tool
Staff Review Form
Student Pre-Evaluation
Student Post-Evaluation
Student Pre-Survey
Student Post-Survey
Texas Education Code

Structured Interviews

Interviews are one of the most important elements of any case study (Yin 2009).

Structured interviews are integral to a comprehensive program assessment of The Eastside Story.

This method can provide researchers with invaluable insight into existing data and new information but, as with all methods, structured interviews have advantages and disadvantages. Interviews allow the researcher to construct questions which most directly relate to the research question(s). Additionally researchers can elicit information about how a program really operates from individuals that are heavily involved with it. Structured interviews can also reveal data that is not documented elsewhere.

Flaws in the structured interview methodology appear when the interviewee fails to report accurate information. Response bias can happen in different ways, especially when the interviewee is reporting on their employer. The individual may hesitate to report negative information. Reflexivity, which occurs when the interviewee reports only what he/she assumes the interviewer wants to hear, is also a potential shortcoming of interviews (Yin 2009). Response bias and reflexivity is mitigated by well-constructed questions (Yin 2009). Questions prepared for interviews in this research are open-ended to encourage a fluid conversational format (Yin 2009) in which respondents can feel comfortable and be forthcoming. Additionally, the questions are based directly upon the conceptual framework and each interviewee will be asked the same questions.

Sampling: Structured Interviews

The structured interview sample included two program supervisors of The Eastside Story. These individuals were chosen for their in-depth knowledge about The Eastside Story's administrative policies and procedures and also their daily involvement in the program. The interviews were conducted in person at The Eastside Story office in Austin, Texas and spanned approximately one hour each. Interviews were conducted independently to encourage candid, sincere responses

and to mitigate one interviewee's responses affecting the others'. The interviewee's names are kept confidential to protect anonymity.

Direct Observation

The final method used to assess The Eastside Story was direct observation. Because the program is conducted at seven separate sites, several locations were observed for the analysis. Observation enables discovery in a way other methods restrict (O'Neal 2008) and is also useful in supplementing information about the subject being studied (Yin 2009). As with other case study methods, direct observation has strengths and weaknesses.

One potential weakness in the direct observation methods is researcher bias. In the observations the researcher may report with bias and relay this in the research. Additionally, direct observation methods can be time consuming and costly for researchers. Conversely, direct observations are valuable in that the researcher can view the natural setting of the "case" (Yin 2009, 109).

Relevant environments can be observed (Yin 2009) adding richness to the study. For this research, environments were observed for all seven Eastside Story program sites to detect characteristics within the 'child-centered location' ideal type component. Specifically, direct observation determined whether the program facilities and the equipment promote learning by providing appropriate apparatuses like playgrounds, computer labs, and sporting areas. Traditional direct observation, in which the researcher visits the site, was used to assess the two Eastside Story sites owned by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department; Parque Zaragoza and Recreation Center and Given Recreation Center. The remaining five sites are located at elementary schools and more difficult to observe as AISD requires special permission to enter the schools. Though the traditional direct observation method was used for outdoor

areas of the five elementary schools, virtual tours¹³ on the AISD website permitted observation of the five elementary schools' interiors.

Assessment Criteria Ratings

A four-point scale measures the evidence collected from the document analysis, structured interviews, and direct observation. "Exceeds Criteria" represents the highest rating and indicates that the measured component goes beyond the literary recommendations. If all the criteria were met, the rating of "Meets Criteria" is given. If a majority of the criteria were met, a rating of "Mostly Meets Criteria" is given. The lowest rating, "Fails to Meet Criteria" indicates that the evidence does not meet the standards outlined in the practical ideal type.

Human Subjects Protection¹⁴

This applied research project was submitted to the Texas State Institutional Review Board and received a formal exemption from full review. The exemption request number is EXP2009O302. This research caused no risk or discomfort to all subjects. All interviewees were volunteers and did neither received benefit for their participation. The overall nature of this project poses no risk to subjects and participants.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Three outlined the research design for this project. The case study utilizes document analysis and structured interviews to collect data which was then measured using a four-point scale. Chapter Four presents the results of the data used to assess The Eastside Story.

¹³ The virtual tours were accessed at <http://www.austinisd.org/schools/campus.phtml?opt=bylevel&slevel=elementary>.

¹⁴ See the Appendix for the Human Subjects Protection Exemption in its entirety.

Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this research is to assess the Eastside Story Afterschool program using the practical ideal type developed from related literature. The five primary components include:

1. Strategic Planning
2. Partnership Elements
3. Staff Elements
4. Program Practices
5. Child-centered Location

Under each of the five primary ideal type components fall several sub components that are all discussed in this chapter. Chapter Four summarizes the results of the data collected from the case study of the Eastside Story and is organized according to the criteria above. Each data collection method used and the corresponding results are discussed for each component. The results are then analyzed according to degree to which the criteria set in the practical ideal type are met. The four degrees are: fails to meet criteria (1), mostly meets criteria (2), meets criteria (3) and exceeds criteria (4).

Strategic Planning: Establishing Clear Goals

The literature concurs that clear goals are integral to well-functioning after school programs. As discussed in chapter two, establishing clear program goals is multi-faceted and includes goal setting and articulating the goals in appropriate program materials. Several documents were used to assess how well The Eastside Story establishes clear program goals: The

2009-2010 Parent Handbook, 2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Eastside Story website and the Eastside Story Program Info Packet.¹⁵

Document Analysis- Establishing Clear Goals

The four documents analyzed illustrate discrepancies and problems with the clarity of The Eastside Story's goals and mission. The terms vision, mission, goals, and objective are used interchangeably to communicate very similar information. In both handbooks, the objective reads "To provide a safe and supportive after school environment by engaging youth in enriching program activities through positive interaction with adults." The section entitled "Our Goals" on the Eastside Story website lists, "to provide a safe after school and summer environment for youth", "to promote educational success and achievement", "to expose youth to cultural, educational, and recreational enrichment activities" and "to strengthen families by encouraging parent-child involvement." Lastly, the Eastside Story Program Info Packet states the program's mission as "To serve youth ages 5-13 and their families who live in or attend East Austin and surrounding area schools by providing education and enrichment services to promote a safe after school and summer environment, foster academic success, enhance the quality of life, and empower families to be self-sufficient."

