AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD: REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN AGES 6 – 12 IN TORONTO

**A Report for the
City of Toronto –
Children's Services Division and
Parks, Forestry and Recreation**

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Executive Summary

The City of Toronto's Vision for Children (the Vision) describes a commitment to provide children with experiences that promote their chances of developing into healthy, well-adjusted and productive adults. Part of the Vision includes a Middle Childhood Strategy. Children 6 to 12 years of age are considered to be in "middle childhood". These years are considered to be critical in the lives of children. It is at this age when children develop the important cognitive and social skills which help them make the transition from early years into adolescence, and where important developmental milestones occur (City of Toronto Middle Child Strategy, 2009).

Part of the Middle Childhood Strategy relates to the after-school needs of children in the 6 to 12 age range. This is based on the growing recognition that the after-school hours (generally considered to be from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.) are a critical time in terms of child development. Due to increased research and stakeholder engagement over the last decade, those working with children and youth have arrived at the conclusion that after-school time has a profound impact on the physical, social, emotional and academic development of children and youth (Clyne, 2010; Miller, 2003). This has resulted in a number of local, provincial and national groups that have a vested interest in high-quality after-school programming in Toronto and Ontario. These groups include: the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) in Toronto, the Ontario After-School Collaborative and the Canadian Active After-School Partnership (CAASP). Many such groups work both independently and together to engage in research, consultation, awareness-raising and system planning activities. In Toronto itself, the landscape for after-school programming is highly complex. There are multiple service providers, funders and general stakeholders that all have a vested interest in the field. Toronto has a number of different groups that provide after-school programs to children ages 6 to 12. These groups include: the City of Toronto, multi-service community-based agencies, child and youth-serving agencies, licensed and unlicensed childcare centres, licensed home child care providers, schools, religious institutions, cultural centres/groups and many informal groups. These groups have widely varying levels of resources to do their work, and are licensed, accredited and regulated through varying bodies at the local and provincial level. Funding comes from multiple sources, These sources are far ranging and are both local and provincial. They include but are not limited to: the City of Toronto, United Way Toronto (UWT), Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Child and Youth Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services. There are also some corporations that have started to express interest in the after-school needs of children (e.g. Sears Canada recently funded Boys and Girl Clubs throughout Canada to offer programming to children after-school). However, despite a relative diversity of funders, most stakeholders describe the after-school field as chronically under-resourced and struggling for sustainability.

Programming for after-school in Toronto tends to fall into 4 broad categories: academic content/homework help; enrichment activities; physical activities; religious and/or cultural content. Many programs offer a combination of these activities depending on their mandate – for example, a common program plan is to offer a snack, followed by homework help and then end with some sort of physical or recreational activity. However, programming can be highly dependent on available space and resources.

This landscape must be considered in light of significant reforms occurring in the way children receive services in Ontario. The government of Ontario has implemented full-day early learning for 4 and 5-year olds, to be rolled out over five years. The report driving that decision, "With Our Best Future in Mind"

(Pascal, 2009), also recommends that school boards provide a fee-based extended day and summer programming for children up to age 12 when requested by a minimum of 15 parents, as a continuation of the learning environment. However, the province has recently passed legislation that will allow school boards to contract out before- and after-school care, potentially threatening the "seamlessness" of the program.

This environment has prompted the City's Children's Services Division to consider how it can look more strategically at the way it connects the various systems it is part of to create more holistic responses to issues facing children and families. They have begun the development of an exciting model that weaves networks in such a way as to integrate system planning and policy development. This model will better support a comprehensive system of services for children and families. The model includes an Early Learning and Care table that will concern itself with issues of middle childhood. This network weaving exercise is being developed in relationship to the City's other strategic and planning commitments, including the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND FOCUS

In 2009, MCMC developed an inventory of full-week after-school programs for children ages 6 to 12 in Toronto in order to develop a greater understanding of the programming available in 2009.

One of the most striking conclusions of the report was that there were a total of 21 organizations that operated 534 full-week after-school programs (Monday through Friday) for children aged 6 to 12 in Toronto, but these 534 full-week programs accommodated a total of 18,205 of Toronto's 192,525 middle years children, which was only 9.5%[1] of this group. This begged the question – what is happening with the other roughly 91 percent of Toronto's middle childhood children in terms of their after-school programming?

The inventory recommended that existing programming be supported, that a Middle Childhood Framework that includes policy recommendations be supported, that a comprehensive integrated strategy with policy and funding that focuses on the complete lifespan of the child be developed. Further, the inventory report urged that all middle childhood children have access to high quality after-school programs regardless of where they live. Two final recommendations were to build on current research to develop a comprehensive and detailed database of Toronto's after-school programs for middle years children and that further research be conducted to identify the after-school situations and needs of Toronto's 6 to 12 year olds, who are not in a full week after-school program in order to answer the questions: "Where are they?", "Who are they with?", "What are they doing?"[2]

This report begins to explore those questions by building on existing knowledge of after-school programs for middle children in Toronto. The three key activities for the project are:

1.   A needs assessment identifying the after school program and service needs of families with children aged 6 to 12 years who are not in an after-school program.

2.   An environmental scan that is inclusive and builds on existing inventories such as the Middle Childhood Matters Inventory, and demonstrates current distribution and identifies service gaps of after-school programs in Toronto.

3.   A database design, ensuring that the database design can align with existing internal City of Toronto division systems (i.e., Children Services – CSIS and Parks, Forestry and Recreation)

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1   Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children 6-12 years in Toronto. Andre Lyn. January 2009. Produced by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto in Partnership with Middle Childhood Matters Toronto.

2   ibid

and is easily expandable and sustainable for future use. As well, develop accompanying terms of use of the database that aligns with the City policy currently in place and develop criteria for service inclusion in the database that aligns with the Middle Childhood Strategy.

The project was focused on children who were 6 to 12 years old, and whose parents were living in Toronto. It was also constrained to after-school programming, with no limits placed on the types and nature of after-school programs that were included (school-based, community-based, full-week, multiple days per week, etc). The research included a number of methodologies to gather data for the needs assessment, the environmental scan and the database design, in order to have a greater strength of conclusions. Methodologies include a statistical analysis of available data, an electronic survey of parents, focus groups with mainly immigrant parents, one-on-one telephone interviews with after-school personnel, one-on-one telephone interviews with researchers and policy experts and a literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A high-level review of the key literature regarding programming for middle childhood children was conducted to inform the project. The following summary of key findings provides useful context to support a priority and decision-making process as the City considers the Next Steps outlined in this report.

> "Quality after-school programs provide engaging learning activities in a safe and supportive environment. These programs can meet students' needs for personal attention from adults, inclusion in positive peer groups, and enjoyable experiential activities that build self-esteem."
>
> (Blenda J. Wilson as cited in Miller, After-school Programs and Educational Success, 2003, p.2)

BEST PRACTICES

The literature reveals the following best practices and quality considerations when it comes to planning and sustaining programming in the after-school period for children ages 6 to 12:

1. **Appropriate staffing is crucial to successful program planning and delivery.**

   a. Programs need to hire caring and committed staff.

   b. Programs must provide appropriate compensation to staff.

   c. Staff need to be well trained and have ongoing professional development support.

   d. Managers and their role are also important; there is a clear link between staff achievement and management practices.

   e. Shared minimum or required staff qualifications and standards for hiring staff needs to be developed.

2. **After-school activities should be planned and purposeful.**

   a. Programs should have clear goals that create intention about outcomes.

   b. Activities must be sequential, focused and explicit (which can improve school performance).

   c. Activities should be clearly connected to goals of program.

   d. Programs should be relevant to children's interest; engage children in development of programming by getting their feedback and ideas.

   e. Elements of learning and play can be successfully combined both in group and one-on-one settings.

   f. It is important to promote informal peer engagement.

   g. After-school programs should complement, rather than replicate, in-school learning by offering more depth on specific topics and skills and by offering children options to pursue individual interests.

3. **Programs need to place priority on being affordable and accessible in order to have the best reach and outcomes.**

   a. Addressing high costs includes offering programs:

   - At rates that are reasonable.

   - That are tied to subsidy opportunities for families who are living on lower incomes.

   - That provide incentives for attendance such as stipends, school credit, food, etc.

   b. Beyond cost, accessibility is also viewed from a number of different lenses in the literature and can mean offering programs:

   - In languages other than English.

   - At sites where parents can easily reach (i.e. schools or places where there can be easy transport).

   - At sites that are accessible to children with disabilities.

   - At times that are convenient for families (usually meaning beyond 6:00 p.m., especially for shift workers or parents working in more than one job).

   - That are culturally inclusive and relevant.

   - From staff who share and/or deeply understand the children's cultural and/or racial backgrounds and experiences.

4. **The highest quality programs engage families as an integral part of their approach to planning and delivery.**

   Family engagement typically falls into one of three categories:

   a. Support of children's learning – this relates to ways parents can directly support the child in their development and academic performance.

   b. Support of family itself – this means providing families with needed supports for their quality of life in order to enhance their ability to participate in programming.

   c. General support for programming – this means getting families to directly support programming.

5. **Partnership and collaboration are the keys to moving after-school programming forward.**

   a. Multiple stakeholders must support after-school programs, and municipalities are the natural stakeholder to lead the charge.

   b. Strong genuine partnerships that encourage shared ownership of talents, resources, and knowledge result in improved outcomes for children.

   c. The intentional integration of both school and non-school supports is the best way to give children what they need to succeed

   d. A strong after-school network enables communities to enhance the capacity of individual program and service providers, and thus serve more children.

   e. Building consensus among key stakeholders is the key challenge. Time must be provided for collaborators to establish and maintain relationships of mutual respect and understanding.

   f. School-community partnerships are a key starting place. The ultimate goal is that schools and community groups vested in middle childhood work in conjunction with one another to create an expanded learning system with a shared vision, mission, and outcomes.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

There are some important gaps in the literature that must be noted. The literature specific to 6 to 12 year olds and after-school programming is somewhat limited. Many studies go outside the 6 to 12 age range, especially studying the older age range (i.e. children up to age 16 or 18). Further, many studies also explore "out-of-time" programs (i.e. before-school, after-school, weekends and summer breaks) as opposed to just after-school time. More research is available on the needs of older middle-childhood (i.e. ages 9 to 12) as opposed to early middle-childhood (i.e. ages 6 to 8).

While there is remarkable consensus among researchers that after-school programming is important, meets critical developmental needs and that children's lives are enhanced by it, we lack a clear understanding of the critical elements of programming that create this impact. More longitudinal studies that engage families, schools, and communities will help to answer questions related to such areas as differential impact of programs on children, required duration for programs opt be effective and how to best tailor programming for certain groups.

Another gap is the lack of literature on how to meaningfully evaluate after-school programs. The literature is clear that programs must be evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis. While outcomes (or desired outcomes) are more developed, strategies to actually measure those outcomes are lacking. This isn't surprising, given that the sector lacks standardized ways of implementing activities. Flexible, standardized tools that are asset-based and support programs to measure changes in children as they happen over time are needed. Monitoring program activities and collecting data on what is working in programming and what isn't seems a realistic place to start to measure impact of any program ((Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008, HFRP, 2006). This will help inform a shared understanding about the process used to plan and deliver after-school programming, which can eventually lead to better measurement of the quality of programs. Funders also have a role to play here, by exploring what type of accountability and monitoring supports continuous improvement and by leading the development of quality improvement standards for the sector.

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SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

In the electronic survey, parents were asked about:

- The worries that they have about their children.
- Where their children spend time after school.
- What activities their children do after school.
- How satisfied they are with what their children do after school.
- The ease of finding after-school programs that satisfy different criteria.
- Choices for after-school programs.
- Hours during which care is needed.
- The factors that affect choices for after-school programs.

In the focus groups parents were asked about:

- Parenting in Toronto.
- Current after-school arrangements.
- Pros and cons of the current arrangements.
- Preferred after-school arrangements.
- Preferred way to find out about after-school programming, and;
- Accessibility of programming.

Key Survey and Focus Group Findings

- Children of parents who were born in Canada were more likely than children of immigrant parents to be in after-school programs.
- The higher the parent's household income, the more likely that their children were in after-school programs.
- Immigrant parents tended to have lower incomes and for them accessibility was a much larger issue than for other parents in the survey.
- Children in a single parent home were more likely than those in a two-parent home to be in an after-school program.
- Children of full-time employed parents were more likely than children of parents who were not full-time employed to attend after-school programs.
- There is a clear distinction between programming for children between 6 and 9 years of age and that for children between 10 and 12 years of age; so much so that the 10 to 12 year old children are much less likely to access programming as compared to the younger children.
- Approximately 45.5 percent of parents said that their children were cared for by staff at an after-school program either in the community (23.2%) or in their school (22.3%). Almost two in five (37.3%) said that they themselves, or the other parent or guardian, took care of their children after-school. Sixteen percent (16.3%) said that a paid babysitter cared for their child and 15 percent (14.9%) said that their children were with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin or other relative. About eight percent (7.7%) said that their children were with a sibling after-school and before their parents came home and seven percent said that their children were with a friend or neighbour in this time period. Less than two percent mentioned staff at the public library (1.1%), someone at their place of worship (0.3%) or another person (3.3%).

- Most parents "cobbled together" a wide range of programs that together crafted an after-school plan for their children; this included parents both accessing after-school programs and having their children at home after-school for a certain number of days per week. Programs were run by local schools, community agencies (e.g. YMCA, St. Christopher House), the City of Toronto, private companies (e.g. tutoring organizations like Kumon Learning Centres) and religious groups.

- Overall parents said that they were satisfied with their after-school programs; however, they had a difficult time finding programs that included transport to the program from the child's school, that were affordable, that were conveniently located, where they could trust the staff and that had interesting activities.

- When accessing programs, parents considered the following three key variables – cost, accessibility of programs (i.e. times and dates and open spots) and appropriate/desired content.

- Immigrant parents were more likely than Canadian-born parents to say that after-school programs were not accessible in terms of language or cultural content.

- A majority of parents would change their current after-school care situation for their children.

- Parents want to have a better understanding of what their children do in their after-school programs, preferring to primarily see a mix of homework help and physical activity.

- Parents would like to have their children in after-school programs, rather than at home.

- Parents want to see programs run out of schools, with accessible costs, adult supervision, flexible hours (until at least 6:00 pm) and with appropriate cultural and language accommodation.

Key After School Personnel Interview Findings

In total, 33 interviews with after-school personnel were conducted. Key findings include:

- Almost every service provider stated that his or her programs are successful. Most had primarily anecdotal evidence to support this claim.

- All interviewees talked at length about how community demographics and the rich diversity in Toronto impact after-school programming, including operations, content and who attends. While an opportunity, providing programming for children coming from diverse communities was also seen as a challenge, especially in terms of language, communicating with parents about program policies, admission criteria, providing culturally relevant and respectful activities and so on.

- Interviewees consistently stated that immigrant families experience more financial barriers to attending programs, and often have to be on the waiting list to qualify for a subsidy from the City of Toronto before their child can participate.

- Even with secured space, many interviewees said that what they had was simply not adequate (i.e. too small, not enough outdoor space, not having it consistently).

- For those service providers that are not fully operating child care centres with ECE's, interviewees stated that staffing their after-school program was a challenge. This was mainly because finding high quality people to come to work for the short period of time that was required was difficult (i.e. ~ 2:30 – 6:00 p.m.) and impacted retention rates.

- In Toronto, after-school programs are provided by adults or by youth or by a combination of both. Many interviewees stated that there are both benefits and challenges with different approaches, and each has its own unique issues.

- Most service providers and several experts feel there is a need for more subsidies to be available for after-school programming in Toronto. Many service providers also feel that the system through which subsidies are allocated may need to be examined. In addition, more operational funding was seen by most interviewees and many experts to be urgently needed to run quality programs and to meet the needs of all families.

- Some interviewees perceive that the amount of subsidy being received has been lowered for some service providers that only provide after-school programs (not before-school and lunch hour programs). Interviewees stated concern that the perceived reduction has created a challenge to meet the needs of children.

- Many interviewees felt that community groups being able to connect and partner with local schools is a big part of being successful in after-school programming. They felt that a stronger relationship with the schools results in a continuum of supports for children. The school-community relationship was seen to begin with having the administration of individual schools on side.

- Both after-school personnel and policy experts talked about the need for better collaboration between the main stakeholders in after-school programs in Toronto. The City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), community agencies and child care centres all came up consistently as needing to come together and meaningfully explore how to work together. Interviewees stated that they felt that the City has excellent resources to offer service providers for training and program development, and are in the best position to lead dialogue at the sectoral level and to support consultations to determine what collaboration should best look like.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES ON THE DRIVERS FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING IN TORONTO

In order to determine the drivers for parents to use after-school programming in Toronto, a stepwise logistic regression[3] was performed on the survey data. Relevant demographic and attitudinal variables, based on the key informant interviews and the literature, were included in the regression.

Various predictor variables were taken into account in the after-school programming space projections that were calculated. According to these, in the next five years, there is a need for 6,962 spaces in the North quadrant, for 8,367 spaces in the South quadrant, 4,879 spaces in the East quadrant and 6,777 spaces in the West quadrant.

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3   Regression is a statistical procedure which is used to predict the values of a given variable, (the dependent variable) based on the values of one or more other variables (independent variables). The result of a regression is usually an equation (or model) which summarizes the relationship between the dependent and independent variable(s) and details how well the independent variables predict the dependant variable.