The differing terminology and descriptions exhibit the lack of a clear delineation between the program's mission and the goals. As conferred in Chapter Two, programs should have a clearly defined mission which is a broad statement of the program's purpose. Additionally, program goals should be more narrow in scope but should bolster the mission and should be stated as such. Although the authors of the four documents analyzed did express the program's

¹⁵ This document is described as "a packet of information provided to partners and the public during program years 07-08; while the program was under the Police Department" in an explanation of documents provided to the researcher by Veronica Delgado, one of the interviews.

purpose and intent, the alignment and clarity of the mission and the goals does not fit the criteria given by the literature.

Strategic Planning: Program Evaluation

Comprehensive program evaluations are needed to determine the degree to which program goals are being met and also serve as vehicle to exchange information about a program's success and shortcomings. Evaluations evidence the service offered to the public and legitimize a program's existence. Without data provided by an evaluation, after school programs can falter despite the level of service offered to participants. Document analysis and structured interviews were used to analyze the use of ongoing evaluations at The Eastside Story. Document analysis revealed facts that were also supported by the information given in the structured interviews. Combined, these methodologies provide insight into the use of ongoing evaluations within The Eastside Story after school program.

Document Analysis-Program Evaluation

The documents analyzed for this section include an evaluation of the program completed by Dr. Peter A. Witt of Texas A&M University, the Student Pre-Evaluation, the Student Post-Evaluation, the Student Pre-Survey, the Student Post-Survey, the Staff Review Form and the Site Visit Tool. The formal evaluation was completed by Dr. Witt under contract for the Office of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts in 2000. The program assessment is thorough but marks the last official evaluation of the program. Additionally, the program has been in a nearly perpetual state of change; many of the program elements assessed are irrelevant in 2009. The literature calls for after school program documented evaluations on an annual basis.

Informal evaluations are conducted by Eastside Story Staff as evidenced by the student pre and post evaluation sheets, the student pre and post survey sheets and the staff review form. The pre and post evaluations sheets are completed by the site administrators at the beginning and end of the school year.¹⁶ The pre-evaluation tool simply measures the participant in six areas including math, reading/Language arts, science, homework completion, social skills and behavior. The site administrator chooses between three ratings: needs help/improvement, on task or exceeding expectations. The data collected at this stage is paltry and the post-evaluation, while slightly more in-depth, is also weak in the data it elicits. While these evaluations are a positive start, they fail to make strong connections between individual participant progress and program efforts. Participant school grades should be added to the student evaluations to support the data provided by the site administrators regarding participant grade improvement.

The student pre-surveys are completed by the participants at the beginning of the school year and post-surveys at the end of the school year. The student pre-survey poses statements clearly intended to give the Eastside Story staff information about the participants home life with statements such as “my parents talk to me about school or homework,” information about the participants study habits with statements like “I get my homework done on time” and information about social behaviors with statements aimed at determining whether the participant “get(s) along well with others” and “feel(s) comfortable talking to adults” (Eastside Story Student Pre-Survey) The student post survey repeats some of the statements included on the pre-survey and elicits new information from participants regarding their enjoyment of school in general, TV-watching habits and reading habits.

¹⁶ The Eastside Story after school program follows the school year for Austin Independent School District and the terminology ‘school year’ is used to describe the time during which The Eastside Story after school program operates.

The staff evaluations measure the site administrators' behaviors and progress at mid school year and the end of the school year. The form, completed by the program supervisors, ranks each site coordinator in three general areas including general work ethic, communication and program contribution with each category containing several desirable attitudes and actions. While the form ideally tracks staff improvements, there is no space for staff to make comments or provide feedback that can be documented. The site visit¹⁷ tool, completed by a program supervisor, is also used to assess the activities of the site administrators each month. The site visit tool is the most comprehensive measurement tool used as it measures the behaviors of participants, the interactions between participants and site coordinators, the opportunities available to participants, and the overall safety of participants.

While these might offer individualized information on each participant and site administrators, the data collected on the evaluations and surveys is basic in nature. The site visit tool offers comprehensive data but is not analyzed or reported. Without combining the results and utilizing experimental study design methodologies, as prescribed by the literature in Chapter Two, the information fails to yield indicators of total program outcomes. Clearly the student evaluations and student surveys are intended to give a snapshot of each participant's progress. Alone the student evaluations do not constitute an appropriate evaluation of the Eastside Story but they can be an asset in creating a more thorough evaluation. The student evaluations and surveys use some sort of ranking system for most data collected. Although it is not currently done, the formatting of these documents would make operationalizing the data simple and would offer an overview of participant and staff progress.

¹⁷ Site visits are conducted by the program supervisors. Each of the seven program locations is visited on a monthly basis.

Interviews-Program Evaluation

Structured interviews corroborated the lack of formal program evaluations of The Eastside Story Program. Structured Interview questions provided insight into the need for formal evaluations of the program. One question asked whether the program is evaluated on a regular basis to which both interviewees answered no. This question also elicited information about the informal evaluations completed by the staff which includes student evaluations, student surveys and site coordinator evaluations. The data is not collected, analyzed nor reported in any specific way. The information is not reported to the public or to potential partnering organizations/companies. The evaluation protocols currently used at The Eastside Story fail to meet the criteria developed in the ideal type not because the materials are ineffective because the data collected is not analyzed or reported. Both interviewees cited staff shortages as one reason comprehensive program evaluations are not conducted. Furthermore, the interview also revealed that program supervisors are hesitant to load site administrators down with paper work but that more data collected from site administrators would be useful for program evaluations.

The interviews also revealed plans for improvement of the program's evaluation protocols. As The Eastside Story has recently come under the jurisdiction of the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department, there are plans to use the program as a 'pilot program' for the department and thus, formal evaluation material is currently in the developmental stages. This will include the tools already in use (pre and post student evaluations and student surveys), include more data and will utilize the National Institute for Out of School Time's research design for the evaluations. At this time, the program fails to meet the criteria within the practical ideal type. The building blocks for an appropriate annual program evaluation exist and with plans to

further develop measurements tools, the program is moving closer to meeting the criteria developed in the model.

Table 4.1 Results Table - Strategic Planning

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence	Score
Clear Program Goals	Document Analysis /Parent Handbook, Staff Handbook, Eastside Story website, Eastside Story Program Info Packet	Program mission is stated clearly and consistently as a broad statement of purpose. Goals are stated clearly and consistently as more narrow objectives which bolster the mission. All stated goals are related to the mission.	Fails to meet criteria
Ongoing program evaluation	Document Analysis /Evaluation of the Eastside Story After-School Program, Student Pre-Evaluation, Student Post-Evaluation, Student Pre-Survey, Student Post Survey, Staff Review Form and Site Visit Tool	Evaluation material current. Variety of data for utilized for evaluation. Data is combined and analyzed to yield insight into program outcomes. Experimental or quasi-experimental study designs are used for data analysis.	Fails to meet criteria
	Structured Interview	Is the program evaluated on a regular basis? How is this achieved? Who are findings reported to? Is a standard research evaluation research design used?	

Partnership Elements: Collaborating with Parents

A vital component to any after school program is parental involvement and support. Programs can encourage this by engaging parents on many levels. As chapter two asserts, strong relationships with parents benefit program participants in the program, at school and at home. Document analysis and structured interviews measured the level of parental collaboration within

The Eastside Story. The data collected regarding parental collaboration reveals the difficulty the program has had in maintaining strong relationships with all parents despite the efforts made.

Document Analysis-Collaborating with Parents

The document analyzed for this section is 2009-2010 Parent Handbook. The pamphlet-sized, 14-page document provides parents with an overview of the program including the information most vital to parents everyday involvement in the program such as the school year calendar, the program hours of operation and emergency contact numbers. The first page of the handbook contains the “parent responsibilities” (The Eastside Story 2009-2010 Parent Handbook). These are listed clearly and state the expectation that parents: attend an orientation meeting and parent conference meetings, provide student report cards, find alternate arrangements during school holidays, report absences and honor the child pick up time. This page also provides parental responsibilities to promote participant success. The Handbook also encourages parents to “address any concerns with program staff immediately, to avoid serious situations or miscommunications” (The Eastside Story 2009-2010 Parent Handbook). Finally, the handbook provides contact information (direct phone number and email address) for the program supervisors to elicit feedback.

Interviews-Collaborating with Parents

During the structured interviews both program supervisors emphasized the importance of parental collaboration. When asked about their philosophy regarding parental engagement¹⁸ both respondents reported it as a critical component to both student and program success. The current level of involvement for most parents is the minimum required to smoothly maintain the

¹⁸ This is question number 8 on the structured interview. See appendix number 1.

program. Some examples of that minimum level include parents attending orientation, mid-year meetings and participant recognition activities, requirements that parents provide contact information in case of emergencies, and requirements that parents provide school report cards. The interviewees maintain that some parents are more involved than others and some parents donate supplies. Parents are also invited to teach enrichment classes such as cooking and some individuals do so.

The interviews revealed that site coordinators interact with parents on a daily basis and are always available during pick-up time for parent discussion. Additionally, program materials are available in Spanish to ensure that all parents are informed. The Eastside Story staff includes at least one bilingual supervisor. Established in 2008, the Parent Advisory Committee strengthened parental collaboration but was short-lived. The committee met monthly from July 2008 to February 2009. When The Eastside Story was incorporated in the city's Parks and Recreation Department in February of 2009 Parent Advisory Committee was cut formally due to budget constraints. The current level of parental collaboration mostly meets the criteria outlined in the practical ideal type.

Partnership Elements: Collaborating with Community

The degree to which after school programs benefit from their community depends largely upon their ability to communicate effectively with the community. The community includes individuals, public and private business and organizations. Expertise, volunteer hours, and financial and material resources are a few examples of the benefits offered by the community that after school programs can leverage. To assess The Eastside Story's level of community collaboration, document analysis and structured interviews were used.

Document Analysis-Collaborating with Community

The Eastside Story's website was examined for information pertaining to current program partners and how those partnerships are formed. The site does contain a page that lists twelve partners, including non-profit organizations and companies. The page also includes a short description of what each partner provides to the program. Additionally, the page includes a downloadable Power Point presentation entitled Eastside Story's Partners Presentation. This document provides an overview of the objectives and activities of the program but most of the information provided is outdated¹⁹. Similarly, the page on the website containing The Eastside Story partners list is outdated as ascertained by the structured interviews. Another document entitled Russian Delegation Presentation²⁰ provides an updated list of 11 partners.