One type of regression, stepwise regression is used in an exploratory phase of research. Exploratory testing makes no assumptions regarding the relationships between the variables, so this regression technique is used to discover which relationships exist. In this regression procedures, the variables that could be predictors of the outcome variable, in this case, whether children are in after-school programming or not, are added on different "steps" under the presumption that each of these accounts for a certain amount of the relationship between the independent and dependant variables.

When the final model is produced, one looks to see how large the Nagelkerke R^2 is. This statistic provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model. As well, there is a reference to how often the final model with the variables that have been selected, is able to predict the outcome.

Only variables with significant Beta-weights are included in the final model. They are used to determine the nature of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables for example, either living with extended family makes it more or less likely that the child will be in after-school programming.

NEXT STEPS

The following suggested next steps come directly from the analysis of the data gathered for the Middle Childhood project. They have been developed with the recognition that the City of Toronto, as a complex organization that has vested interests at the local, provincial and national level, must be strategic and thoughtful about the manner in which it invests its resources for children ages 6 to 12. These next steps are intended to complement and support the work around the City of Toronto's commitment to middle childhood.

It is important to note that these next steps intersect and can address more than one gap or need in after-school programming. While they are presented as a list, it is strongly encouraged that they be taken together to inform the Middle Childhood Strategy currently in development by the City of Toronto.

A. Local Service Coordination And Planning

This research shows that there is a lack of available after-school spaces in Toronto, and that parents and planners alike in Toronto do not have information on where after-school spaces in Toronto are relative to available funding and local community needs.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

A1. Lead a Toronto-wide after-school program mapping process, where programs, available spaces, and service priorities can be determined. Conduct this in conjunction with data already available through tools such as the Child Finder tool and Well Being Toronto.

A2. Gather detailed utilization data on after-school programming.

A3. Use mapping and utilization data (along with other data found in this report) to inform dialogue at a sectoral level about service gaps and inequities in program distribution. These dialogues should eventually inform the Middle Childhood Strategy.

A4. Direct funding to increased spaces in after-school programs throughout the City based on need. Use the data outlined above, as well as projection data in this report as the foundational tools for decision-making and planning.

A5. Look to models such as Toronto First Duty to explore how the services in Toronto can be coordinated to produce a more seamless approach relative to integration of staffing, resources, administration, and facilities such that meaningful efficiencies and streamlining of resources can be achieved.

B. Accessibility of Programs

The existence of barriers to accessibility of after-school programs in Toronto for families is the most significant finding of the data collected for this project. While many barriers were raised (e.g. locations of programs, cultural and language barriers), cost and transportation to and from programs were considered most pressing. Issues of accessibility are multiplied for immigrant families.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

B1. Increase the number of subsidized spaces available for after-school programming in Toronto based on mapping, utilization, and projection data, as well as City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles and Well Being Toronto.

B2. Explore alternative funding models in conjunction with accurate and up-to-date utilization data; consider where the fewest spaces and greatest need for programs exist, taking into account the economic, living, working and transportation conditions of families.

B3. Streamline registration processes for programs and increase availability of most popular recreation programs in the after-school period (e.g. swimming).

B4. Pilot an initiative for after-school programs in local communities to share costs and plans for transportation to and from programs; evaluate and use results for longer-term planning.

C. Programming Content

The data show that most parents want a balance between recreational or "enrichment" activities and academic support as part of after-school programming. Parents, particularly immigrant parents, also want programming that meets their language and cultural needs. While many programs in Toronto do engage families as part of their programming, the literature shows that more work to meaningfully engage families needs to be done. Within all of this, a one-size-fits-all approach to program content will not work, even within the same family.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

C1. Support after-school programs in Toronto to conduct program evaluations to determine parental satisfaction and program impact on children and families ; support can be provided through the provision of evaluation capacity building resources (e.g. training, tools) or through funding program evaluation. Engage other capacity building organizations such as United Way Toronto, in collaborative efforts to build the competence of the sector in program evaluation, thereby contributing to the body of evidence-based practice in this area.

C2. Support research in Toronto to determine best practices for after-school programs. This includes supporting new and innovative after-school models that, if successful, could be funded and adopted by more organizations. Potential program pilots include studying outcomes related to recreation-only, academic-only and mixed programs and exploring programming needs of marginalized children.

C3. Fund innovative collaboration pilots in after-school programming, especially school-community collaborations that increase access for families and measure longitudinal changes in children's academic performance and skills development. Such pilots can eventually contribute to a business case and framework for integrated responsibility in after-school programming.

C4. Work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) to assist them to engage families (e.g. provide funding for awareness and engagement, make family engagement a part of funding criteria, support the development of outreach tools).

C5. As part of the Middle Childhood Strategy, create a collaborative, integrated service delivery model for after-school programming in Toronto; the model can include driving values and principles for programming, key program strategies and higher level outcomes. This model should be developed with full participation of all stakeholders with a vested interest in after-school programming for children ages 6 to 12 in Toronto. This also includes working with the Province of Ontario to develop quality standards and key indicators that could ultimate form the basis for licensing or accreditation.

D. Public Awareness-Raising

"[After-school care for middle childhood kids is] not even a front page issue, not even a back page issue." - Policy expert

Experts state that there is a need for a public-relations campaign on the after-school needs of children in middle childhood and on the value of after-school programming.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

D1. Work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) to develop and implement a public awareness raising campaign on after-school programming, including what it is and why it is important. This kind of campaign must be multi-sectoral to be effective. The City, community service agencies, schools, childcare centres and other community groups (e.g. religious groups) need to take part. Shared key messages should be determined based on data coming from this project and from the literature.

E. Research/Knowledge Exchange

While the literature has made important gains in our understanding of after-school programming, there is still more to be done. Toronto is an important setting for further research in Canada. Research should be pursued in partnership with local schools, various City divisions (e.g. Toronto Public Health), community agencies, and other non-profit organizations. Research on after-school programming and policy should also be widely disseminated in Toronto and beyond, in order to ensure that we have a place in this exciting knowledge exchange community.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

E1. Work with the MCMC and key stakeholders such as the Atkinson Foundation to conduct research that particularly resonates with the needs of Toronto communities.

E2. Create and coordinate an information-sharing hub for program providers to improve access to after-school program resources, tools, and knowledge exchange opportunities (e.g. conferences).

E3. Create a Middle Childhood Knowledge Translation position at the City of Toronto in the Children's Services Division that will be responsible for coordinating the sharing of information on best practices, lessons learned, and innovations.

F. Development of Staff Standards And Staff Development/Training

The literature and interviewees indicate that there is a need for high-quality staff and common standards for staff hiring and training to guide the after-school field, similar to what has evolved for the early years sector.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

> F1. Work with the MCMC, policymakers, researchers and provincial groups/ministries to develop standards regarding staff qualifications and certification for the after-school field.

> F2. Work with the MCMC, policymakers, researchers and provincial groups/ministries to develop staff training resources for after-school program personnel (including training manuals, toolkits, and resources).

> F3. Offer ongoing staff development training and resources (e.g. on serving diverse communities, gender-sensitive programming, supervision of program staff, etc.)

> F4. Provide Train the Trainer sessions to after-school managers and leaders in order to support the standardization of staffing quality; consider making such training mandatory for City-funded programs.

> F5. Engage in dialogue with employers and funders to establish fair and equitable salary scales for staff in after-school programs, based on required training and skills as well as the type of programming being provided.

G. School-Community Collaboration

In accordance with the literature, all the different stakeholders engaged for this review (parents, community groups, after-school program providers, school representatives, and experts) stated that schools and the community must find ways to collaborate and work more effectively together to provide better after-school programs for middle childhood children in Toronto. This, beyond the challenge for parents of negotiating access barriers, was the strongest message from the data. Collaboration was seen to be needed in numerous areas, including use of space and equipment, negotiation of legislated requirements for programs, determination of program content, continuity of curriculum, etc. Out of all of these, the greatest challenge for after-school programmers was finding affordable, accessible, and appropriate space. Perhaps in response to these challenges, there is also broad support for the development of community hubs, with some models focused on the school as the hub and others focused on community-based organizations. Furthermore, experts suggested that having hubs in communities is not an onerous task and would definitely result in cost savings and service streamlining.

The Middle Childhood Strategy has, as one of its key areas of action, the development of partnership opportunities, making the City of Toronto a natural choice to provide leadership by engaging partners from within the City, schools and the broader community.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

> G1. Participate in solutions-building at the local level to address space and equipment issues in the after-school programming arena. This could include sharing facilities and resources between schools and community groups to reduce redundancy and costs and brokering joint community-school initiatives and facility-use agreements.

> G2. Support the provincial government to encourage all relevant ministries to work together to engage in inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral planning, including allocating funding to support school-community collaborations and providing systemic infrastructure

support such as amending board policies to allow shared responsibility for space, creating technological support for joint data collection and sharing and providing capital support to renovate existing schools to facilitate community usage.

G3. Promote dialogue between schools and community groups to participate together in the development of the Middle Childhood Framework for Toronto, including developing shared outcome measures and benchmarks, sharing aggregate data at the local level, and supporting research and the dissemination of best practices.

G4. Support research into the development of criteria for determining appropriate school-community collaborations.

H. Systemic Approach To Planning, Policy And Programs

Repeatedly in this project, the need for a broader, provincial response to after-school programming in Toronto and Ontario arose. It was raised in relation to almost all aspects of after-school work including programming, costs, staffing standards, quality improvement, licensing, and funding. This report offers additional information to the City of Toronto to continue to participate in the process of developing a provincial strategy for the critical after-school hours in Ontario.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

H1. Enhance awareness of after-school programming among key stakeholders. Along with the MCMC, use this report to proactively raise awareness of the importance of after-school programming with the following groups:

- Political leaders at the municipal, provincial and federal level.

- All four Toronto-based school boards.

- Funders (community-based and government).

- Relevant community leaders.

Awareness-raising can come in the form of roundtables or other forums to discuss the findings and recommendations of this report. Such forums can inform the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy, as well as help lay the foundation for a Provincial After-School Strategy. Key messages include the potential of after-school programming to improve the lives of children and families, the need to address service gaps and access issues in after-school programming, and the need for collaboration at a program and policy level (including bringing various groups together to explore the issues, plan and create a community of practice).

H2. Work with provincial groups to advocate for a Provincial After-School Strategy that outlines:

- A province-wide vision for how to meet the after-school needs of middle childhood children that complements and expands on the directions outlined in "With Our Best Future in Mind" (Pascal, 2009)

- Shared definitions and guiding principles and values.

- A provincially coordinated training and certification program for after-school workers and managers.

- Desired child, community and system outcomes, benchmarks and measurement tools based on a strong theory of change.

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- Minimum quality assurance standards and indicators of quality for all after-school providers (including the development of tools and standards for program quality that consider both developmental differences in how instruments will be implemented for middle school programs as well as how the local context can be incorporated in their usage. Consider if it is possible to adapt Toronto Operating Criteria as part of this process, or other tools such as the University of North Carolina FPG Child Development Institute School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, (SACERS), designed to assess group-care programs for children of school age, 5 to 12, or the California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool)[4]. Long-term, this step could potentially lead to accreditation or licensing for programs.

- Collaboration on streamlining legislative, accreditation and regulatory process for after-school providers

- Research and knowledge exchange plans

- Policy expectations and standards for inter-sectoral collaboration and that use innovative models such as network weaving; collaboration can include the shared use of space, equipment, staffing and other resources that are consistent with the best interests of families and communities. Collaboration should be considered between all stakeholders in the field, including community agencies, school, the City, faith-based groups, private providers and others.

The work should be guided by a multi-sectoral committee involving provincial umbrella groups (e.g. Parks and Recreation Ontario), provincial child and youth service organizations, and ministries mandated to oversee children, recreation, education, health, and social needs. The work and participation of existing provincial and local groups should also play a key role in the process (e.g. Ontario After-School Collaborative, current speech and language pilots being funded provincially on collaboration, Atkinson Foundation). The Committee's work can be supported by this report, as well as other relevant mapping, utilization data, and best practices research at local and provincial levels.[5]

H3. Advocate for the sustainability of an accessible quality after-school system by encouraging the provincial government to provide ongoing core funding and subsidies to support a network of community-based programming for children ages 6 to 12. This should include encouraging provincial ministries to work with local funders to explore how they can integrate their funding priorities, eligibility, and outcome requirements so as to streamline the development and implementation of programming at the front-lines, and to reduce funding administrative and accountability burden on after-school providers.

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4   http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers & http://www.after-schoolnetwork.org/files/QSATool.pdf

5   It should be noted that some interviewees for this project suggested that the province focus their efforts on integrating any policy framework for after-school programming (and indeed child and youth services) across all ages – that is, frameworks should be developed that consider children ages 0 – 18, as opposed to the current approach of compartmentalizing children 0 to 6, 6 to 12 and 13 and up. While studying this approach is outside the scope of this project, it warrants mentioning here.

1.0 Introduction and Project Scope

"The after-school hours are critical to the formation of our children and youth. There is strong consensus among international sources that what children and youth do in the three hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. has profound impact on their physical, social, emotional and academic development." (Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, 2009, p. 14).

The City of Toronto's Vision for Children (the Vision) is a commitment to provide children with experiences that promote their chances of developing into healthy, well-adjusted and productive adults. The Vision brings together a network of representatives from governments, school boards and community organizations across Toronto who are leading the effort to ensure that services work more closely together to better meet the needs of families and children (Toronto Best Start Network, 2006).

An important part of the Vision includes a Middle Childhood Strategy. Children 6 to 12 years of age are considered to be in "middle childhood." The Strategy is included in recognition of the fact that the middle childhood years are a critical period in the lives of children. It is at this age when children develop the important cognitive and social skills which help them make the transition from early years into adolescence, and where important developmental milestones occur (City of Toronto Middle Child Strategy, 2009).

One of the most critical elements of the Middle Childhood Strategy relates to the after-school needs of children in the 6 to 12 age range. The after-school hours are considered to be between 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. This period of time presents both a challenge and an opportunity to parents and others with a vested interest in the quality of children's lives. More than anything, there is a growing recognition that offering quality activities in the after-school period can have a profound impact on the physical, social, emotional, and academic development of children (Clyne, 2010; Miller, 2003). The notion of after-school programs is thus created.

The literature reveals that after-school programs play a key role in helping middle childhood children successfully grow and develop. High quality programs give children a range of new opportunities for play and learning that they may not have at home or in the classroom. They also provide supervised care that ensures that children are safe while at the program. This supervision gives parents peace of mind while they are at work or fulfilling other responsibilities:

"... [people feel] an explicit connection between kids being bored and kids getting into trouble" (Duffett, Johnson, & Farkas, 2004, p.10).

Studies show that children will demonstrate improvements in multiple areas as a result of after-school programs, including improved ability to process feelings and better school performance. Given such successes, this field is being seen as more and more critical among experts and personnel alike:

> *"Whether it's sports or the arts or a church group or homework help, organized activities and programs in out-of-school time play a valuable and a highly valued role in the lives of the nation's youth. The vast majority of young people believe that kids are better off when their plates are full and they don't have too much time to just hang out. What's more, youngsters who participate in out-of-school activities give them high ratings for being fun and educational and being good places to make friends."* (Duffett, Johnson, & Farkas, 2004, p.9).

1.1 INVENTORY OF FULL-WEEK AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

In order to develop a greater understanding of the programming available for middle childhood children in Toronto, the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMC) developed an inventory of after-school programs for this group in 2009. MCMC is a multi-sectoral group in Toronto that focuses on children 6 to 12 and their families using a community perspective. The City of Toronto (the City) is a member of the MCMC.

One of the most striking findings of the inventory was that, although there were 21 organizations that operated a total of 534 full-week after-school programs (Monday through Friday) for children aged 6 to 12 in Toronto, these programs only accommodated a total of 18,205 of Toronto's 192,525 middle childhood children, which was 9.5% of this group (Lyn, 2009). This finding begged the question – what is happening with the other roughly 91 percent of Toronto's middle childhood children in terms of after-school programming?

The report coming out of the inventory recommended that existing programming be supported, that a Middle Childhood Framework that included policy recommendations be developed, and that a comprehensive integrated strategy with policy and funding that focuses on the complete lifespan of the child be developed. Further, the report urged that all middle childhood children have access to high quality after-school programs regardless of where they live. As well, there was a recommendation to put policies, procedures and funding in place to fully realize the potential of schools as community hubs working with local agencies to deliver after-school programs for middle childhood children. Two final recommendations were to build on current research to develop a comprehensive and detailed database of Toronto's after-school programs for middle childhood children, and to conduct further research to identify the after-school situations and needs of Toronto's 6 to12 year olds who are not in a after-school program in order to answer the questions:

- "Where are they?"
- "Who are they with?"
- "What are they doing?" (Lyn, 2009, pp. 15-16)

1.2   GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to continue to build on existing knowledge of after-school programs for middle childhood children in Toronto, three goals were identified for this project:

1.   Conduct a needs assessment identifying the after-school program and service needs of families with children aged 6 to 12 years who are not in an after-school program.

2.   Conduct an environmental scan that is inclusive and builds on existing inventories such as the one conducted by the MCMC that demonstrates current distribution and identifies service gaps of after-school programs in Toronto.

3.   Create a database design, ensuring that the database design can align with existing internal City of Toronto division systems (i.e., Children Services) and is easily expandable and sustainable for future use. As well, develop accompanying terms of use of the database that aligns with the City policy currently in place and develop criteria for service inclusion in the database that aligns with the Middle Childhood Framework.