Because most of the published materials about The Eastside Story's partners are outdated much of the data was garnered through structured interviews. The interviews revealed that the program does not maintain partnerships with any areas universities, something identified as beneficial in the literature. Additionally, the program does not currently utilize individual volunteers and does not operate a volunteer system. One interviewee cited one reason for the lack of individual volunteers, stating that any program volunteers would have to through the Parks and Recreation Department's "broken" volunteer system.

Interviews-Collaborating with Community

¹⁹ The information on The Eastside Story's website was collected in November 2009.

²⁰ The Eastside Story program leaders were asked in October 2009 to present program services to a group of Russian delegates who were visiting youth program in the U.S.

The Eastside Story does partner with non-profit organizations such as LifeWorks²¹ and the Girl Scouts of Central Texas. These organizations mostly lead enrichment classes focusing on social skills at different times throughout the school year. LifeWorks, for example, leads an enrichment class about friendship. Several corporations are also program partners. The Target Corporation was given as an example. Target donates an array of supplies to the Eastside Story from art and school supplies to expensive toys like bicycles, scooters and MP3 players. The art and school supplies boost quality activities while the toys supply the give-aways at holiday carnivals and special ‘fun days’ facilitated by the program. One interview question asked how current partnerships advance the Eastside Story’s mission, to which one interviewee answered that the partners provide high interest activities which increases attendance. Additionally, program supervisors seek enrichment classes and extracurricular activities that advance the program’s mission.

The interviews revealed another hurdle to community collaboration. Expanding the partner base of The Eastside Story is a challenge as the staff person previously dedicated to the program as community liaison, now fills that role for the entire Parks and Recreation Department. The Eastside Story’s community collaboration mostly meets the criteria outlined in Chapter Two.

²¹ LifeWorks is a non-profit organization based in Austin, Texas that serves homeless and runaway youth and also offers counseling services to youth and adults.

Table 4.2 Results Table – Partnerships

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence	Score
Collaboration with Parents	<p>Document Analysis/Parent Handbook</p>	<p>Parental responsibilities/expectations clearly stated. Parents are encouraged to engage with program staff. Means for parental feedback are clearly stated.</p>	<p>Mostly meets criteria</p>
	<p>Structured Interview</p>	<p>What is your philosophy regarding parental engagement? How would you describe the level of involvement with parents? What is the ideal amount of parental involvement?</p>	
Collaboration with Community	<p>Document Analysis/ The Eastside Story Website, Partners Presentation, Russian Delegates Presentation</p>	<p>Current partners listed Protocol for choosing partners expressed</p>	<p>Mostly meets criteria</p>
	<p>Structured Interviews</p>	<p>How does The Eastside Story Partner with other public and private organizations? How are those organizations’ attributes leveraged? How do the partnerships advance The Eastside Story’s mission?</p>	

Staff Elements: Staff Organization

According to the literature, the quality of after school program staff helps determine how effective a program will be. In this section, staff elements center on ideals determined by program leaders. The first element is the configuration of staff responsibilities. A clear delineation should exist between staff duties at different levels.

Document Analysis-Staff Organization

The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook was analyzed to determine if The Eastside Story practices appropriate staff organization. The handbook expresses the organization of all program staff as such: one program manager, two program supervisors, multiple site coordinators (one for

each site) and multiple aides (number determined by enrollment levels). Contact information for the program manager and program supervisors is listed in the handbook. The handbook also includes the responsibilities of the coordinators and aides and to whom those staff report to. The Eastside Story practices optimal staff organization and clarifies the roles of staff directly and clearly thus meeting the criteria set out by the literature.

Staff Elements: Staff Standards

The literature reveals that although credentials like degrees and certifications do carry weight, standards concerning staff attitudes are most significant. Programs that employ staff persons with positive attitudes and a propensity for caring adult-child relationships were identified as effective. Another staff standard included here is the staff to participant ratio. Research shows that low ratios elicit warmer and more supportive interactions between staff and participants. Document analysis and structured interviews were used to evaluate staff standards at The Eastside Story.

Document Analysis-Staff Standards

The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook and the Russian Delegates Presentation were analyzed for this section. The Handbook requires staff to ensure a supportive environment, positive youth interaction and positive youth engagement. These requirements are included in the list of responsibilities, counting them as one of several job duties. Including these requirements in the job duties clarifies that such behaviors are compulsory rather than suggestions. The Russian

Delegates Presentation reports the low²² 1:10 staff to participant ratio maintained by The Eastside Story. The literature indentified low staff-participant ratios as positive.

Interview-Staff Standards

Structured interviews were used to determine the attributes most desirable when hiring Eastside Story staff. One interviewee answered that in addition to six months to two years (depending on the position) experience working with youth, the candidates must enjoy working with children. Additionally, the hiring staff favor candidates who take initiative and who exhibit proactive behavior which demonstrates their ability to be a positive, effective leader.

Background checks are conducted on each new hire, an advisable practice. The Eastside Story exceeds the criteria for legitimate staff standards at after school programs.

Staff Elements: Staff Development and Training

Staff development and training is necessary for staff to stay informed about best practices, learn new activities, and develop innovative teaching methods. In addition to orientation, ongoing training should be practiced by after school program according to the literature. All program staff should be trained on conflict resolution protocols and that information should be made available at any time. The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook along with two interview questions were used to identify staff development and training practices.