These project goals that are supported by the methodology are outlined below.

1.2.1   Needs Assessment

The needs assessment was used to answer a number of key questions including:

- The extent of the need for after-school programming for children 6 to 12 years old in Toronto.

- The strengths and gaps in current programs and services that are currently being offered for this group.

- What after-school programming will best work to meet the needs of children 6 to 12 years old.

- The nature of problems, challenges and opportunities in the issue of after-school programs for children 6 to 12 years old.

- The best way to use time and resources to create the greatest impact in terms of after-school programs for 6 to 12 year olds.

The needs assessment incorporated a variety of methodologies and focused on both qualitative and quantitative data. Part of the needs assessment included an analysis of available data, an on-line survey and focus groups with mainly immigrant parents of children ages 6 to 12 years in Toronto, interviews with after-school program personnel, and interviews with policy experts and researchers in this field.

1.2.2 Environmental Scan

This environmental scan answered the following questions:

- What are the best practices across Canada for after-school full-week programs for children 6 to 12 years of age?
- What are the known challenges to take-up of these programs?
- What are some innovative approaches to circumventing challenges in these programs?
- How are these programs delivered in a cost-effective manner?
- What are the known benefits of these programs?
- Are there alternative programs, perhaps because of delivery or location, that work in other jurisdictions?

The environmental scan included interviews with after-school program personnel, interviews with policy experts and researchers, and a literature review on factors that affect children's participation in and need for after-school full-week programming.

1.2.3 Database Design

The database design involved three key components:

- Determining the data sets required and how they related to each other.
- Determining the data usage - who will use the data, how will it be used and for what purpose.
- Investigating the technical environment – the platform it would be sitting on, the fields that needed to be included, and the best way to integrate all of these in a user-friendly interface.

The database design component of this project is presented as a separate report. Please reference the associated document, entitled "An Opportunity for Every Child: Design of a Database for Middle Childhood Programs within the City of Toronto" for additional details.

2.0 Context for After-School Programming in Toronto

The landscape for after-school programming in Toronto for children ages 6 to 12 is highly complex. There are multiple service providers, funders and other stakeholders that all have a vested interest in the field. This section provides a "snapshot" of the context for after-school programming in Toronto today. This landscape is changeable, and will continue to be impacted by funding and policy changes at the local and provincial level. The City of Toronto and other stakeholders should update the information in this section regularly so it can be meaningfully used as an ongoing tool to inform planning and programming.

2.1 THE CITY OF TORONTO'S MIDDLE CHILDHOOD STRATEGY

The City of Toronto is the system service manager for early years services from prenatal to age 12 in Toronto. As part of its Vision for Children, and in recognition of the need for integrated planning and service coordination that aligns with shared standards and practices the City of Toronto is developing a Middle Childhood Strategy. The Strategy is part of a broader Child and Family Framework being developed by the City of Toronto that will enable effective planning and program development, guide investment and regulation, and include measurable indicators and address outcomes for families, children and services (City of Toronto, 2010).

The Framework is founded on the belief that "Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adults" (City of Toronto, 2010, p.2).

Priorities for the Framework include:

- Stressing the importance of appropriate facilities.
- Indicating that programs should be operated on a not-for-profit basis.
- Identifying accessibility for children with special needs as a key issue.
- Recognizing the value of play.
- Focusing on recruiting and retaining staff with appropriate mix of professional skills.
- Developing standards & regulations for full-week programs.

The Framework will align with the City's 2010 -2014 Child Care Service Plan and city-wide Recreation Service Plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE MIDDLE CHILDHOOD STRATEGY

1. **Acknowledging the developmental significance of middle childhood years.**

   • Programs should help children develop new skills and become more resilient and independent as they make the transition to adolescence is a key objective of out-of-school-time programs.

2. **Creating high quality programming.**

   • Programs should strive to provide high-quality service to meet the needs of children and families.

3. **Ensuring funding sustainability.**

   • Programs need adequate, ongoing funding to ensure consistency in staffing and program delivery to meet local needs.

4. **Collaborating and coordinating for local service planning and delivery.**

   • Programs should work together within communities to ensure an appropriate range and mix of programs are available.

   • Joint planning is needed to coordinate service delivery in local neighbourhoods.

5. **Supporting inclusion, access and equity.**

   • All families should have access to high-quality affordable out-of-school time programs.

   • Programs should have flexible funding options, including subsidies, to ensure income does not become a barrier to access.

6. **Setting standards and conducting ongoing evaluation.**

   • Appropriate quality standards and measures based on program outcomes should be established.

   • The quality of programs must be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Other municipalities in Canada have shown progress in developing such strategies and leading the way for collaboration at the local level to occur. In Calgary, Upstart – Champions for Children and Youth (formerly the Calgary Children's Initiative, led by the City of Calgary and United Way Calgary, has convened a multi-sectoral table that explores issues such as school-community collaboration and aboriginal youth education). They are guided by a Framework (called the Collective Impact Framework, Kania and Kramer, 2011) and work through the City as lead convener to ensure adequate funding and support for after-school programs. They are also actively working with the provincial government to encourage them to develop standards that can guide programming, funding and the measurement of impact.

A Middle Childhood Strategy for Toronto must be considered in light of significant reforms occurring in the way children receive services in Ontario. Beyond full-day early learning, Charles Pascal's 2009 report, "With Our Best Future in Mind", recommends that school boards provide parents the option of a seamless full-day, full-year program for their children. This is intended to be a part of the Early Learning Program that provides a universally-available, school day program and fee-based extended day and summer programming as a continuation of the learning environment. Pascal has also suggested the development of Child and Family Centres that will act as hubs for providing comprehensive services to children and families. Lastly, Pascal's report recommends that if enough parents request them, school boards be required to offer fee-based before- and after-school programs for 6 to 12-year-olds. This year, 42% of elementary schools in Ontario have before- and after-school programs, an increase from 37% last year. However, the province has recently passed legislation that will allow school boards to contract out before- and after-school care, potentially threatening the "seamlessness" of the program.

This environment has prompted the City's Children's Services Division to consider how it can look more strategically at the way it connects the various systems it is part of to create more holistic responses to issues facing children and families. They have recently struck a Network Advisory Group to identify how to develop and implement a new and enhanced children's stakeholder network that is supported by local networks, government and community partners. The Network Advisory Group has produced an integrated planning model that will better support a comprehensive system of services for children and families (See Appendix A). The model features an Integrated Steering Committee that intersects between four tables that represent different elements of child and family services and policies :

- Early Learning And Care
- Early Identification And Intervention
- Family Support
- Health

In addition to these four tables, local planning tables will feed into the work of the Integrated Steering Committee, as will special interest groups (i.e. research bodies, Aboriginal issues tables, etc.). The new model is expected to promote positive outcomes for Toronto's parents, children and families through the planning, leading and implementing of a high quality, accessible and comprehensive child and family system. Of particular interest for after-school programming for children ages 6 to 12 is the Early Learning and Care table, which will advise the Integrated Steering Committee to plan, implement and integrate high quality services. The City has indicated that the MCMC will be a part of that table. Beyond that, it is assumed that the Middle Childhood Strategy is part of this broader planning and network weaving exercise with details of how to be best aligned going forward.

2.2 WHO PROVIDES AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN TORONTO

Toronto has a number of different groups that provide after-school programs to children ages 6 to 12. These groups include:

- The City of Toronto: After-school programs are provided through the After-School Recreation Care (ARC) program (see text box on page 25 or more information) and through City-operated recreation and community centres, as part of their regular, ongoing programming.

- Multi-service community-based service agencies: Agencies like St. Christopher House and Agincourt Community Services Association in Toronto provide after-school programs as part of their spectrum of service delivery to families and communities.

- Child and youth-serving agencies: Agencies like Big Brothers Big Sisters and Boys and Girls Clubs offer after-school programming as part of their mandate to serve children.

- Licensed childcare centres: Many licensed childcare centres offer after-school programming as a part of their range of services (some also include before-school and lunch-hour programs).

- Unlicensed childcare services: Many childcare services are operating in Toronto that are not licensed by the government of Ontario. These programs may operate out of individual's homes and other spaces, and many offer after-school programs and services.

- Schools: There are elementary schools (i.e. Grades 1 – 6) in Toronto that offer after-school programming to children ages 6 to 12.

- Religious institutions: Churches, mosques, gurdwaras, synagogues and temples across Toronto offer programming in the after-school hours.

- Cultural centres/groups: Associations and groups representing many of Toronto's diverse cultural communities offer after-school programming.

- For-profit businesses: Some companies in Toronto offer programming in the after-school hours. Most of these businesses focus on tutoring supports (e.g. Kumon Learning Centres) or sports (e.g. private martial arts classes).

- Informal groups: There are informal groups that provide after-school supports in Toronto (e.g. retired people or parents who stay at home that offer informal, free after-school programs to children in the common area in their apartment building).

All of these groups operate both on their own and in partnership with each other. For example, partnerships are common between community agencies and schools, where an agreement is often reached on using or leasing space, equipment, etc. in the school and the program is carried out by the community agency. As well, some community agencies partner with other agencies or religious groups to offer content-specific programming together. Generally partnership relates to one or more of the following factors:

- Space.
- Equipment.
- Staffing.
- Shared content.
- Shared transportation.

Partnerships run the range from an informal sharing of information, resources, outreach and referrals to more in-depth collaborations guided by formal memorandums of understanding.

> *"The ARC program sees assets which is great...*
> *we are programmed to see deficits."* – Policy Expert

In October 2005, City of Toronto Council directed staff to develop a model after-school recreation and care program to address the child care and recreation needs of children 6 - 14 years of age in the City's 13 Priority Neighbourhoods. Through inter-divisional collaboration, staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Children's Services engaged in the development of this new recreation service for school age children that offers quality, innovative and safe after-school recreation care to children living in Priority Neighbourhoods. ARC is funded by the City of Toronto and also receives pilot funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion's Ministry of Health Promotion's Ontario After-School Program.

The vision of ARC is to provide children in Priority Neighbourhoods the opportunity to participate in a diverse and sustainable after-school program that will enhance their social, physical, creative and educational development. Programs will provide safe and developmentally appropriate programming. Communication and respect are the foundation for supporting children as they solve problems, apply critical thinking skills, make friends and relate positively with caring adults through strength based programming. Programming focuses on personal health and well being, healthy snacks and nutrition education, social activity and physical activity, including regular outdoor play every day. The strength-based ARC curriculum is based on sound knowledge of healthy child development and focused on character education, physical activity, fine arts, resiliency and health and well-being (adapted from ARC One-Pager, City of Toronto, n.d.).

Programs are offered by youth staff, who receive comprehensive training from a local community college that emphasizes child development, leadership, communication, program planning and inclusion. This includes a partnership with Resiliency Initiatives Canada to implement Resiliency Protocol Questionnaires to assist staff in understanding participants strengths, potential strengths and challenges related to resiliency and relationship building:

> *"[After-school programs need to] hire someone that kids look up to and value. Program content is only 15% of [the] change factor...85% of it is relationship in community and who from the community drives the content on its own won't change anything unless person presenting is someone [children] value. We need to pay attention to process – this is actually more important than outcomes."* – Policy Expert

2.3   WHAT HAPPENS IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school programming in Toronto tends to fall into four broad categories:

Academic content/homework help

Activities can include:

- A set time where children can work by themselves and do their homework for the day.

- Structured homework time where help or support is provided (help can range from working through a homework challenge with children or more formal tutoring).

- Additional academic studies beyond the school curriculum on any variety of topics (e.g. if children are in a program that focuses on science, then additional content is offered in that subject area).

Enrichment activities

Activities are wide-ranging, and can include:

- Arts and culture programming.
- Learning dance and music.
- Learning social skills (e.g. boundaries around talking to strangers, how to make friends).
- Learning about nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
- Learning about world cultures, food, traditions, and languages.

Physical activities

Activities can include:

- Learning about individual and team games and/or sports.
- Playing individual and team games and/or sports.
- Offering individual and/or group physical exercise.

Religious and/or cultural content

Activities can include:

- Learning about one's own religion (background, teachings, what it means to belong to a religious community).
- Learning about one's own culture (traditions, rituals, customs).
- Learning one's own language.

Content for programming is driven by the funding source, the program mandate, as well as the philosophy and the origin of the group. For example, many community-based agencies are funded to offer some combination of programming, usually academic content and enrichment activities, along with physical activity when weather and/or space allows. Religion-based programs offer programming to further their teachings. Many school-based programs have a vested interest in academic support in order to support their desired outcomes around student academic performance.

In addition, some programs are targeted to particular populations and may be based on certain strategies. A clear example of this in Toronto is programs that adopt SNAP (Stop Now and Plan). SNAP is a cognitive-behavioural strategy that helps children and parents regulate angry feelings by getting them to stop, think, and plan positive alternatives before they act impulsively. It is used as a model for children with behavioural challenges.

2.4 HOW AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED

After-school programs in Toronto are funded through multiple sources. These sources are far ranging and are both local and provincial. They include:

The City of Toronto: The City provides ongoing funding for staffing and operations to provincially licensed childcare centres, many of which run after-school programs. As well, the City provides funding through its Community Service Partnerships (CSP) program, which "…facilitates access to services that improve social outcomes for vulnerable, marginalized and high-risk communities. The CSP provides ongoing funding to community-based programs that:

- Are designed for vulnerable, marginalized and high-risk communities.

- Clearly identify a social service need of this community and focus on achieving attainable, measurable results.

- Maximize the capacity-building approach to be effective." (City of Toronto, 2011)

Some of the community agencies funded through this program provide after-school programs as part of that allocation.

Beyond funding, the City of Toronto offers childcare subsidies to families based on a formula tied to ward equity targets (arrived at by dividing the number of available subsidized spaces by the ward's proportion of the City's low-income children). These subsidies allow over 650 child care service providers to offer spots to families living on low-incomes for reduced fees. As well, the City of Toronto has a Welcome Policy, which allows Torontonians receiving social assistance to automatically qualify for a Welcome Policy membership. This membership provides free access to a range of recreation programs managed by Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation (City of Toronto, Date Unknown).

United Way Toronto (UWT): UWT is a major funder in the City of Toronto. They fund after-school programs primarily through two funding programs. The first is their Community Fund, which offers ongoing funding to over 150 community-based agencies. These agencies include child and youth organizations, multi-service agencies and settlement organizations, many of which provide after-school programs. Secondly, UWT offers a special grant stream called *Success By 6*, which aims "…to improve the life chances and well-being of at-risk children in Toronto by supporting parents, connecting families, and building community. The program offers pre and post-natal care, parenting skills, family resource centres, school readiness initiatives and home visits." (United Way Toronto, 2004). While *Success By 6* focuses on the 0 – 6 age group, some funded organizations also provide after-school programming through this grant stream for older children as part of a commitment to family-friendly and accessible service.

Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport: As part of its Ontario After-School Program, the Ministry provides "opportunity for approximately 18,000 children and youth in Grades 1 to 12 at more than 320 sites in priority neighbourhoods across the province, [including Toronto]" (Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, 2011). Program goals include:

- A decrease in childhood obesity.

- Healthier eating.

- Increased physical activity.

- Improved student achievement.

- A reduced rate of youth violence.

- A reduction in childhood poverty.

The Ontario After-School Program is being piloted until 2012, at which time the Ministry will explore the possibility of extending the initiative.

Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS): MCYS funds many organizations in Toronto that provide a wide range of services to children and youth, including Boys and Girls Clubs, multi-service agencies, and organizations that focus on the early years (including Ontario Early Years Centres). Many funded agencies provide after-school programs for children ages 6 to 12 in the community.

Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS): MCSS finds a number of multi-service agencies in Toronto. While direct funding for after-school programs is not provided, MCSS does provide operational funding for organizations that allow them to keep their doors open and provide programs, including for children after-school.

Ministry of Education: As part of the reforms related to full-day early learning, the Ministry of Education now offers a possible subsidy to parents who have children attending a school where an extended day program before and/or after is offered and who cannot afford a fee. Fee subsidies are offered on a first come, first serve basis.

In addition to the funders listed above, many organizations and community groups run on private donations. The revenue that contributes to after-school programs in Toronto from these sources is not publicly known. There are other key stakeholders in the City and provide that play a critical role in the after-school scene, even though they are not a direct funder. Of particular note is the Atkinson Foundation.[6]

2.5   HOW AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE REGULATED

There are a number of ways that after-school programs are regulated, including accreditation, licensing and legislation.

Accreditation

At present, there is only one accreditation body that directly relates to after-school programming in Ontario, which is HIGH FIVE. HIGH FIVE is Canada's only comprehensive quality standard for children's sport and recreation programs, and was founded by Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) in 2007. HIGH FIVE identifies five principles of healthy child development that are essential for quality programs: a caring adult, and the opportunities to play, make friends, master skills and participate. In order to move towards accreditation, organizations are encouraged to access training, resources and modules in the areas of:

- Policies and procedures
- Training and development
- Awareness
- Program assessment

Accreditation is a 5-level process that involves achieving targets within all four areas.

Other groups are also accreditation bodies. For example, the Ontario Camps Association offers accreditation to camps, which can include community-based agencies that provide urban camps in the after-school time period. In order to be a member of the OCA, an organization must be accredited through their process.

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6   **Atkinson Foundation:** The Atkinson Foundation is a private family foundation that gave over $2.2 million in grants in 2010. The Foundation supports the implementation of "With Our Best Future in Mind" and further will continue to support a three-pronged approach of policy, research and practice (The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, 2011). While not a direct funder of after-school programs at present, in the future, Atkinson's Foundation's commitment to middle childhood children could include funding after-school programming pilots.

Licensing

Any childcare centre (including centres that run after-school programming) that has a Service Contract with the City of Toronto must meet the City's Operating Criteria. "The Operating Criteria outlines clear expectations, service standards and guidelines to childcare providers with a service contract. It serves as a self-evaluation and planning tool for childcare operators, supervisors and front-line staff. In addition, it is used by [City of Toronto] Children's Services Consultants to measure quality and contract compliance" (City of Toronto, 2009b).

There are nine core components included in the Operating Criteria that centres are rated against:

- Infant Program.
- Toddler Program.
- Preschool Program.
- School Age Program.
- Playground.
- Nutrition.
- Administration.
- Financial Management.
- Working Together.

Measures of quality include:

- Sound management practices.
- Training, experience and stability of caregivers.
- Group size; ratio of children to caregivers.
- Family involvement in the program.
- Health and safety standards of the physical facility.
- Program content and development.

In order to be considered in compliance with the Operating Criteria centres must meet measures of quality in all relevant components, including their school-age programs.

The main emphasis of a school age program is to:

- Provide an inclusive program that respects individual abilities, needs and strengths.
- Provide a language-rich environment that encourages communication through positive interactions.
- Develop children's self-esteem by ensuring that they feel valued and cared for as individuals.
- Foster a sense of autonomy by ensuring flexibility and choice.
- Provide a supportive environment in which children can develop their skills, talents and interests.

2.6   LEGISLATION

All childcare centres in Toronto (including centres that run after-school care programs for children at least 6 years of age and less than 13 years of age offering activities such as sport, recreation, fitness, arts and culture activities, youth leadership, camping and outdoor education) must meet the standards of the provincial Day Nurseries Act (DNA) in order to be licensed, which regulates elements of childcare such as staff to child ratios, health and safety, outdoor playground space, indoor space, and staff qualifications. Centres are licensed on an annual basis.

In addition to this legislation, other non-profits running after-school programs must abide with various legislation such as the Non-Profit Corporations Act and Personal Health Information Act if providing any health-related services.

Organizations have their own operating policies and procedures in addition to these legislative requirements, their own values and philosophy for service, and potential quality assurance standards that they meet as part of their commitment to the community.

2.7   KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AND POLICY

Beyond service providers and the City of Toronto itself, local, provincial and national groups have been formed that have a vested interest in after-school programming. These groups include:

Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC)

The MCMC focuses on children 6 to 12 and their families using a community perspective. MCMC works for systemic change through influencing public policy, advocating, partnership and network development, and supporting best practices. There are over 24 members, representing municipal departments, academic institutions, both public English-speaking school boards, children's aid organizations, settlement agencies, childcare centres, and multi-service agencies. MCMC has recently received Ontario Trillium Foundation funding to promote public awareness and conduct community engagement relative to middle childhood issues (MCMC, 2011).

Ontario After-School Collaborative

The Ontario After-School Collaborative is spearheading a two year initiative entitled "Enhancing the Quality of Ontario's After-school Programs: A Provincial Collaborative Approach". The initiative is being supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Healthy Living Fund and the Province of Ontario. The Collaborative has seven members:

- Boys and Girls Clubs Canada – Central Region.
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario.
- Evidence (First Work).
- Ontario Public Health Association.
- Ontario Physical Health and Education Association.
- Parks and Recreation Ontario.
- YMCA Ontario.

The Collaborative will work to create:

- An overarching strategy for sustainable high quality after-school programs in Ontario (comprehensive and supported across government).

- Interconnected strategies related to children and youth and opportunities to support after-school programs.

- A common approach and framework supporting the delivery of consistent high quality after-school programming and coordination/seamlessness at the community level.

- The objectives of the project are to:

  - Increase the understanding of the environment of after-school services for priority target groups.

  - Increase the number of resources that promote quality, consistency, and sustainability of after-school programs in a diversity of settings across Ontario.

  - Increase the awareness and use of evidence-based resources that promote physical activity and healthy eating by the priority target groups and the after-school community in Ontario.

- The steps to meet these objectives are:

  - A grey literature search.

  - Conducting a series of consultations with priority groups across Ontario.

  - Identifying and validating best practices through pilot tests.

  - Developing/adapting key tools, trainings and resources, then creating awareness about them and enabling their use (Ontario Public Health Association, 2011).

- Consultations with priority groups occurred earlier this year in Ontario. The Collaborative is also getting ready to release their literature review that explores best practices in after-school programming, including supporting strategies, policies, guidelines, peer reviewed publications, and standards and recommendations within Ontario, Canada, and internationally.

Canadian Active After-School Partnership (CAASP)

In 2010, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for sport and recreation set a goal for 2015 to increase by seven percentage points, the proportion of children who participate in 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity over and above activities of daily living, and to increase from 11,500 steps to 14,500 steps per day. In addition, the Ministers endorsed the after-school time period as an opportunity for government policy and programming efforts focusing on the physical activity of children and youth in partnership with non-government organizations.

As a result of this goal, CAASP, with support and initial funding from PHAC, is developing a Pan-Canadian After-School framework to support after-school programs that include physical activity and healthy eating initiatives. The framework will:

- Influence policy development and enhancements to support better use of facilities, inclusion, and equitable access for all.

- Increase knowledge development through social marketing/communication campaigns, better access to resources and support tools, and sharing of best/promising practices.

- Train and build capacity among program leaders.

- Explore and establish strategies to address barriers to participation.

- Build leadership capacity for quality program delivery.

- Promote community mobilization through policy awareness and implementation, increased program opportunities, and broadened access.

- Develop (or enhance access to) resources and support tools.

- Raise awareness and build on best practices for program delivery.

- Engage an extensive network of partners and collaborators (both traditional and non-traditional).

- Develop and test a variety of projects to learn about ways to address barriers, make good use of resources, and expand successes into new regions.

The members of CASSP are:

- Active Healthy Kids Canada.

- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability.

- Boys and Girls Clubs Canada.

- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity.

- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association.

- Green Communities Canada.

- Physical and Health Education Canada.

- YMCA Canada.

Consultations with key stakeholders were held earlier this year in Ottawa and Toronto to facilitate CAASP's work. This work is supported by the 2007 federal government report entitled "Reaching for the Top" by Dr. Kellie Leitch, which recommended that the federal government play a leadership role in after-school initiatives that involve physical activity by taking the following steps:

- Lead the development of an action plan to ensure access to healthy, active, physically oriented after-school activities.

- Set national targets for child and youth physical activity levels and healthy weights.

- Establish national standards in after-school programming.

- Fund organizations that are providing these programs.

- Help to promote and market quality after-school programming.

- Foster collaboration among provincial ministries of health and education, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and other organizations that provide after-school programming.

- Leverage existing infrastructure by facilitating access to schools and community recreation facilities after school (Reaching for the Top, 2007).

3.0 Methodology

This project focused on children who were 6 to 12 years old, and whose parents were living in Toronto. It was also constrained to after-school programming, with no limits placed on the types and nature of after-school programs that were included (school-based, community-based, full-week, multiple days per week, etc.). The research included a number of methodologies to gather data for the needs assessment, the environmental scan, and the database design in order to have a greater strength of conclusions. Methodologies included focus groups with mainly immigrant parents, a survey of parents, one-on-one telephone interviews with after-school personnel, one-on-one telephone interviews with researchers and experts, a statistical analysis of available data, and a literature review.

3.1   FOCUS GROUPS

The original methodology for the project proposed a series of 10 one-on-one interviews with immigrant parents of children ages 6 to 12 in order to be able to explore their particular needs relative to after-school programming. These interviews were meant to complement electronic survey results. However, the Working Group for the project felt that a deeper focus on the needs of immigrant parents was required. This assertion was made based on a number of variables, including:

- The current demographic make-up of Toronto.

- The anecdotal and program evaluation evidence gathered by many stakeholders indicating that immigrant parents face more barriers to accessing after-school programs.

- A strategic desire to see the assets and needs of immigrant parents reflected strongly through the report, including findings and recommendations.

As such, focus groups with primarily immigrant parents of children ages 6 to 12 were conducted throughout Toronto using a community research approach. In total, eight focus groups were held between May 17th and June 24th, 2011, with a total of 83 participants. See Table 1 for the date, location and host of each focus group.

Table 1 - Focus Group Logistics			
Date	**Location**	**Host**	**Number of Participants**
May 17	West Quadrant – Ward 14	St. Christopher House	18
May 18	East Quadrant – Ward 41	Agincourt Community Services Association	9
May 25	North Quadrant – Ward 33	Working Women Community Centre	15
May 30	West Quadrant - Ward 14	St. Christopher House - Family Resource Centre	5
June 13	North Quadrant – Ward 8	Jane Finch Community Family Centre	11
June 14	West Quadrant – Ward 6	LAMP Community Health Centre	8
June 17	East Quadrant – Ward 40	Agincourt Community Services Association	13
June 24	South Quadrant – Ward 29	East York Community Centre – City of Toronto	4

Focus groups were approximately 60 minutes each and were limited to a maximum of 16 participants per group. The focus group guide can be found in Appendix B. Groups were organized by quadrant, where quadrant definition was determined by the City of Toronto Children's Services Division Planning map (see Appendix C for the quadrant map).

Groups were located as follows:

- West Quadrant – 3 groups
- East Quadrant – 2 groups
- North Quadrant – 2 groups
- South Quadrant – 1 group

Each focus group was hosted by a service organization with membership in the Working Group. Service organizations known to serve immigrant parents of middle childhood children were approached as needed when Working Group members could not accommodate a request to host a group. In total, five service organizations and the City of Toronto hosted the eight focus groups.

Participants for the focus groups were limited to parents and guardians of children ages 6 to 12 residing in the City of Toronto. Unpaid people providing care for children ages 6 to 12 (e.g. extended family members, family friends) were excluded from participation in order to reflect only the needs and opinions of those who had the most direct decision-making role in their children's lives. Staff in each organization recruited parents through one of two methods:

- Advertising the focus group to all service users coming to the organization. Advertising methods included a standardized information poster, announcements during programs and information about the focus group during one-on-one service appointments. Potential participants were required to register in advance given the participant limit and to ensure that they met eligibility criteria.

- Engaging parents that were already meeting at the organization to participate in organization-sponsored programs (e.g. adding a focus group to a Conversation Circle Program).

All parents were given the choice to participate in the focus group without penalty related to their participation in the organization's programming.

Focus groups were conducted whenever most convenient to participants (as decided with the service organizations), including on evenings and weekends. Each participant received an honorarium of $30.00, including $6.00 for transportation costs. Refreshments and child minding were provided at each meeting. The focus groups were conducted by one of the lead consultants for the project and a note-taker attended each session. Where required, interpretation support was provided by the service organization. Discussions were held with service organizations prior to the focus group to clarify the role of the interpreter, including limits to the role, and appropriate engagement with participants during and after the group.

The focus group data was analyzed using a basic thematic coding and analysis process. First, data was briefly scanned in its entirety to ensure its usability and to identify any data errors. Next, the data was evaluated to identify obvious and/or overarching themes. Themes were documented as a "first layer" of analysis.

Categories were then created that parallel program planning concepts and principles to further organize the data, including "perceived strengths of programs," "challenges," "accessibility," and "satisfaction". Data was reviewed against the categories to identify further themes and/or connections to broader themes that were first identified. Next, data was reviewed line by line for fit with categories. As the process unfolded, sub-categories were created. In addition, this process allowed for a simple counting process to be used to further determine prevalence of themes.

Once the data was categorized in this manner, it was again reviewed to assess cross-category relevance, integration, and further connections between themes. This helped refine patterns and relationships within the data.

The analysis has certain limitations. The frequency of responses was not noted unless a majority of people indicated agreement with a statement made during the focus group. Although the data was quantified using a simple counting method, the strength or weakness of certain statements is difficult to ascertain. As such, the analysis should not be considered generalizable to the experience of all immigrant parents of middle childhood children but, instead, should indicate broader trends and issues for consideration by stakeholders during policy development and planning.

3.2   SURVEY OF PARENTS

It was proposed that an on-line survey of parents be conducted as part of the data gathering process. In an effort to include parents without access to the Internet, it was also proposed that a number of hard copies of the survey be disseminated.

The questionnaire was drafted in close collaboration with both the Working Group and the City of Toronto Project Lead. This questionnaire allowed for a broad objective analysis of the parents who are using after-school programs for children 6 to 12 years of age, as well as those who are not using this programming for their children. It also gave insight as to where children who are not attending programs are going and what activities they are engaging in. See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire.

In order to ensure that the survey collected the data that was needed in a clear and objective fashion and took no more than 10 minutes to complete (to reduce response burden and increase response rate) the questionnaire was first pre-tested and then piloted with a sample of 10 potential respondents. This

sample was recruited using a snowball methodology, where potential respondents were approached to be a part of the pre-test and these people recommended others. Potential respondents were residents of the City of Toronto who had children between 6 and 12 years of age. Pre-test respondents were sent the electronic survey, asked to complete it and then take part in a 15-minute one-on-one interview with a lead researcher in order to discuss areas of the survey that needed editing for clarity and comprehension. Based on this pre-test with five respondents, the survey was edited and then sent to potential pilot test respondents. Using the same snowball methodology, where respondents suggested other potential respondents, five respondents were asked to complete the survey on-line and asked to time how long it took them. They were asked questions on their ease of completion and their results were analyzed online to determine where they might have skipped questions or misunderstood questions, so that the survey instrument could be revised accordingly. Once the pilot test results were analyzed and changes were made to the online survey, it was considered to be final.

The final survey was disseminated to a large potential pool of respondents across Toronto through a number of means: an online link, postcards, and paper copies. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. For this reason, Internet Protocol (IP) addresses were not tracked in any way.

The online link for the final survey was disseminated to all of the members of the Working Group, the City of Toronto, and other organizations that were anticipated to have an interest in their stakeholders completing the survey. The link was posted on the websites of the City of Toronto (including its main page, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation After-School Recreation Care Program site, and the Toronto Public Library site) and a number of other organizations. Still other organizations distributed the link to their membership lists instead. See Appendix E for a complete list of organizations that participated in disseminating the survey.

The Project Team also distributed the online link through Facebook. As well, a Facebook advertisement was posted that once clicked upon, would lead potential respondents to the survey link. The advertisement targeted only Facebook users in Toronto.

Paper copies were distributed to a number of organizations for distribution to their membership and/or clients. See Table 2 for a list of these organizations.

Table 2 - Organizations that Distributed Paper Copies of the Survey
Agincourt Community Services Association
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre
First Stage Child Care Centre
Local Immigration Partnership – North West Scarborough
Not Your Average Daycare (NYAD) Community Inc.

Furthermore, postcards with the link and a short blurb about the survey were distributed to a number of agencies across Toronto (see Appendix F for a sample of the postcard). See Table 3 for a list of these organizations. It was anticipated that these postcards would allow potential respondents to be aware of the survey and access the link to complete the survey.

Table 3 - Organizations that Distributed Postcards with the Survey Link
4 Villages Community Health Centre
After-School Recreation Care Program (ARC) – City of Toronto
Agincourt Community Services Association
Blessed John XX111 Early Learning Program
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre
First Stage Child Care Centre
Local Immigration Partnership – North Etobicoke
Local Immigration Partnership – North West Scarborough
North York YMCA
Scarborough YMCA
St. Leonard's Society of Toronto
Terry Tan Child Centre
Toronto Public Library
Women's Habitat of Etobicoke

To increase the number of survey responses, the parent survey was fielded concurrently with some of the focus groups being conducted rather than wait until after the focus groups had been completed, as was originally proposed. As such, the survey was conducted between May 28th and July 19th, 2011.

In all, a total of 1,589 respondents completed the survey. Because respondents' IP addresses were not recorded, it is not possible to know the number of respondents who responded through the various methodologies. Once the data were cleaned, removing survey data that was too incomplete to be useful, that was from outside of the Toronto area, or with other issues that would prevent its inclusion, there were 1,313 completed surveys.

3.3 TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH AFTER-SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Telephone interviews were conducted with 33 after-school program staff and management. Interviewees were selected using a snowball sampling methodology, where Working Group members suggested some personnel whom they were confident would have valuable information to provide, and these potential interviewees suggested others. In addition, the research assistant for the project contacted some agencies in order to ensure that there was adequate representation of interviewees across after-school programs housed in personal homes, community agencies, schools, and faith groups.

The final interviews provided in-depth information on participants' views toward after-school programs for children 6 to 12, including gaps, barriers and best practices. See Table 4 for the positions that are held by the interviewees.

Table 4 - Positions Held by Interviewees	
Role/Title	**Number of Interviewees**
Supervisor (or assistant supervisor) for after-school program	29
Toronto District School Board staff who support after-school programs throughout all schools	2
Front-line worker	2

See Appendix G for a complete list of the organizations represented by the interviewees.

Interviewees were sent the interview guide (see Appendix H for the guide) prior to the interview. In the pre-interview discussion, participants were told that interview data would be presented anonymously. All interviews were conducted over the telephone. An appointment was made and one of the lead researchers called the interviewee. In all instances but one, interviewees attended alone (in one instance both a program director and one of the program staff attended the interview together). Interviews were conducted between June 1st and September 6th, 2011 and interviewees were not paid for their participation.