Document Analysis-Staff Development and Training

The Staff Handbook only vaguely mentions staff development requirements or opportunities in simply stating that there will be meetings, an “in-service” and monthly site

²² The State of Texas allows a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:22 in classrooms. The determination of a low ratio uses this standard.

visits. The handbook does include procedures for conflict resolution, with references for staff and participant. The Handbook offers suggestions for staff to deal with problem situations and requirements that the staff person document and report serious issues. The document also addresses behavior expectations for participants and consequences for failing to do so, specifying the steps to be taken. The successive steps are related to number of behavior violations. All participants are required to sign a participant code of conduct document. The Eastside Story clearly has a well-established protocol for handling conflict.

Interviews-Staff Development and Training

Information regarding other staff development and training was ascertained through interview questions. Site coordinators are required to attend an annual meeting before each school year begins, during which the staff orientation is created as a group. All staff persons are then required to attend a four-hour staff orientation. Staff are also required to attend two-hour meetings each month. Supervisors utilize the monthly meetings to focus on program standards, program goals and the Youth Program Quality Assessment²³. The Youth Program Quality Assessment is described as an instrument to assess accountability, evaluation and program improvement. The tenets of this tool are communicated to Eastside Story staff during monthly meetings. The Eastside Story practices an acceptable level of staff development and training and thus, meets the criteria.

Staff Elements: Develop Quality Relationships

The literature maintains that one of the most important components of any after school program is the relationships cultivated. As reported by Rhodes (2004), positive staff-participant

²³ The Youth Quality Assessment tool was created and is published by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

interactions not only foster meaningful one-on-one relationships, they also direct the overall social and intellectual climate of the program. Programs must rely on staff at all levels to elicit connections based on communication and trust. The methodologies used to measure The Eastside Story's guidelines for and ability to develop quality relationships include document analysis and structured interviews.

Document Analysis-Develop Quality Relationships

The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook shed light on the program's guidelines for developing and maintaining quality relationships. The job duties for site coordinators and aides include a call to ensure a supportive environment, positive youth interaction and positive youth engagement. Additionally, the document suggests that site coordinators discuss problem behavior with participants if a problem arises. Supervisors are to be notified only if behavior persists or is of a very serious nature. This encourages open relationships with participants by requiring on-site staff to handle problems in a positive manner.

Interviews-Develop Quality Relationships

Structured interviews supplemented the information in the Staff Handbook. As mentioned above, the program employs many AISD teachers and teachers' aides. The strong ties that exist between staff and youth (that already know each other from school) is another benefit of this practice. Program supervisors look especially favorable on return participation to strengthen the ties participants have to staff from year to year. Mandatory monthly training sessions and feedback given after monthly site visits provide staff with techniques to foster positive social environments. Program supervisors promote the principles of the Youth Program Quality Assessment often to site coordinators and aides. Some of the tenets of the Youth

Program Quality Assessment are: evoke a sense of belonging for and a welcoming atmosphere for participants, reframe conflict, and provide encouragement and mentor. The interviews addressed Eastside Story’s mentoring practices. Participants are mentored on a as-needed basis, no formal protocol exists. Staff is made aware that participants should be mentored if the need is demonstrated. The Eastside Story meets the criteria for developing quality relationships.

Table 4.3 Results Table – Staff Elements

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence	Score
Staff Organization	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Clearly defined positions within the staff are expressed. Roles for each position are expressed.	Meets the criteria
Staff Standards	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Russian Delegation Presentation	Staff are required to foster positive youth development.	Exceeds the criteria
	Structured Interview	What attributes are you looking for when hiring staff? What experience and/or education requirements exist? Is a background check required for each new hire?	
Staff Development and Training	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Requirement to attend regular training sessions expressed. Protocols for conflict resolution exist.	Meets the criteria
	Structured Interview	What types of mandatory training exist? Do staff members have an opportunity to participate in conferences, meetings and/or other staff development methods?	
Development of Quality Relationships Between Staff and Participants	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook	Staff regulations which support positive social environments are expressed.	Meets the criteria

	Structured Interview	How are positive staff-participant relationships encouraged? Are staff members provided with techniques to foster positive social environments? How are program participants mentored by the program staff?	
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Program Practices: Flexibility

Because after school programs vary in the types of participants they serve and the goals they have, program flexibility allows appropriate responsiveness to the particular needs of participants. Although a degree of structure is advisable, permitting flexibility helps elicit change within a program that will benefit participants. Flexibility in program practices can be achieved in many ways. One example is allowing staff some adaptability in activities.

According to Rhodes (2004) this encourages spontaneity, empathy, and closer ties between staff and participants. Additionally, overall program flexibility is key when sweeping changes affect a program. As illustrated with The Eastside Story, programs can be moved into different agencies, making adaptability integral to program survival. Document analysis and structured interviews were utilized to evaluate program flexibility at The Eastside Story.

Document Analysis-Flexibility

The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook illustrates flexibility. The site coordinators are given general guidelines for the daily schedule but the handbook also informs the coordinators that they “may adapt the general schedule to [their] needs.” The most recent fundamental change at The Eastside Story was the incorporation of the program the City of Austin’s Parks and Recreation Department after being under the jurisdiction of the Austin Police Department for

several years. The program was moved after an evaluation²⁴ of the police department conducted by MGT of America, Inc. in coordination with the Austin Office of the City Auditor. Page 15 of the document entitled Public Safety, Police Options states that the program failed to advance the department's mission by taking away time and resources.

Interviews-Flexibility

The interviews revealed that The Eastside Story senior staff highly value flexibility as a means of ensuring participant and parent satisfaction with the program. One interviewee stated that program flexibility has increased and that the program manager and program supervisors always encourage coordinator and aide feedback. The interviewee also indicated that the flexibility has permitted such as the creation of the parent advisory board. It was created upon the request of participant parents to strengthen parent participation. The now defunct group was dismantled due to budget cuts at the Parks and Recreation Department. Also, homework assistance is the focus of one hour during the program each day, as requested by parents. Daily procedures and activities are easily adapted according to the interviewee. The document analysis and interviews illustrate that The Eastside Story exceeds the criteria set by the practical ideal type.