The interviews took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Interviews were not recorded but notes were taken. Data was analyzed using a content analysis approach identifying key themes that emerged.

3.4 TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH RESEARCHERS AND POLICY EXPERTS

Telephone interviews were conducted with 24 researchers and policy experts across North America. As with the after-school personnel interviews, names of potential researchers and policy experts were obtained from the Working Group and the City of Toronto Project Lead.

Interviewees were asked for their opinions regarding the best practices in after-school programming for children aged 6 to 12, key reasons that hamper participation for children, and what they see as viable alternatives to current after-school program models, among other questions (see Appendix I for this interview guide and Appendix J for a list of interviewees).

Interviewees were sent the interview guide prior to the interview. All interviews were conducted over the telephone. An appointment was made and one of the lead researchers called the interviewee who attended the interviews alone. Interviews took between 15 and 90 minutes and interviewees were not paid for their participation. While interviewees had an interview guide, in about two-thirds of the interviews, the interviewees responded to other issues that were relevant to their fields of expertise, rather than the prescribed questions.

These interviewees were asked to suggest other potential interviewees who they felt would contribute to understanding the issues, thereby using a "snowball' approach to the sampling methodology. At least five attempts were made to contact each potential interviewee before concluding that they would not be a part of this project.

The data from these interviews were reviewed and analyzed for congruence or non-congruence with the other data that were found. Results are provided in the relevant places in this report, rather than in one comprehensive section, as these data support or discount the other data collected from many sources.

3.5   STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The original methodology proposed an examination of statistics from a variety of sources, with the final list determined with the City of Toronto Project Lead. After consultation, relevant and recent data were retrieved from Statistics Canada, and were also provided by the City of Toronto's Social Research & Analysis Unit, Toronto Social Development Finance & Administration Division, and Children's Services Division. These data were analyzed in order to assist in projections of future need for after-school programming spaces in the City of Toronto. Specific detail is provided in the Results section.

As well, the original project proposed determining the factors that contributed to participation in after-school programming. It was decided that these factors would be most easily determined through the survey analysis rather than through other data sources (given the survey focus). As such, these results are also provided in the relevant section.

Finally, the original methodology included an analysis of where middle childhood children are located and the characteristics of their neighbourhoods. While this project was being undertaken, the City of Toronto released their Well Being Toronto application[7] (City of Toronto, 2011), which provided this information, making an additional analysis in this regard redundant.

Statistical analyses took place between June 1st and August 31st, 2011.

3.6   LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature search was conducted to identify key materials related to children's participation in and need for after-school programming. The original focus for the literature review was to identify and review current theory underpinning the development of after-school activities (and the values driving the development of theoretical models), as well as to review research and evaluation on the effectiveness of programs or activities.

Original questions developed to guide the review of the literature included:

1. What are the key theories of change and guiding values that underpin after-school programming for children 6 to 12 years of age?

2. What are the promising practices across Canada for after-school programs for children 6 to 12 years of age (both from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective)?

3. What are the known successes or benefits of these programs?

4. What are the known challenges to take-up of these programs?

5. What are some innovative approaches to circumventing challenges in these programs?

6. How do such programs address the needs of diverse communities?

7. What are the implications for multiple stakeholders in terms of collaboration and service coordination/planning?

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7   This web application allows the user to look at and combine various indicators about neighbourhood wellbeing in the City of Toronto

When it came to best practices, an initial search revealed that, while consensus has been reached on certain ways of structuring programs, many practices still need to be better tested to fully understand why they are effective. In order to best focus project resources, and given that other stakeholders in this area are doing literature reviews (i.e. the Ontario After School Collaborative is releasing a literature review this year), it was decided by the Working Group that this literature review should focus on summarizing best practices (including successes or benefits) from a high-level and indicating where any gaps in the literature may exist. A summary of the literature review is provided in the body of the report. Please see Appendix K for the full review.

3.6.1 Review Process

Specific dimensions framing the search for literature included:

- Developmental stages of children ages 6 to 12.
- The need for after-school programs.
- Best practices of well-functioning programs.
- Multi-sectoral collaboration in after-school programming.

The literature review accessed Ontario-based, Canada-wide and some American literature. Primary focus was on non-peer reviewed articles and reports from internet searches and websites of research organizations, multi-sectoral coalitions, government sites, funder groups and community-based organizations and included:

- Canadian Council on Social Development
- Canadian Policy Research Networks
- National Children's Alliance
- United Way Calgary/City of Calgary
- United Way Lower Mainland
- University of British Columbia
- Harvard Family Research Project
- National Alliance for Children and Youth
- The After-School Corporation
- National Institute for Out-of-School Time
- Government of Ontario

3.7 PROJECT DATA RESULTS FORMAT

The results will be explicitly detailed with respect to the statistical analysis of available data, the survey of parents, focus groups, one-on-one telephone interviews with after-school personnel, and the literature review. The results from the one-on-one telephone interviews with researchers and policy experts will be woven into the appropriate results sections.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations in this research project.

This project was limited to after-school programs for children ages 6 to 12 only. Results cannot be generalized to programming for other age groups, nor can they be generalized to before-school programs, summer programs, and March Break programs.

After-school personnel and focus groups participants were not specifically asked about the activities that children did in each of the 6 to 9 and the 10 to 12 age groups. As a result, data from these sources in this regard are limited.

In order to balance the respondent burden with the data potential, the survey was constructed at the level of the family. Once the data were analyzed, the potential for data at the level of the child was noted. This creates limitations in the depth of some of the data. For example, data indicate a variety of activities that children within a family take part in but it is not clear which children (ages and genders) take part in which activities. While acknowledging this limitation, it would be onerous to have created the survey at the level of the child (unless it were directed to children, an approach laden with ethical and methodological issues that would be necessary to consider, and one outside the project scope and available resources).

A high-level review of the key literature regarding programming for middle childhood children was conducted to inform the project. The complete literature review report, including full sourcing, is attached as Appendix K. The following key findings are a synthesis of the most significant conclusions found in the literature. While by no means exhaustive, they are meant to provide useful context to support a priority and decision-making process as the City of Toronto considers the Next Steps outlined in this report.

The literature supports the importance of and positive impact that quality after-school programs have in the healthy development of children ages 6 to 12. It confirms the value of quality after-school programs to parents and emphasizes the need for affordable and accessible choices for families and communities. It also offers some best practices for consideration in developing or supporting programs with resources and identifies some gaps in the research in this area.

4.1 KEY DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES FOR MIDDLE CHILDHOOD CHILDREN

The middle childhood years mark a distinctive period in which there are important developmental changes and transitions (Schonert-Reichl, Buote, & Jaramillo, 2006). In fact, children experience important cognitive, social, and emotional changes in this period that establish their identity and set the stage for development in adolescence and adulthood (Eccles, 1999). Key experiences include encountering new settings, such as schools, that lead children to experience new developmental challenges and dramatic physical changes including rapid growth and onset of puberty.

"Children 6 to 12 experience developmental transitions that are a continuation of critical changes that began in the early years. These transitions affect a child's ability to be healthy, safe and secure, able to learn, and socially engaged and responsible" (Varga-Toth, 2006, p.5).

Clearly, much is happening in the middle childhood years. As such, it is critical to study children during this time in order to identify the factors that promote positive development. Yet middle childhood development (in contrast to early childhood or adolescence) is not thoroughly understood. However, what has emerged in the past decade is an interest in the relationship between healthy development in middle childhood and the after-school hours, and a growing understanding that the after-school hours (generally considered to be from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.) are a critical time. Indeed, programmers, policy-makers and researchers alike have arrived at the conclusion that after-school time has a profound impact on the physical, social, emotional and academic development of children and youth (Clyne, 2010; Miller, 2003).

> *"Quality after-school programs provide engaging learning activities in a safe and supportive environment. These programs can meet students' needs for personal attention from adults, inclusion in positive peer groups, and enjoyable experiential activities that build self-esteem."*
>
> (Blenda J. Wilson as cited in Miller, After-school Programs and Educational Success, 2003, p.2)

4.2   PARENTS' PRIORITIES AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

After-school programs serve important functions for parents, including::

- The provision of supervision and safety for children in the after-school hours, especially for working parents.
- Opportunity for "enrichment" activities for children, which can include learning arts, dance, culture, sports and social recreation.
- Opportunity to improve academic achievement. This often comes in the form of homework help, special tutoring programs, or a homework club setting.

These functions are powerful protective factors for children that can reduce risks of harm through accidents or injury, and possible experimentation with alcohol, drugs, sexual, and other risk behaviours.

4.3   OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

The rise of research on after-school programs has provided evidence that after-school programs can and do work in terms of enhancing the development of children ages 6 -12, including:

Academic outcomes:

- Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations.
- Higher school attendance rates and less tardiness.
- Less disciplinary action (e.g., suspension).
- Lower dropout rates.
- Better performance in school (e.g., literacy rates) as measured by achievement test scores and grades, paving the way for better employment opportunities.
- Improved homework completion.
- Improved engagement in learning and program activities.

Social/emotional outcomes:

- Decreased behavioural problems.
- Improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with others (peers, parents, teachers).
- Increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.
- Increased leadership skills.
- Development of initiative.
- Improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school.

Prevention outcomes:

- Avoidance of drug and alcohol use.
- Decreases in delinquency and violent behaviour.
- Increased knowledge of safe sex
- Avoidance of sexual activity.
- Reduction in juvenile crime.
- Increased knowledge of community resources.
- Increased engagement of family and/or community.

Health and wellness outcomes:

- Better food choices.
- Increased physical activity (measured through carried pedometers and other physical activity measuring devices).
- Increased levels of energy.
- Increased knowledge of nutrition and health practices.
- Reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI).
- Improved blood pressure.
- Improved body image.

> *"...a recent review conducted in the US concluded that the available studies offer evidence of program benefits for many children, especially in contrast to the risk associated with self-care. Evidence for beneficial effects is strongest for low-income children, children in urban or high-crime neighbourhoods, younger children and boys."* (Hanvey, 2002, p.32)

Understanding how middle childhood children benefit from after-school programming and where those beneficial effects are most powerful is an important tool in determining where to concentrate scarce resources for programming and what types of programming to focus on for maximum impact.

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4.4   BEST PRACTICES

The literature reveals the following best practices and quality considerations when it comes to planning and sustaining programming in the after-school period for children ages 6 to 12:

1. Appropriate staffing is crucial to successful program planning and delivery:
    a. Programs need to hire caring and committed staff.
    b. Programs must provide appropriate compensation to staff.
    c. Staff need to be well trained and have ongoing professional development support.
    d. Managers and their role are also important; there is a clear link between staff achievement and management practices.
    e. A shared understanding of minimum or required staff qualifications and standards for hiring staff needs to be developed.

2. After-school activities should be planned and purposeful:
    a. Programs should have clear goals that create intention about outcomes.
    b. Activities must be sequential, focused and explicit (which can improve school performance).
    c. Activities should be clearly connected to goals of program (e.g. if improving academic performance is a program goal, there should be a component of the programming that is explicitly academic).
    d. Make programs relevant to children's interest; engage children in development of programming by getting their feedback and ideas.
    e. Combine elements of learning and play both in groups and one-on-one settings.
    f. Promote informal peer engagement.
    g. Ensure that after-school programs complement, rather than replicate, in-school learning by offering more depth on specific topics and skills and by offering students options to pursue individual interests.
    h. Offer a diverse array of developmentally appropriate activities that provide opportunities to build skills in the younger years (ages 6 to 7).
    i. Offer flexible programming that allows for student choice and autonomy in the selection of activities in the older years (ages 8 to 12).

3. Programs need to place priority on being affordable and accessible in order to have the best reach and outcomes:
    a. Addressing high costs includes offering programs:
        • At rates that are reasonable.
        • That are tied to subsidy opportunities for families who are living on lower incomes.
        • That provide incentives for attendance such as stipends, school credit, food, etc.
    b. Beyond cost, accessibility is also viewed from a number of different lenses in the literature and can mean offering programs:
        • In languages other than English.
        • At sites where parents can easily reach (i.e. schools or places where there can be easy transport).

- At sites that are accessible to children with disabilities.

- At times that are convenient for families (usually meaning beyond 6:00 p.m., especially for shift workers or parents working in more than one job).

- That are culturally inclusive and relevant (including teaching explicit principles of respect, inclusion, understanding, cooperation and conflict resolution).

- From staff who share and/or deeply understand the children's cultural and/or racial backgrounds and experiences.

c. Specific recommendations for programs for ESL Learners:

- Pay particular attention to the social, cultural, linguistic and literacy needs of participants.

- Strengthen cultural connection and identity through incorporation of cultural and language components.

- Include programming for the entire family including family literacy.

- Carry out ongoing needs assessments.

- Use curriculum and provide experiences that are culturally and linguistically supportive, accessible, and responsive.

- Provide first language tutoring.

- Assist children and families to gain cross-cultural skills and understanding.

- Provide exposure to strong, culturally relevant role models

4. The highest quality programs engage families as an integral part of their approach to planning and delivery.

Family engagement typically falls into one of three categories:

a. Support of children's learning – this relates to ways parents can directly support the child in their development and academic performance. Strategies include:

- Giving information about programming to the family on a regular basis, both information that is sent home and offered when parents drops off/picks up child from program.

- Engaging family in the program setting, and tapping into their expertise.

b. Support of family itself – this means providing families with needed supports for their quality of life in order to enhance their ability to participate in programming. Strategies include:

- Supporting parents to get the information they need to address their challenges, including direct information and referrals to other supports (e.g. settlement supports, support for family relationships, workshops on how parents can obtain the services their children need and how they can develop relationships with schools).

- Encouraging positive family-child interactions.

c. General support for programming – this means getting families to support programming by:

- Acting as a liaison between families and schools.

- Helping parents develop advocacy skills.

- Volunteering for programs as activity assistants, advisory board members, tutors and translators/interpreters.

5. Partnership and collaboration are the keys to moving after-school programming forward.

    a. Multiple stakeholders must support after-school programs, and municipalities are the natural stakeholder to lead that charge.

    b. Strong genuine partnerships that encourage shared ownership of talents, resources, and knowledge result in improved outcomes for children.

    c. The intentional integration of both school and non-school supports is the best way to give children what they need to succeed

    d. A strong after-school network enables communities to enhance the capacity of individual program and service providers, and thus serve more children.

    e. Building consensus among key stakeholders is the key challenge. Time must be provided for collaborators to establish and maintain relationships of mutual respect and understanding.

    f. School-community partnerships are a key starting place. There is a need to strengthen the relationship between community-based after-school programmers and schools. This includes coordinating after-school learning with the regular school day and creating linkages between school-day teachers and after-school personnel. The ultimate goal is that schools and community groups vested in middle childhood work in conjunction with one another to create an expanded learning system with a shared vision, mission, and outcomes.

> *Beyond 3:30, an innovative program of the Toronto Community Foundation, offers free programs in schools to children in the after-school hours. A key element of the program is to teach healthy nutrition, which culminates in a Community Meal where families and children share a meal prepared at the program together, thus engaging families and encouraging family-child-school interaction.* (http://www.tcf.ca/vitalinitiatives/ beyond330.html)

4.5 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

There are some important gaps in the literature that must be noted. The literature specific to 6 to 12 year olds and after-school programming is somewhat limited. Many studies go outside the 6 to 12 age range, studying the older age range (i.e. children up to age 16 or 18). Further, many studies also explore "out-of-time" programs (i.e. before-school, after-school, weekends and summer breaks) as opposed to just after-school time. Also, more research is available on the needs of older middle-childhood (i.e. ages 9 to 12) as opposed to early middle-childhood (i.e. ages 6 to 8).

- While there is remarkable consensus among researchers that after-school programming is important, meets critical developmental needs and that children's lives are enhanced by it, we lack a clear understanding of the critical elements of programming that create this impact. Key questions yet to be answered may include:

- What is the duration and intensity of participation required for children in order to reap the benefits of after-school programming?

- How can we develop a greater understanding of the differential impact of programming on different populations of children (e.g. boys versus girls, newcomer populations, younger versus older children, children with special needs)?

- How do we tailor programming to maximize outcomes for certain specific populations?

- Do specialized content programs or more general programs have a greater positive impact on children?

More longitudinal studies that engage families, schools, and communities will help to answer such questions, as will more research that targets certain populations of children.

Another gap is how to meaningfully measure the impact of after-school programs. The literature is clear that programs must be evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis. While outcomes (or desired outcomes) are more developed, strategies to actually measure those outcomes are lacking. This isn't surprising, given that the sector lacks standardized ways of implementing activities. Flexible, standardized tools that are asset-based and support programs to measure changes in children as they happen over time are needed. Monitoring program activities and collecting data on what is working in programming and what isn't seems a realistic place to start to measure impact of any program ((Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008, HFRP, 2006). This will help inform a shared understanding about the process used to plan and deliver after-school programming, which can eventually lead to better measurement of the quality of programs. Funders also have a role to play here, by exploring what type of accountability and monitoring supports continuous improvement and by leading the development of quality improvement standards for the sector.

Finally, the impact of the struggle to find sustainable funding for after-school programs, while mentioned repeatedly, has not been studied in terms of how programs achieve their outcomes, as well as the impact on families of lost or reduced funding.

> *"The after-school field now has strong research reviews showing what many in the field have argued; these programs can have an important impact on academic and other policy-relevant youth outcomes. The research also shows that many programs do not make a greater difference than other services in the community, and ... learning how to intervene effectively to improve programs is now the primary issue facing the field..."* (Granger, 2008, p.15).