Program Practices: Complement School-day Curriculum

One major component of most after school programs is academic improvement which can be maximized by structuring academic activities according to school curriculum. The literature asserts that by complementing school curriculum, after school programs can support learning and directly help improve participants' academic performance. Document analysis and

²⁴ This 580-page report evaluated all aspects of the Austin Police Department; one of which was The Eastside Story.

structured interviews were used to determine the level of school-day complementarity at The Eastside Story.

Document Analysis- Complement School-day Curriculum

The Russian Delegation Presentation offers insight into The Eastside Story's school-day complementarity by illustrating the program's adherence to the Texas Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).²⁵ TEKS is the official curriculum for Texas public schools mandated by the state. The TEKS requirements cover most subjects taught in Texas public schools and thus, provides an expansive base for The Eastside Story to model after. By aligning The Eastside Story's academic and recreational activities to the TEKS design, broad school-day complementarity is achieved. The 2009-2010 Staff Handbook shows participant school report cards to be integral to the program. The Handbook states that report cards are required for each participant every six or nine weeks.

Interviews- Complement School-day Curriculum

Structured interviews were used to garner more information about school-day complementarity and specifically, the use of report cards to support academics. The report cards are used to determine which subjects each participant needs the most help with. Individualized assistance can be more beneficial to each program participant when the staff is concentrating on his/her most important needs. Although program staff do not meet with school staff to discuss curriculum, the interviews revealed that many of The Eastside Story staff are also employed by Austin Independent School District as teachers or teachers' aides. This connection boosts continuity between the program and participants' schools. The Eastside Story mostly meets the criteria within the practical ideal type regarding school-day complementarity.

²⁵ More information about TEKS requirements can be found at the Texas Education Agency's website (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>).

Program Practices: Program Comprehensiveness

To most effectively serve participants, a program must be well-rounded and include an array of activities. It is key to balance the two basic types of activities; academic and recreational. Additionally, the literature revealed that within those two types, the activities should be rich with an emphasis always on positive youth development. The literature warns against activities that seek to simply keep participants occupied and champions activities that challenge youth. Activities should vary to maintain the interest of various participants.

Document Analysis- Program Comprehensiveness

Document analysis was used to gauge The Eastside Story's program comprehensiveness. The Russian Delegation Presentation was used because it illustrates the curriculum with which the program operates. The program curriculum is divided into two parts; 'active life' and academic enrichment. It is important to note here again that all activities in both sections are aligned with TEKS standards. The active life and academic enrichment curricula are in addition to the homework assistance offered each day. Active life focuses on physical activity but also includes nutrition and is also in keeping with national best practices for physical education. Some activities included in the active life curriculum include obstacle courses, cooperative games and relay races. All of the activities listed in the document address another feature of after school activities identified as important in the literature; peer interaction and collaborative learning. The Eastside Story participants are also provided a healthy snack each day which bolsters the nutritional focus of the active life curriculum.

The School-Aged Care Environment Rating Scale is also utilized to develop academic enrichment curriculum at The Eastside Story, as communicated in the Russian Delegation

Presentation document. The book is described as a comprehensive rating scale for school-aged child care activities (Harms, Vinberg-Jacobs, and Romano-White 1996). The book acknowledges that most after school programs include a range of ages and considers this in the activities. In utilizing the construct set out by The School-Aged Care Environment Rating Scale, The Eastside Story addresses comprehensiveness across the seven-year age span amongst its participants. The Russian Delegation document also exhibits the careful organization of Eastside Story activities. Each month the activities center on a chosen theme, such as community service, goal setting and art appreciation. Some of the activities included in the academic enrichment focus include arts and crafts and storytelling. Interviews also conveyed the variation in program activities. One innovative activity mentioned during the interview focused on free trade to inform participants on the importance contentious consumers.

The Eastside Story has effectively leveraged outside expertise by maintaining well-established standards in the field. This coupled with efforts to keep the program interesting and fresh (as ascertained in the structured interviews), ensures that the program is well-rounded and extensive in activities offered. The program clearly exceeds the criteria set in the area of program comprehensiveness.

Table 4.4 Results Table – Program Practices

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence	Score
Flexibility	Document Analysis/ 2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Public Safety Police Operations	Does staff have flexibility in daily operations? Has the program been required to adapt to major change?	Exceeds the criteria
	Structured Interview	Is flexibility valued within the program? Has the program ever been changed in response to feedback from staff, parents or participants?	

Complementarity with School-day Curriculum	Document Analysis/2009-2010 Staff Handbook, Russian Delegation Presentation	Standards exist for program curriculum exist that mirror school-day curriculum. Documentation connects the program to schools (i.e. report cards).	Mostly meets the criteria
	Structured Interview	In what way does the program link to school-day activities? How often do you meet with school staff to discuss curriculum?	
Program Comprehensiveness	Document Analysis/ Russian Delegation Presentation	Examples of program activities are listed. Variation exists in the examples provided.	Exceeds the criteria

Child-centered Location: Facility and Equipment Promote Learning

After school programs should offer a variation of activities which necessitates appropriate facilities and equipment to support those activities. As described in the literature, schools and community centers are ideal locations for after school programs. While The Eastside Story program meets this criteria, direct observation evaluated whether specific learning tools are present at each location. The Eastside Story program locations include: Givens Recreation Center, Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center, Andrews Elementary, Barbara Jordan Elementary, Blanton Elementary, Campbell Elementary and Sanchez Elementary, all located in Austin, Texas.

Direct Observation- Facility and Equipment Promote Learning

The recreation centers (Givens and Parque Zaragoza) are owned by the City of Austin. Both facilities were observed to detect child-centered apparatuses. Both facilities offer a variety of recreational equipment and space. Givens Recreation Center has a tennis court, a baseball field, an indoor gym and a playscape. Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center has two basketball courts, a baseball field, a volleyball court and a playscape. Both also offer ample work space for art and academic activities. Neither recreation center has a computer lab, a component identified as advantageous by the literature.

The AISD website displays virtual tours of campuses within the district. The technology uses a sequence of hyperlinked panoramic photographs to exhibit certain features of school facilities. Each site was observed via virtual tour for playscapes, recreation space and computer labs. Each school contained two of the three components with a majority of the schools containing all three. Table 4.5 presents the child-centered components for each location. The Eastside Story mostly meets the criteria set in the practical ideal type.

Table 4.5 Eastside Story Sites Containing Child-Centered Location Components

	Computer Lab	Playscape	Indoor Gym	Outdoor Sports Recreation Area
Givens Rec. Center		✓	✓	✓
Zaragoza Rec. Center		✓	✓	✓
Andrews Elementary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barbara Jordan Elementary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blanton Elementary	✓	✓		✓
Campbell Elementary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sanchez Elementary		✓	✓	✓



Figure 4.1 Outdoor Playscape at Givens Recreation Center



Figure 4.2 Outdoor Sports Area at Givens Recreation Center



Figure 4.3 Outdoor Playscape at Zaragoza Recreation Center



Figure 4.4 Outdoor Sports Area at Zaragoza Recreation Center



Figure 4.5 Outdoor Playscape at Andrews Elementary School



Figure 4.6 Outdoor Sports Area at Andrews Elementary School



Figure 4.7 Outdoor Playscape at Barbara Jordan Elementary School



Figure 4.8 Outdoor Sports Facilities at Barbara Jordan Elementary School



Figure 4.9 Outdoor Playscape at Blanton Elementary School



Figure 4.10 Outdoor Sports Recreation Facility at Blanton Elementary School



Figure 4.11 Outdoor Playscape at Campbell Elementary School



Figure 4.12 Outdoor Playscape at Sanchez Elementary School



Figure 4.13 Outdoor Sports Area at Sanchez Elementary School

Child-centered Location: Safe Facility

After school programs must ensure the safety of the participants and take that task seriously. Safety standards should be met and always maintained. Programs should operate in an environment suitable for youth. Because all seven locations sites at The Eastside Story are public facilities and thus, regulated by government entities. The elementary schools are regulated by the State of Texas and the recreation centers are regulated by the City of Austin. Document analysis determined the statutory safety regulations set for the facilities. The State of Texas Education Code and the Austin City Code were analyzed to detect sufficient safety requirements.

Document Analysis- Safe Facility

Texas public schools must comply with the safety standards set in the Texas Education Code Title Two. Chapters 37, 38 and 88 of the Title address general health and safety provisions for a wide range of safety concerns. They include but are not limited to immunizations, child

abuse reporting, alcohol and tobacco free zones and fire safety. Because after school programs operate mostly outside of the normal school day, some components such as fire safety and alcohol and tobacco free zones are more important. The Code also mandates that each school have a defibrillator²⁶ in addition to fire and chemical safety equipment. It is important that emergency equipment be available at all times in the classroom, as required by the Texas Education Code. Similarly, the Austin City Code mandates that Austin public facilities follow certain requirements. The Code deals specifically with fire safety and alcohol and tobacco restrictions. The Eastside Story operates in seven public locations; each regulated by the state or city governing entity. Therefore, the program meets the criteria defined in the practical ideal type.

Table 4.6 Results Table – Child-centered Location

Ideal Type Categories	Research Method/Source	Evidence	Score
Facility and Equipment Promote Learning	Direct Observation	Facility includes a variety of age-appropriate instruments for arts and recreation. Sports apparatuses available. Computers available for participants.	Meets the criteria
Safe Facility	Document Analysis/Texas Education Code, Austin City Code	Safety regulations are mandated.	Meets the criteria

²⁶ This mandate is in section 38.017 of the Code.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides results of the case study conducted of The Eastside Story. The research methodology of this case study includes document analysis, structured in interviews and direct observation. The final chapter concludes the research and offers suggestions for improvement of The Eastside Story after school program.

Chapter Five: Recommendations and Conclusion

Chapter Purpose

This chapter concludes the research with a summarization of information covered and makes recommendations for improvement of The Eastside Story. All recommendations are based upon the practical ideal type constructed in Chapter Two. By better meeting the criteria set in the practical ideal type, The Eastside Story is expected to be a more effective and quality program.

Research Summary

After discussing the importance of after school programs and policy history of publicly funded after school programs, the purpose of this project was introduced. The purpose is three-fold. The first purpose is to determine and describe ideal characteristics of a model public sector after school program by examining existing literature. The literature review was used to construct a model public-sector after school program, as seen in Chapter Two. Chapter Three addresses the second purpose of this applied research project; to use the practical ideal components to assess The Eastside Story after school program. Lastly, the third purpose is to provide recommendations for improvement of The Eastside Story program.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improvement are made for any ideal type component in which The Eastside Story was rated at 'mostly meets criteria' or 'fails to meet criteria.' As expressed during the structured interviews, much opportunity waits the program at the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. The program will likely be used a pilot program for other after school

programs in the city benefitting the community but Eastside Story also stands to gain from this opportunity which might bring to the program a larger budget. With more funding, the program could serve more students and improve existing services.