5.0 Survey and Focus Group Results

5.1 DATA WEIGHTING ANALYSIS AND OUTCOME

Analysis of the survey data began with a number of strategic decisions on whether or not to weight the data. After a review of readily available Statistics Canada data it was clear that there were no specific data for the number of children in middle childhood who were in after-school programming in Toronto. As such, it was decided not to weight the data. However, a comparison was made between publicly available data and the survey data that were obtained.

The income distribution of the survey sample was very similar to the Toronto population in every category other than the highest income category of $60,000 and over (see Table 5). This finding was expected, given that most of the surveys were returned through the web rather than via paper copy (a medium offered partly to address computer access barriers).

Table 5: Survey Sample vs. Toronto Population: Income					
Income	**Survey sample**	**% of total sample**	**Toronto Population (1000's*)**	**% of total population**	**% difference****
Under 10 K	67	6.2	945	1.8	4.4
10 to under 20K	61	5.6	3,590	6.8	1.2
20 to under 30K	68	6.2	4,515	8.6	2.4
30 to under 40K	84	7.7	4,930	9.4	1.7
40 to under 50K	82	7.5	4,975	9.5	1.9
50 to under 60K	90	8.3	5,410	10.3	2.0
60K and over	673	61.9	28,050	53.5	8.3

(Based on family income in 2005 of economic families (either a single or two parent family)[2]
** Numbers and percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100. The absolute value of the difference is presented.

The age distribution of the survey sample is similar to that of the Toronto population with two exceptions: children who are 6 years old and children who are 12 years old (see Table 6). In the former instance, the proportion of 6 year-olds in the survey is proportionately almost nine percent greater than the proportion of 6 year-olds in Toronto.

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8   Economic family refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. Foster children are included. By definition, all persons who are members of a census family are also members of an economic family. Examples of the broader concept of economic family include the following: two co-resident census families who are related to one another are considered one economic family; co-resident siblings who are not members of a census family are considered as one economic family; and, nieces or nephews living with aunts or uncles are considered one economic family. (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Table 6: Survey Sample vs. Toronto Population*: Age of Respondent's Children					
Age	Survey Sample	% Of Total Sample	Toronto Population	% Of Total Population	% Difference**
6 years old	305	22.4	62,325	13.7	8.8
7 years old	234	17.2	61,000	13.4	3.8
8 years old	207	15.2	63,785	14.0	1.2
9 years old	198	14.6	64,770	14.2	0.4
10 years old	160	11.8	67,710	14.9	3.1
11 years old	145	10.7	68,505	15.0	4.4
12 years old	110	8.1	67,500	14.8	6.7

Based on 2006 census data
*** Numbers and percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100. The absolute value of the difference is presented.*

The reason for the over-representation of younger children in this sample is likely due to the questionnaire preamble, which states that the survey is focused on after-school programming. As is known from these data, younger children are more likely than older children in the 6 to 12 age group to take part in after-school programming; thus the parents of younger children may have found this a more salient topic and be more likely to take part, as compared to parents of older children in this age group.

Comparisons between the survey results and the Toronto population are instructive as they suggest areas where generalizations can be made with caution. However, overall the similarity of the results with the Toronto population distribution suggest that results can be generalized to parents of children aged 6 to 12 living in Toronto.

5.2   RESULTS

In the survey parents were asked about:

*   The worries that they have about their children.
*   Where their children spend time after school.
*   What activities their children do after school.
*   How satisfied they are with what their children do after school.
*   The ease of finding after-school programs that satisfy different criteria.
*   Choices for after-school programs.
*   Hours during which care is needed.
*   The factors that affect choices for after-school programs.

In the focus groups parents were asked about:

- Parenting in Toronto.
- Current after-school arrangements.
- Pros and cons of the current arrangements.
- Preferred after-school arrangements.
- Preferred way to find out about after-school programming.
- Accessibility of programming.

It was anticipated that results from these questions would give information on the need for after-school programs, the scope and type of programs offered, the utilization of after-school programs and the gaps in programming that currently exist in Toronto.

Note that survey respondents and focus group participants will be described as such throughout the report.

5.2.1 Ages and Gender of Middle Childhood Children

In the survey, parents were asked to give the ages and gender of their children who were currently in after-school programming. Of the 1,600 children described in the survey, 944 were between the ages of 6 and 9 and 427 were between the ages of 10 and 12. Another 229 were under the age of 6 and only 12 were older than 12 (see Table 7). These results confirmed that parents described the ages of their children regardless of whether they were in organized after-school programming, in informal care or another situation. In short, these appeared to be the number of children whose parents have completed the surveys.

Table 7: Age of Children in Survey			
Total Children Under 6	229		
Age (6-9 years)	**Number of Children**	**Age (10 – 12 years)**	**Number of Children**
6	305	**10**	160
7	234	**11**	145
8	207	**12**	110
9	198		
Age 6 – 9 years TOTAL	944	**Age 10 – 12 years TOTAL**	415
Total Children Over 12	12		
N=1,600			

Further analysis revealed that the number of children participating in *organized after-school programming* was indeed less than 1,600; in fact, 641 children were in organized after-school programs and 932 were not.

Cross tabulation analysis (see Table 8) indicated that children between 6 and 9 years of age were in fact more likely to be in after-school programming than not (53.4% vs. 46.6%). The reverse was true for those children who were between 10 and 12 years of age – a little more than one-third (35.3%) were in after-school programming while almost two-thirds (64.7%) were not in this programming. This result is clear support for the perception that as children become older they are less likely to take part in after-school programming.

Table 8: Age of Children by Attendance in After-school Program (%)		
Attendance in after-school programs	Age in years	
	6 - 9	10 - 12
No	46.6	64.7
Yes	53.4	35.3
N=1,573		

Looking at gender (see Table 9), almost equal proportions of girls and boys in this survey attended and did not attend after-school programs. Differences between and within the genders are not statistically significant.

Table 9: Gender of Children Attendance in After-School Programs (%)		
Attendance in after-school programs	Gender	
	Boy	Girl
No	52.5	51.1
Yes	47.5	48.9
N=1,572		

The survey showed children of parents who were born in Canada were more likely than children of immigrant parents to be in after-school programs (see Table 10).

Table 10: Attendance in After-School Programs by Parental Birthplace (%)		
Attendance in after-school programs	Parental Birthplace	
	Born in Canada	Born outside of Canada
No	46.4	63.4
Yes	53.6	36.6
N=1,158		

As well, the higher the parent's household income, the more likely that their children were in after-school programs (See Table 11).

Table 11: Attendance in After-School Programs by Income (%)			
Attendance in after-school programs	**Income**		
	< 30K	**30K - <60K**	**60K+**
No	65.4	62.5	47.5
Yes	34.6	37.5	52.5
N=1,088			

Children in a single parent home (53.7%) were more likely than those in a two-parent home (44.2%) to be in an after-school program (see Table 12).

Table 12: Attendance in After-School Programs by Number of Parents in Household (%)		
Attendance in after-school programs	**Number of Parents in Household**	
	1 parent	**2 parents**
No	46.3	55.8
Yes	53.7	44.2
N=1,134		

As shown in Table 13, children of full-time employed parents (56.4%) were more likely than children of parents who were not employed full-time (25.1%) to attend after-school programs.

Table 13: Attendance in After-School Programs by Full Time Employment (%)		
Attendance in after-school programs	**Parental Full Time Employment**	
	Full Time Employment	**Not Full Employment**
No	43.6	74.9
Yes	56.4	25.1
N=1,137		

Participants in the focus groups had a total of 108 children between the ages of 6 and 12; 73 of which were between the ages of 6 and 9, and the other 35 were between the ages of 10 and 12 (see Table 14).

Table 14: Age of Children in Focus Groups			
Age (6-9 years)	**Number of Children**	**Age (10 – 12 years)**	**Number of Children**
6	12	**10**	15
7	26	**11**	11
8	17	**12**	9
9	18		
Age 6 – 9 years TOTAL	73	**Age 10 – 12 years TOTAL**	35

5.2.2   Respondent Profile

It is instructive to have a greater understanding of the demographics of respondents in this survey (see Table 15). Respondents were asked to indicate the option that best described their household income before taxes. When this information was combined into categories, as in Table 8 below, it was clear that the majority of respondents (51.3%) were in the highest income category. Another one in five (19.5%) earned between $30,000 and $60,000 per year and 12.1 percent earned less than $30,000 per year.

Table 15: Income (%)	
Less than $30,000	12.1
$30,000 to less than $60,000	19.5
$60,000 and more	51.3
N=1,088	

When asked to describe the employment situation of the parents in the household (see Table 16), about half of them (51.5%) said that both parents were working full-time. For some two parents households, one parent worked full-time and the other worked part-time (14.8%) or one worked full-time and the other was mainly at home (13.5%). For 2.3 percent of parents in two parent households, parents were both working part-time or mainly at home.

Single parents comprised 17.6 percent of the respondents: 14.9 percent worked full-time and 2.7 percent were mainly at home. Less than one percent (0.4%) outlined another situation in the comment box such as being "a full-time student," "both parents learn English full time," and "jobless."

Table 16: Family Employment Situation (%)	
Both parents work full-time	51.5
One works full-time and the other works part-time	14.8
One works full-time and the other is mainly at home	13.5
Both parents are working part-time or mainly at home	2.3
I am a single parent working full-time	14.9
I am a single parent mainly at home	2.7
Other	0.4
N=1,137	

Not surprisingly, income tended to increase with full-time employment, regardless of whether referring to a one-parent or a two-parent household (see Table 17). Three-quarters of full-time employed parents (75.9%) earned $60,000 or more per year compared to 24.1 percent of parents who were not employed full-time. Conversely, 61.7 percent of parents who were not employed full-time earned less than $30,000 a year compared to 38.3 percent of parents who were employed full-time.

Table 17: Employment Situation by Income (%)			
	Income		
	< $30K	**$30K - < $60K**	**$60K +**
Parents full-time employed	38.3	58.5	75.9
Parents not full-time employed	61.7	41.5	24.1
N=1,078			

In total, four in five (82.3%) of respondents were in two-parent households and 17.7% were in one-parent households (see Table 18).

Table 18: One- or Two-Parent Household (%)	
One-parent household	17.7
Two-parent household	82.3
N=1,134	

While income was higher for parents who were full-time employed vs. those who were not full-time employed regardless of whether the parents were single parents or part of a two-parent family, income was higher in two parent families than in one parent families (see Table 19). While seven in ten two-parent households (69.5%) had a household income of $60,000 or more per year, only 29 percent of one-parent households had this same income. Conversely, 36.3 percent of one-parent households earned $30,000 or less per year but only 9.3 percent of two-parent households earned this same amount.

Table 19: One- or Two-Parent Household by Income(%)			
	Income		
	< $30K	**$30K - < $60K**	**$60K +**
One parent household	36.3	34.7	29.0
Two parent household	9.3	21.2	69.5
N=1,075			

As seen in Table 20, 8.3 percent of respondents lived with extended family leaving 91.7 percent who did not live with extended family.

Table 20: Do You Live With Extended Family (%)	
Yes	8.3
No	91.7
N=1,137	

More than half (55.7%) of respondents were born in Canada while 44.3 percent came to Canada from another country (see Table 21).

Table 21: Place of Birth (%)	
Born in Canada	55.7
Born outside of Canada	44.3
N=1,158	

It appeared that there were significant differences relative to immigration status that influenced whether respondents lived with extended family (see Table 22). Respondents who were born outside of Canada were almost twice as likely as those born within Canada (11% vs. 6%) to live with extended family.

Table 22: Place of Birth by Living with Extended Family (%)		
	Live with Extended Family	
	Yes	**No**
Born in Canada	6.1	93.9
Born outside of Canada	11.0	89.0
N=1,137		

As well, income appeared to vary between parents who were born in Canada and those who were born outside of Canada (see Table 23). Parents who were born in Canada (72.9%) were much more likely than those born outside of Canada (48.1%) to be in the highest income bracket. Those born in Canada (7.8%) were much less likely than parents born outside of Canada (23.0%) to be in the lowest income bracket.

Table 23: Place of Birth by Income (%)			
	Income		
	< $30K	$30K - < $60K	$60K +
Born in Canada	7.8	19.3	72.9
Born outside of Canada	23.0	28.8	48.1
N=1,088			

Respondents who indicated that they were born outside of Canada were asked how long they had been living in Canada (see Table 24). The majority (61.7%) had lived in Canada for 10 years or longer with another one in five (21.5%) who said they had lived in Canada between 5 and 10 years. Another 6.9 percent had lived in Canada for three to five years and about one in ten (9.9%) had lived in Canada for less than three years.

Table 24: How Long Have You Lived in Canada (%)	
Less than 3 years	9.9
3 years to less than 5 years	6.9
5 years to less than 10 years	21.5
10 years or longer	61.7
N=507	

Furthermore, the longer parents lived in Canada the more likely that they were full-time employed (see Table 25). Among those who had been in Canada less than three years, 20.4 percent were full-time employed and 79.6 percent were not full-time employed. These proportions shifted significantly to the reverse trend among those who were born outside of Canada but lived in Canada for 10 years or longer. Here 63.4 percent of these parents were full-time employed and 36.6 percent were not full-time employed.

Table 25: Length of Time in Canada by Employment (%)		
	Full-time employment	Not full-time employment
Less than 3 years	20.4	79.6
3 years to less than 5 years	36.4	63.6
5 years to less than 10 years	57.0	43.0
10 years or longer	63.4	36.6
N=498		

Finally parents were asked to give the first three digits of their postal codes. This information was used to categorize them into the four quadrants as per the designations used at Children's Services Division at the City of Toronto. Using this categorization scheme, as shown in Table 26, one-third of respondents (33.8%) were from the South quadrant and almost equal proportions were from the other three quadrants.

Table 26: Quadrant (%)	
North	22.1
South	33.8
East	22.1
West	21.9
N=962	

5.2.3   Being a Parent in Toronto Today

Focus groups participants were asked about the experience of being a parent in Toronto. These parents generally felt that Toronto has many choices for programs and activities for children ages 6 to 12 available. Cold weather and safety were the main concerns when it came to parenting.

Parents from focus groups felt that one of the key positive aspects of parenting in Toronto was that, accessibility aside, the City offered a good range of programs for children ages 6 to 12 in all out-of-school times (i.e., before-school, after-school, weekends, and holidays). In addition, public spaces such as parks with playgrounds were also seen to be readily available. Some exception was noted to this in terms of some of the "inner suburb" areas (i.e., pre-amalgamation cities), where both programs and parks were seen to be lacking. This created some frustration among parents in the focus groups who struggled to come up with positive ways for their children to spend their out-of-school time.

The availability of programs was seen to have many benefits, including keeping children busy, allowing children to bond with each other, and helping develop children's interests:

> *"I love that everything is within reach. You can do everything you want to do. My youngest likes rock-climbing, so we do that. My oldest seems to want to learn hockey, so he does that. You can walk down through the valley to the conservation area. Everyone's needs can be met."* - Focus Group Participant

> *"The library system itself is awesome for kids. They have a lot of resources, programs for the kids, tons of material. They have everything."* - Focus Group Participant

Beside availability of programs, there was a strong feeling that public transportation in Toronto is well-developed enough that getting around with children is easier than other places in Canada (particularly smaller communities/towns) or other countries.

In terms of what makes parenting a challenge in Toronto, parents stated that the cold winters make finding things to do hard, since their children usually do not want to go outside to play when the weather is cold.

> *"In wintertime it's hard. There aren't many activities and it's cold so kids don't care. My kids are very outgoing people and they love to be with friends, so it's hard to keep them at home."* - Focus Group Participant

In addition, parents stated that they worry about the safety of their children:

> *"I can see the school right from my living room window – I can watch my kids walk to school, but I don't trust it. There's the parkette there and my kids have to go through there. There are always teenagers there and beer bottles broken. For a year and a half the bench was set on fire and there was no bench. Half the bench was gone and they didn't replace it for over a year."* - Focus Group Participant

It seems that while Toronto offers a diversity of choice for meeting children's after-school needs, there are also practical issues that make parenting challenging, which may impact on how parents access those choices.

5.2.4   What Parents Worry About

When asked what they worry about the most from a list of three choices, a majority of parents who completed the survey (50.8%) said that they worried about how well their children were doing in school (see Table 27). Almost equal proportions worried about what their children were doing when they were not in school and before the parents came home (20.6%) and who their child's friends were (19.4%). Another 7.5 percent said that they did not worry most about any of these issues and 1.7 percent did not know or could not respond to this question.

Table 27: What Parents Worry About (%)	
How well my child is doing in school	50.8
What my child is doing when not in school (before I get home)	20.6
Who my child's friends are	19.4
None	7.5
I don't know	1.7
N=1,224	

5.2.5   Where Children Spend their After-School Time

In the survey parents and guardians were asked an open-ended question about where their children spent time after school was over and before a parent or guardian came home in the evening (see Table 28). This question was designed to gain information on where 6 to 12 years olds were spending time before coming home in the evening and more specifically, to gain an indication of the proportions of children who were in after-school programming as opposed to other forms of care such as staying with a friend or relative, and to assess the proportions of children who cared for themselves. It is important to note that as this was an open-ended question, parents typed/wrote their responses themselves. Parents could give more than one response to reflect the multi-layered nature of after-school options that are often accessed in Toronto. Responses were coded into categories.

About a third of parents who completed the survey (34%) said that their children between the ages of 6 and 12 were in an after-school program, without elaborating on the nature of this programming. Responses included comments such as "*licensed childcare*," "*staff of the childcare,*" and "*paid after-school program*." Another 10.4 percent said that their children were in an after-school program in the community and 9.4 percent said that their children were in an after-school programming in a school. Taken together, this would suggest that approximately 53.8% of children spend their time in an after-school program some of the time.

In all, 15 percent said that their children stayed with them after-school (exemplified by comments such as "*I am home with my son*" or "*A parent is home by 3:15 pm when children arrive from school*"). Another 9.4 percent mentioned that their children stayed with a paid babysitter. This includes a nanny caring for the child in the child's home or a person who cares for children in their own home. Almost ten percent (9.4%) said that their children were "*at home*" without elaborating on whether the child was home alone or with the parent or another person.

About five percent (5.3%) did elaborate to say that their child was old enough to take care of him/herself. About six percent (6.2%) said that their children stayed with a grandparent or other relative while five percent (5.2%) said that their children were with friends, either playing with them (in an undefined location or at the park) or at their children's friends' homes, or with the parents' friends. It was not clear when the children were with their own friend whether an adult was supervising them but the assumption was made that the parents' friends were adults. About four percent gave a variety of answers that did not allow for a determination of who they were with, such as "*He plays at the park*," "*She watches TV,*" or "*He does his homework*." Another two percent (2.1%) said that their children stayed with a sibling at home and about one percent (1.2%) said that their child was at the library (without specifying a program).

This data suggests that a slim majority of children between 6 and 12 had some kind of organized after-school programming as an option. However many parents commented that this was one of many combinations of options that they used in a given week and the data show that another 46 percent are not in after-school programming.

Table 28: Where Children Spend Time After-School (%)*	
After-school program – general (no specific program named)	34.0
Stays with a parent	15.0
At an after-school program in the community	10.4
Stays with a paid babysitter	9.4
At an after-school program in a school	9.4
At home (undefined as to who child is with)	9.4
Stays with a relative	6.2
Child is able to take care of him or herself	5.3
Stays with a friend	5.2
Unclear total (at the park, watching TV, not clear whether alone or in a program)	3.8
Stays with a sibling	2.1
At the library**	1.2
N=1,313 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided. **The Toronto Public Library does not offer after-school programs.*	

5.2.6   Who Takes Care of Children After-School

Survey respondents were also directly asked who took care of their children after-school and before they came home (see Table 29). In this close-ended question, parents and guardians were encouraged to select all of the caregiver options that applied to their situation, again, to reflect the reality of often having more than one caregiver for after-school care. In response to this question, approximately 45.5 percent said that their children were cared for by staff at an after-school program either in the community (23.2%) or in their school (22.3%). Almost two in five (37.3%) said that they themselves, or the other parent or guardian, took care of their children after-school. About sixteen percent (16.3%) said that a paid babysitter cared for their child and 15 percent (14.9%) said that their children were with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin or other relative. About eight percent (7.7%) said that their children were with a sibling after-school and before their parents came home and seven percent said that their children were with a friend or neighbour in this time period. Less than two percent mentioned staff at the public library (1.1%), someone at their place of worship (0.3%) or another person (3.3%).

Again, while the largest proportion of survey parents indicated that their children were in after-school programming, there were approximately 54.5% who did not have their children in after-school programming.

Table 29: Who Takes Care of Children After-School (%)*	
I do or other parent/guardian	37.3
Staff at an after-school program in the community	23.2
At an after-school program in their school	22.3
Paid babysitter	16.3
Grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, other relative	14.9
Child is able to take care of him/herself	8.6
Sibling	7.7
Friend or neighbour	7.0
Staff in the public library**	1.1
Someone at our place of worship	0.2
Other	3.3
N=1,313 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided. **The Toronto Public Library does not offer after-school programs.*	

Most parents in the focus groups "cobbled together" a wide range of programs that together crafted an after-school plan for their children. This included both accessing after-school programs and having children at home after-school for a certain number of days per week. Programs were run by local schools, community agencies (e.g. YMCA, St. Christopher House), the City of Toronto, private companies (e.g. tutoring organizations like Kumon Learning Centres), and religious groups.

Only a few parents in the focus groups had their children consistently at home or consistently in an after-school program through one or more organizations.

How many children are home alone?

An objective for this project was to get an assessment of how many children between 6 and 12 years of age were at home between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.. Results give a picture of these children saying that:

- 8.6 percent of parents in the survey said that their children were able to take care of themselves. Compare this to 0.8 percent of parents who said having their children take care of themselves was their ideal after-school care scenario

- The majority of these children (63.3%) were between 10 and 12 years of age. Another 36.7 percent were between 6 and 9 years of age.

- When asked what their children did while home alone, 77 percent said their children engaged in free play, 72 percent said their children had a snack, 69 percent said their children relaxed and 61 percent said the children watched movies or tv.

- After-school program personnel said that children who were not in their program were often on the street looking in at the children who were in the program; they were at home babysitting younger siblings; or they were home on their own. After-school personnel also spoke of the perceptions of the older children that after-school programming was for "babies."

- There were no significant demographic differences in the survey to distinguish parents of children who stayed home alone from those who children were in other after-school care situations. The single largest determinant in this data appeared to be age.

5.2.7 Reasons for Participation in After-School Programming

Parents who completed the survey were asked to indicate why a child would be involved in organized after-school care other than for safety reasons (see Table 30). Almost half of parents (47.2%) said that children would be involved in after-school programming in order to develop their interests and hobbies. Another one in five (22.3%) said that this involvement would keep them busy and out of trouble and 14.5 percent said that involvement in organized after-school programming would allow their children to have fun. Almost nine percent (8.8%) felt that this type of activity would help children with schoolwork and around two percent (1.6%) felt that organized after-school programming would help children learn about religion and culture. About four percent of survey parents (3.8%) felt that none of these reasons were behind children's involvement in organized after-school programming and 1.6 percent could not answer the question.

Table 30: Reasons for Take-up of After-School Programming (%)	
To develop their interests and hobbies	47.2
To keep them busy and out of trouble	22.3
To have fun	14.6
To help with school work	8.8
To learn about our religion and culture	1.6
None of these	3.8
I don't know	1.6
N=1,097	

Interestingly, perceptions of why children would be involved in organized after-school care varied with the number of parents in the household, whether parents were born in Canada or in another country,

household income, and employment. For example, survey parents in a two-parent household were more likely than those in a one-parent household to say that children should be in organized after-school programming to develop interests and hobbies (51.8% vs. 41.6%) but were less likely than parents in a one parent household to say that (23% vs. 29.8%) this programming is to keep kids busy and out of trouble. Survey parents who came to Canada from another country (55.9%) were more likely than those born in Canada (46.7%) to see organized after-school programming as a vehicle to develop children's interests and hobbies.

As well, parents in households with a total income of between $10,000 and $30,000 were more likely than those in the household with the highest income ($60,000 and over) to say that organized after-school programming keeps kids busy and out of trouble (28% vs. 22.3%) and helps with homework (15.3% vs. 9%).

5.2.8   Satisfaction with After-School Arrangements

In order to understand parents' attitudes about where and how their children spend their after-school time, survey respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their after-school arrangement (see Table 31). Overall parents were satisfied; a 78.2 percent majority said that they were either very (31.3%) or somewhat (46.9%) satisfied with what their children did after-school. Another 19.9 percent were not satisfied, with 6.4 percent saying that they were not at all satisfied. Two percent (1.9%) did not know the answer.

Table 31: Satisfaction with Current After-School Care Arrangement (%)	
Very satisfied	31.3
Somewhat satisfied	46.9
Not very satisfied	13.5
Not at all satisfied	6.4
I don't know	1.9
N=1,313	

In the cross tabulation analysis below, there are percentages indicating where parents and guardians who completed the survey had varying levels of satisfaction with different childcare arrangements. Only significant results are displayed (see Table 32). Parents were most satisfied with arrangements where their children were in an after-school program either in the community (87.9%) or in the school itself (85.9%). To a lesser degree, a majority of survey parents was satisfied with having their children with a relative (68.8%), siblings (68.4%), or friends and neighbours (65.9%). A smaller majority was satisfied with having their children with public library staff (53.8%), even though the public library does not offer after-school programs under the Day Nurseries Act or Ministry guidelines, but instead offers library programming using the Toronto Public Libraries' guidelines. Results for having the child in the parents' care, with a paid babysitter, with someone at a place of worship, or on their own, were not significant and are not presented.

Table 32: Satisfaction with After-School Care Arrangement by Who takes Care of Children(%)						
	Community after-school program	After-school program in the school	Relative	Sibling	Friend / Neighbour	Public library staff
Satisfied	87.9	85.9	68.8	68.4	65.9	53.8
Not Satisfied	12.1	14.1	31.2	31.6	35.1	46.2
N=1,265						

5.2.9   Finding and Accessing After-School Programs

"It is very important to have a program in each and every school or community centre. [They] should accommodate every child in neighbourhood. This is because 6 to 12 is a very crucial age. At that age children listen, look up to [others]." - Focus Group Participant

Finding After-School Programs

Given the number of arrangements with extended family and friends, parents in the survey were asked whether they had ever looked for after-school programs in their community. This was intended to give an indication of how many parents needed this programming. As seen in Table 33, three-quarters (74.6%) of parents have looked for this programming and one-quarter (25.4%) have not done so.

Table 33: Have Looked for After-School Programs in Their Community in Toronto (%)	
Yes	74.6
No	25.4
N=1,176	

Focus group parents also stated that they did try to seek out some kind of activity for their children at least a few times a week, and that variety felt important to them in that endeavour:

"I have my daughter through [a] Christian centre. Wintertime skating, summer spring dancing. Not all the time – [we are] switching according to what she likes. It's two, three times a week. She takes Albanian and Spanish class as well. Try to keep her busy because she doesn't like to stay at home. When it's good weather, we always go out." - Focus Group Participant

"You don't want to keep them busy seven days a week, you don't want to over-schedule them. I try to do things three or four times a week. Other times they're at home. - Focus Group Participant

All programs that were used as examples by parents in the focus groups had the following characteristics (See Table 34):

Table 34: Characteristics of After-School Programs Outlined in the Focus Groups	
Program Characteristic	**Details**
Cost	The majority of programs have some sort of cost structure; a few programs are free (e.g., the Toronto Public Library [TPL]). Note: While the Toronto Public Library has stated that they do not provide formal after-school programs, parents in the focus groups referred to the TPL as providing a viable after-school program choice.
Focus/Content	Key categories of focus for program are: sports-based programs (e.g. karate), arts programs (e.g. choir, arts lessons), academic-based programs (e.g. reading, tuition programs, homework help) and cultural programs (e.g. Chinese language or culture classes).
Frequency of programs	Most programs run once a week; a few programs run 2 or 3 X a week.
Location	Programs are within walking distance or short driving distance (i.e. 5 – 10 minutes) of home or school. Some programs run by or hosted in the local school; others by community agencies (e.g. YMCA), others by private companies.

When accessing programs, parents in the focus groups considered the following three key variables in order:

1. Cost.
2. Accessibility of programs (i.e. times and dates and open spots).
3. Appropriate/desired content.

Parents in the focus groups found about after-school programs through three key sources:

- Their child's school.
- The Fun Guide (a guide put out by City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation on recreation programs in various neighbourhoods in Toronto).
- Other parents.

Interestingly, parents in the focus groups indicated that of all available sources, their preference for finding out about after-school programs was through their child's school. They stated that this source made the most sense to them, as other information was already coming from the school on a regular basis with which after-school programming information could easily be included. They also indicated that if they had questions, they could directly ask school personnel with whom they already had a relationship. Finally, parents in the focus groups felt that if the information came from the school, it would be thorough:

> *"I know that the schools will give me all the information I need about what I can do with my child....I don't know if I can always find it on my own."*
> – Focus Group Participant

Barriers to Accessing After-School Programs

Parents in the survey who had looked for after-school programming were asked about how easy or hard it had been for them to find after-school programs in their community with a number of different access attributes (see Table 35). Results indicated that most parents did not find it particularly easy to find programs with these key attributes. A majority (65%) said that it was either very (47.3%) or somewhat (17.7%) hard to find an after-school program that included having someone pick their child up from school and take them to the program. Affordability was also a large barrier, with 62.9 percent of parents who said that it was very (33.6%) or somewhat (29.3%) hard to find a program that they could afford. A majority also had difficulties finding programs that were in a convenient location (i.e., close to work or home; 57.4% said this was hard, 29.8% said this was very hard), that were high quality (58.1% said this was hard, 25.9% said this was very hard), that were run by adults they felt they could trust (53.1% said this was hard, 24.4% said this was very hard), and that had activities that were interesting to their children (47.8% said this was hard, 17.8% said this was very hard).

Table 35: Difficulty Finding After-School Programming on Key Indicators (%)					
Indicator	**Level of Difficulty**				
	Very easy	**Somewhat easy**	**Somewhat hard**	**Very Hard**	**I don't know/ Not applicable**
Include transport to the program *(N=915)*	10.7	12.1	17.7	47.3	12.1
Affordable *(N=914)*	11.4	22.0	29.3	33.6	3.7
Convenient location *(N=917)*	15.8	24.5	27.6	29.8	2.3
Quality *(N=909)*	10.2	25.4	32.2	25.9	6.3
Can trust the staff *(N=917)*	12.2	28.6	28.7	24.4	6.1
Interesting activities *(N=918)*	14.7	33.0	30.0	17.8	4.6

Parents in the focus groups also experienced challenges in terms of accessing after-school programs. Every participant wanted to be able to create an after-school plan that met all their children's and their own needs. However, while some focus group parents spoke of being able to be deliberate, most stated that the factors that came into decision-making were often not under their control, and that finding appropriate things for their children to do in the after-school time was dependent on luck, timing and on maneuvering access barriers.

In terms of barriers, timing and location of programs were consistently cited as the major issues for parents who took part in the focus groups. This is primarily because most programs expect the parent to bring the child to the program, but when both parents and extended family members are working, it becomes difficult to meet this requirement. For some parents that were not working outside the home, this did not present an issue if the program was located in their community. However, when programs were far away, reaching them became a challenge whether the parent was working or not, especially for those with children under the age of 6 (i.e. it required the parents to get all the children ready to go, and the time and energy for this was often felt to be prohibitive).

"After school the difficulty is working with my work schedule. I work part-time and contract basis, different hours. The problem is transportation. That's the main concern for me. After school, I am not home. That's the main hurdle for me. The programs are good. When they sit with other children, it motivates them to do their work. But if she is alone in my house, she'll do what the big kid is doing. In programs I don't have to be after her to do her homework." - Focus Group Participant

"It's costly, far away, hard to go via TTC when I have to take everyone [all her children]." - Focus Group Participant

"My daughter's 11 and even though I'm at home, it's right away to the TV or I have to plan something for us to do. There are programs that are after-school programs that aren't necessarily in the school. Those are good for kids who can travel there themselves. My kid doesn't understand that she can't travel there on her own. She has friends who are going there on her own and that's okay with their parents, but it's not okay with me. There's a group of really tight friends and she's the only one who's not allowed to travel home by herself. It would be good to have a program where they can all be together instead of her watching her friends walk home by themselves when I pick her up from school. It's an embarrassment issue too, she doesn't realize it's about safety and thinks I'm being overprotective." - Focus Group Participant

It seems that finding ways to manage the logistics of getting children to programs that are not school-based presents a significant challenge for parents. These results are of concern, as they suggest that while the majority of parents in Toronto have looked for after-school programming, it is very difficult for them to find programming that has adequate transportation, affordability, convenience of location, quality, trustworthy staff, and interesting activities.

Demographic Factors in Finding Affordable After-School Programs

In the survey, perceptions of the ease or difficulty of finding after-school programs with these attributes varied significantly with the number of parents in the household, the country where parents were born, income, and employment (see Table 36). For example, finding affordable after-school programming appeared to be easier for two parent households (36.1% vs. 24.1%), for parents born in Canada versus those born outside of Canada (38.6% vs. 28.4%), and for the wealthiest Toronto parents (40.3% of those in household incomes of $60,000 and over compared to 22.9% of those in households with $10,000 - $20,000 in income). Not surprisingly, for those parents who were in the lower socio-economic levels, cost was a greater issue when it came to after-school programming.

Table 36 : Difficulty Finding Affordable After-School Programming by Demographic Factors (%)		
	Easy	**Hard**
Number of parents in household		
One parent (N=141)	24.1	75.9
Two parents (N=684)	36.1	63.9
Place of Birth		
Born in Canada (N=482)	38.6	61.8
Born outside of Canada (N=356)	28.4	71.6
Income		
$ <30,000 (N=105)	22.9	77.1
$30,000-<$60,000 (N=192)	23.4	76.6
$60,000 and over (N=514)	40.3	59.7

Further analysis showed that in the highest income category (households with an income of $60,000 and over), 44.3 percent of Canadian-born respondents but only 32.4 percent of immigrants found it easy to find affordable after-school programs.[9]

Cost was an issue that experts brought up as well. There was a concern that after-school programming was too expensive for many parents. Some experts mentioned that programs run by the "Y" and the "Boys and Girls Clubs" as good models in this regard because of the low costs to parents.