The program earned the lowest ratings in the strategic planning category. It's clear that existing in a near-constant state of change has made overall effective planning a challenge for program administrators. During the initial data gathering stages, several calls were made to the Parks and Recreation Department and no clear indication of who oversees the program could be given. It took several calls and talking with several Department staff persons to ascertain basic information about the program. A lack of familiarity with the program was clear. The program should remain with the Parks and Recreation Department indefinitely, providing a steady foundation to implement strategic plans. A program mission and vision should be carefully designed and included in all published materials. The wording of the mission and vision should be consistent throughout all program materials. Program goals that bolster the mission should be established each year and published as deemed appropriate. Updating the program's website should be a simple task. With the web becoming American's most vital information source, the updates it's important that it be completed immediately.

A comprehensive program evaluation should be implemented and utilized each year. The evaluation should measure an array of program components and use an experimental design to effectively measure program outcomes. Evaluation findings are most effectively reported with quantitative data which can be communicated to prospective partners and other program funders.

Although the program fared better within the partnership elements category, improvements are necessary. To boost collaboration with parent, it is advisable to reinstate the

parent advisory committee. Establishing the group was a positive step and program supervisors and parents valued the work accomplished. To strengthen collaboration with Austin's community, The Eastside Story can implement several initiatives. Program administrators should seek a partnership with The University of Texas at Austin. The program was originally established in cooperation with the University and thus, a history between the entities exists. There are several institutions of higher education in the Austin area that could also be utilized for a similar partnership. It is advisable to initiate a volunteer program for The Eastside Story to leverage the time and expertise of Central Texas residents. Additionally, hiring a community liaison solely dedicated to the program is recommended. By garnering positive interaction between the program and local non-profit organizations and businesses, this individual would further integrate The Eastside Story into the local community and open doors for financial assistance.

Program practices at The Eastside Story were shown to be effective and positive. Further cooperation with AISD teachers and school staff will bolster program complementarity with school-day curriculum. Program staff should meet with school staff at least once each school year to ensure alignment in curriculum. Program staff contact information should also be made available at schools to encourage interaction.

Lastly, computers should be made available to all program participants. Interviews and direct observation illustrated the disparity between program sites in this regard. Computers are not only an important component to modern learning but also serve as a tool for innovative activities. Table 5.1 lists the suggested improvements according to the practical ideal type categories.

Table 5.1 – List of Recommendations for The Eastside Story

Strategic Planning	Program should remain under the jurisdiction of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.
	Create a program mission statement and use the statement consistently in all program materials.
	Create program goals that support the mission each year.
	Update Eastside Story website immediately.
	Implement a comprehensive program evaluation to be completed each year using an experimental design.
Partnership Elements	Publish program mission, goals, and evaluation findings in appropriate places.
	Reinstate the Eastside Story Parent Advisory Committee.
	Seek a partnership with The University of Texas at Austin or another local institution of higher education.
	Initiate an effective Eastside Story volunteer program.
	Reinstate the Community Liaison position dedicated specifically to the program.
Program Practices	Interact with AISD teachers and administrators at least once each school year.
	Make Eastside Story staff's contact information readily available at AISD schools.
Child-centered Location/Facilities	Make computers available at all program host sites.

Based upon document analysis, structured interviews and direct observation, The Eastside Story is clearly a cherished program in East Austin. Although in need of improvement, the program has been developed and cultivated with loving care for fifteen years. There is promise on the horizon for this under-funded program with a big heart. By implementing the recommendations suggested in this research, The Eastside Story can become a model for after school programming.

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Appendix A

Structured Interview Questions

1. What is the Eastside Story mission?
2. Is the wording of the mission consistent across published materials?
3. How are goals created and who are they reported to?
4. Is the program evaluated on a regular basis?
5. How is this achieved?
6. Who are findings reported to?
7. Is a standard research evaluation research design used?
8. What is your philosophy regarding parental engagement?
9. How would you describe the level of involvement with parents?
10. What is the ideal amount of parental involvement?
11. How does The Eastside Story Partner with other public and private organizations?
12. How are those organizations' attributes leveraged?
13. How do the partnerships advance The Eastside Story's mission?
14. Is Eastside story staff organized to perform different duties?
15. What attributes are you looking for when hiring staff?
16. What experience and/or education requirements exist?
17. Is a background check required for each new hire?
18. What types of mandatory training exist?
19. Do staff members have an opportunity to participate in conferences, meetings and/or other staff development methods?
20. How are positive staff-participant relationships encouraged?
21. Are staff members provided with techniques to foster positive social environments?
22. How are program participants mentored by the program staff?
23. Is flexibility valued in daily operations?
24. Has program ever been changed in response to feedback from staff, parents or participants?
25. In what way does the program link to school-day activities?
26. How often do you meet with school staff to discuss curriculum?
27. What measures are taken to ensure that the Eastside Story offers comprehensive activities?
28. How do the program locations promote learning for the participants?
29. Is there a requirement that allocations provide access to computers or other learning tools?

Appendix B

Texas State University Institutional Review Board Exception Request Approval



Exemption Request EXP2009O302 - Approval

Monday, October 19, 2009 4:03 PM

From:

"OSP IRB" <ospirb@txstate.edu>

To:

jenlin00@yahoo.com

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. This email message is generated by the IRB online application program. Based on the information in IRB Exemption Request EXP2009O302 which you submitted on 10/14/09 16:11:42, your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

If you have questions, please submit an IRB Inquiry form:

http://www.txstate.edu/research/irb/irb_inquiry.htmlComments:No comments.

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