Demographic Factors in Finding Conveniently-Located After-School Programs

Similarly, survey parents in two-parent families had an easier time than single parents finding after-school programming in a convenient location (41.7% vs. 32.6% - see Table 37). Canadian-born parents (43.8%) found it easier than parents born outside of Canada (36.1%) to find conveniently located after-school programming. While it appears intuitive that having two parents in the home increases the options for after-school program locations, it is less intuitive that parents born outside of Canada have a harder time finding convenient after-school programming than parents born in Canada.

Table 37: Difficulty Finding After-School Programming in a Convenient Location by Demographic Factors (%)		
	Easy	**Hard**
Number of parents in household		
One parent (N=141)	32.6	67.4
Two parents (N=698)	41.7	58.3
Place of Birth		
Born in Canada (N=489)	43.8	56.2
Born outside of Canada (N=363)	36.1	63.9

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9   N=341 and N=173 respectively

Program Waitlists as an Accessibility Issue

One issue that was cited as an important barrier in the focus groups is the issue of waitlists for programs. Parents in the focus groups said that many programs have very few spaces available or have long waiting lists. This means that even if parents find the ideal program for their children, they can't always get into it easily:

> *"My husband and I have to make sure we are up and ready to start dialling by 7 a.m. to access the program we want. If we don't get on it right away, we lose our chance. It is very important to be on time and sometimes our kids need us and we can't get to the phone at the right minute and then our chance is lost."* - Focus Group Participant

Parents expressed confusion as to why there were seemingly so few spaces for children in after-school programs, and why their availability was not a higher priority for school and local authorities.

5.2.10 Organized After-School Programming: Satisfaction

Survey respondents who said that their children were with a paid babysitter (i.e., someone who cares for children after-school in their home), with staff at an after-school program or childcare centre in the community or at the school, or with staff at the public library – in short, respondents who had their children in organized after-school programming - were asked to rate their satisfaction on a number of aspects of the after-school care arrangement (see Table 38). Of the aspects of after-school programming that were examined, parents and guardians were most satisfied (in descending order) with the location of their children's after-school program (86.8% satisfied, 68.1% very satisfied), hours (83.1% satisfied, 60.4% very satisfied), safety (87.6% satisfied, 59.1% satisfied), and ability to meet their language needs (70.9% satisfied, 51.7% very satisfied). While the majority of parents were satisfied with the quality of staff (78.7% satisfied, 46.1% very satisfied), ability of the program to meet their cultural needs (67.9% satisfied, 43.4% very satisfied), the activities offered (73.2% satisfied, 34.9% very satisfied), and the cost (63.1% satisfied, 28.1% very satisfied), these four factors were on the lower levels of satisfaction. Cost was clearly the issue that parents were least satisfied with – in fact 32.5 percent of parents were dissatisfied with the cost of after-school programming with 13.3 percent saying that they were not at all satisfied. Of note, 20.4 percent of survey respondents were unable to comment on whether their children's after-school programming met their language needs and 20.2 percent were unable to comment on whether the after-school programming met their cultural needs.

These results suggest that while it was difficult for survey parents to find organized after-school programming that had attributes that they were pleased with, once they did decide on this programming, they were satisfied. Cost appeared to be the factor where parents tended to be least satisfied.

Table 38 : Satisfaction with Organized After-School Programming on Key Indicators (%)					
Indicator	**Level of Satisfaction**				
	Very satisfied	**Somewhat satisfied**	**Not very satisfied**	**Not at all satisfied**	**I don't know/ Not applicable**
Location *(N=593)*	68.1	18.7	5.9	3.5	3.7
Hours *(N=591)*	60.4	22.7	9.0	3.2	4.7
Safety *(N=589)*	59.1	28.5	4.9	2.5	4.9
Ability to meet our language needs *(N=588)*	51.7	19.2	5.1	3.6	20.4
Quality of staff *(N=592)*	46.1	32.6	10.5	4.1	6.8
Ability to meet our cultural needs *(N=595)*	43.4	24.5	7.6	4.4	20.2
Activities offered *(N=590)*	34.9	38.3	14.1	7.5	5.3
Cost *(N=595)*	28.1	35.0	19.2	13.3	4.5

Demographic Factors in Satisfaction with Meeting Language and Cultural Needs

Survey respondents born outside of Canada were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with the ability of after-school programming to meet language and cultural needs, as compared to parents and guardians who are born in Canada (see Table 39). In fact, the proportions of respondents who were satisfied with the ability of after-school programming to meet their language and cultural needs were almost exactly reversed: while a majority of those born in Canada were satisfied (63.8%, 63.3%), a corresponding majority of those born outside of Canada were dissatisfied (75.6%, 69.2%). Clearly immigrant status played a large role in satisfaction on these two measures. As one focus group participant said:

> *"From my experience and what I've heard, there is a language barrier for children. Most immigrant children experience racism, bullying. I used to go with [my] children and they used to be scared of other children."* - Focus Group Participant

Table 39 : Satisfaction with Ability to Meet Language and Cultural Needs by Place of Birth (%)				
	Birth place			
	Born in Canada*		**Born outside of Canada****	
	Satisfied	**Not Satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Not satisfied**
Ability to meet language needs **(N=266) **(N=179)*	63.8	24.4	36.3	75.6
Ability to meet cultural needs **(N=263) **(N=186)*	63.3	30.8	36.7	69.2

Demographic Factors in Satisfaction with Cost

When it comes to cost, being born outside of Canada and the age of the children in after-school programming appeared to be the most significant factors affecting survey respondents' satisfaction. As seen in Table 40, while a large proportion of both parents born in Canada and those born outside of Canada were satisfied with the cost of their children's after-school programming, parents born outside of Canada were significantly less satisfied with this cost. Again, this satisfaction level appears tied to the lower incomes of immigrants as compared to the higher incomes of Canadian-born parents. However, among focus group participants, concern was expressed about free programs perhaps not being of the highest quality possible. Interestingly, a more moderate approach where cost can be geared to income or be minimal seemed to be the preference for parents.

Table 40: Satisfaction with Cost by Place of Birth (%)				
	Born in Canada*		Born outside of Canada**	
	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
Cost *(N=330) **(N=209)*	71.8	28.2	56.9	43.1

Given the confound between income and place of birth, additional analyses were done that indicated that for the wealthiest respondents, earning $60,000 and over, respondents born in Canada (75.1%) were more likely than immigrants (55.2%) to say that they were satisfied with the cost of after-school programming.[10]

Indeed, most focus group participants stated that the fees to access programs were simply too high:

> *"[After-school programs] can also be really expensive and there is also a waiting list a lot of the time, so you have to really decide."* - Focus Group Participant

However, focus group participants also stated that the many smaller, and perhaps hidden, costs also make it a challenge to access programs:

> *"And then not everywhere accepts subsidies. There's a certain list that accepts subsidies. And once you go out of your area, that's more money. Gas money, TTC money, money, money, money. [People think] we're made of money."* - Focus Group Participant

A sizeable number of the parents that participated in the focus groups indicated another challenge – that of falling "in-between" income stratas such that accessing programming became a challenge:

> *"For people whose incomes aren't very high, but not low-income – they `re not able to get subsidy, but want to send kids to after-school programs, what can they do?"* - Focus Group Participant

Interestingly, one of the things that seemed to surprise parents in the focus groups the most about costs for programs related to tutoring programs specifically. They felt that tutoring programs are often more expensive than recreational programs in the community. Many parents told stories of tutoring programs (coming out of schools or in the community) being free or having nominal fees in their countries of origin, presumably because academic achievement was seen as a fundamental precursor to success in adult life. As such, participants strongly felt that tutoring should be more widely provided in the after-school time, and should be offered at reduced fees.

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10   N=253 and N=125 respectively

5.2.11 After-School Activities

Survey respondents were asked to indicate all of the activities that their children took part in after-school, regardless of whether they were in formal after-school programming or not (see Table 42). The majority of parents and guardians mentioned free play (82%), snack time (70.9%), structured games and recreational activities (57.6%), and help with homework (53.4%). Almost half of parents also mentioned that their children relax (49.2%) and watch movies and television (42.4%) and 12.6 percent mentioned that their children receive tutoring. About four percent (4.4%) said that their children receive religious education, three percent (3.3%) mentioned sports, and about 6.7 percent mentioned another activity. Other activities included speech therapy, taking part in a spelling bee and reading, among other mentions.

Table 41: Activities That Children do After School (%)*	
Free play	82.0
Snack time	70.9
Structured games and recreational activities	57.6
Help with homework	53.4
Relaxing	49.2
Movies/TV	42.4
Tutoring	12.6
Religious teaching	4.4
Sports	3.3
Other	6.7
N=1,308 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided.*	

There was a difference in the after-school activities that children did based on their age group.

Children between 6 and 9 years of age were more likely to engage in free play than those who were between 10 and 12 years of age (85.1% vs. 77.3%). However, children who were between 10 and 12 years of age were more likely than those who were between 6 and 9 years of age to get help with homework (61.8% vs. 51.7%), relax (58.0% vs. 45.7%), or watch movies or TV (49.3% vs. 39.2%). Note that there were no significant differences in the after-school activities that children did based on other demographic factors.

Finally, Table 43 outlines the differences in activities that children engaged in across age groups, depending on whether or not they attended an after-school program. Of note, children who take part in after-school programming are more likely than those who do not take part in this programming to take part in structured games and recreational activities (75.3% vs. 43.5%). Conversely, children in after-school care are less likely than those not in after-school care to have help with homework (48.8% vs. 57.1%), relax (39.7% vs. 56.7%), or watch movies and TV (31.7% vs. 50.8%).

Table 42: Activities That Children do After School by Presence in After-School Program (%)*		
	Take part in after-school program	
	No	Yes
Free play	79.8	84.7
Structured games and recreational activities	43.5	75.3
Snack time	69.9	72.1
Help with homework	57.1	48.8
Relaxing	56.7	39.7
Movies/TV	50.8	31.7
Tutoring	11.4	14.3
Sports	2.9	3.8
Religious teaching	5.8	2.8
Other	7.4	5.9
N=1,308 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided.*		

In terms of the time when parents in the focus groups had their children at home, these participants stated that they had a set schedule of activities that they followed. This schedule almost always revolved around three key activities: having an after-school snack, completing homework, and then free time to play or do "fun" activities. Those "fun" activities meant watching TV, surfing on the Internet or playing video games almost 100% of the time (occasionally playing outside was mentioned).

5.2.12 Ideal After-School Care and Programming

Survey respondents were asked a number of questions pertaining to their preferences for their children's after-school care, in order to get information on what parents would want for their children's ideal after-school care situation. To start, parents were asked if they could choose how their child spends his/her time after-school, whether they would keep things the way they are or they would change them (see Table 44). A majority (53.8%) would change things while two in five (39.9%) would keep things the way they are.

Table 43: Keep Things the Same or Change Them (%)	
Keep things the way they are now	39.9
Change things	53.8
I don't know	6.3
N=1,182	

Parents and guardians were also asked which activity from a list of after-school activities would be best for their child's needs (see Table 45). Almost half (45.5%) selected physical activity or sports as the best after-school activity for their children's needs. Another 23.7 percent chose art, music, or dance and 20.6 percent selected homework help. Interestingly, while 7.7 percent said that free play would be best for their children's needs, 82 percent (see Table 42) had also indicated that their children engaged in free play after-school. Less than one percent (0.9%) said that their children took part in religious or cultural activities and 1.6 percent did not know how to answer the question.

Table 44: Best After-School Activities (%)	
Physical activity or sports	45.5
Art, music, or dance	23.7
Help with homework	20.6
Free play	7.7
Religious or cultural activities	0.9
I don't know	1.6
N=1,091	

Parents in focus groups wanted after-school programs to have a balance of recreational and academics/homework help; some concern about the type and quality of academic work was also raised. This approach was seen to support the needs of children both to do well in their studies but also have the chance to develop social skills and "rest" after a hectic day at school.

Ideal After-School Programming: Homework vs. Recreation

Focus group parents were quite convinced that programming should combine academics/homework help and recreation, and that homework should be done first. This approach was seen to be important because homework was considered the priority for children in order to progress in school, whereas recreation was seen as an "extra." As well, some parents in the focus groups felt that providing additional academic work in the after-school time would be useful, as there was a perception that the amount of schooling in Canada was not comparable to their countries of origin. Even when children were primarily at home after-school, parents generally took this approach:

> FIRST SPEAKER: "*I love it* [children doing their homework first]. *They don't but I do. The easiest thing is to get them to do their homework right away. Once they have some free time, it's like they're going back to a different stage of their time.*"

> SECOND SPEAKER: "*Me too. It's homework first, then you can go to ballet, or sports or the computer game.*"

> THIRD SPEAKER: "*I tried letting them do it later, but they're saying, 'I'm hungry, I'm tired,' it's very difficult. Come home, get your homework done, then we'll take you to the park.*" - Group Dialogue at a Focus Group

An additional finding in this area is that focus group participants wanted more academic help for their children, as some parents couldn't meaningfully help with homework due to English language barriers. This was especially a concern in the higher grades (i.e. Grade 4, 5, and 6). As well, some parents stated that their children, many who were immigrants themselves, needed extra help with homework that they couldn't always provide:

> *"Children doing homework are totally stressed out. So they stress us out in other ways. There was a bridge project, you have to jump on the bridge. It took me one and a half weeks to figure out how to build the bridge for my son, until then he was stressed out, forgot clothes and homework. So it's good if they can get help."* - Focus Group Participant

Finally, focus group parents wanted to understand better what happens in after-school programs relative to homework help. Many spoke about not always being clear on what was being offered other than in broad terms. Parents stated that this was a concern in terms of the academic support children were getting in specific subjects; participants felt more information was warranted in order for them to fully assess the quality of the programming relative to their child's needs:

> *"The programs never send anything home with the kids, like homework, or give a report of what they did. And my [child] never brings work home. They don't tell mom what they learned – I am not sure what is happening in programs."* - Focus Group Participant

One policy expert mentioned that she sees programs struggling with how to clearly communicate academic learning objectives in after-school program content to parents. As an example, she stated that parents often do not understand that children are learning math while they are playing a numeracy-focused game.

Future Choices for After-School Programming

When asked about the importance of six aspects of after-school programs when choosing a new after-school program in the future, survey respondents said that five of the six were extremely important (see Table 46). Parents said that better activities[11] (90.9% important, 66.3% very important), better location (86.2% important, 64.9% very important), and better staff (86.5% important, 64.6% very important) were the most important factors followed closely by better service hours (82.2% important, 58.2% very important) and lower cost (85.2%, 55.8% very important). Language-specific programs emerged as the least important factor in future after-school programming overall (39.6% important, 21% very important).

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11   Please note that "better" was specifically not defined in this survey, in order to allow respondents to make judgments using their own experiences and values.

Table 45: Importance of Key Factors in Organized After-School Programming (%)					
Factor	**Importance**				
	Very important	**Somewhat important**	**Not very important**	**Not at all important**	**I don't know/ Not applicable**
Better activities *(N=1,126)*	66.3	24.6	5.2	1.4	2.4
Better location *(N=1,124)*	64.9	21.3	7.7	2.5	3.6
Better staff *(N=1,107)*	64.6	21.9	7.2	2.5	3.8
Better service hours *(N=1,119)*	58.2	24.0	10.8	3.3	3.7
Lower cost *(N=1,140)*	55.8	29.4	8.5	2.5	1.8
Language-specific programs *(N=1,069)*	21.0	18.6	28.5	21.4	10.5

Crosstabulation analyses were conducted in order to determine which demographic factors played a role in survey respondents' perceptions of the relative importance of each factor. It was clear that income was a significant factor, so for significant results, additional analyses were conducted for each level of income.

Demographic Differences in Choice Related to Better Location

Examining survey respondents who were born in Canada compared to immigrant parents in the highest income category that completed the survey, results indicated that immigrants found a better location for after-school programming to be more important in their use of future programs as compared to Canadian-born respondents (92.8% vs. 83.0%; see Table 47). Additionally, parents who were not full-time employed found a better location for their children's future after-school programming to be more important in comparison to parents who were full-time employed (93.2% vs. 84.3%). This may relate to the increased travel that parents working more than one job or seeking employment may have to do.

Table 46: Importance of Better Location in Organized After-School Programming by Key Demographic Factors (%)		
Respondents earning $60K and greater	**Importance**	
	Important	**Not Important**
Born in Canada *(N=405)*	83.0	17.0
Born outside of Canada *(N=421)*	92.8	7.2
Parents are full time employed *(N=477)*	84.3	15.7
Parents are not full time employed *(N=147)*	93.2	6.8

Demographic Differences in Choice Related to Better Staff

Immigrant parents were more likely than Canadian-born parents to say that better staff in future after-school programs were important, regardless of whether they were earning between $30,000 and $60,000 a year or $60,000 and more per year (see Table 48). However there were no significant differences between Canadian-born and immigrant parents in the lowest income categories.

Table 47: Importance of Better Staff in Organized After-School Programming by Key Demographic Factors (%)		
Factors	**Importance**	
	Important	**Not Important**
Respondents earning $30K to <$60K		
Born in Canada *(N=108)*	85.2	14.8
Born outside of Canada *(N=134)*	95.5	4.5
Respondents earning 60K and greater		
Born in Canada *(N=392)*	85.7	14.3
Born outside of Canada *(N=223)*	92.4	7.6

Demographic Differences in Choice Related to Better Service Hours

Again, regarding service hours, differences between Canadian-born and immigrant respondents were found among those earning $60,000 a year and more. While 77.6 percent of Canadian-born respondents felt that better service hours were an important consideration in their children's future after-school programs, 89.9 percent of immigrant parents had this same perception (see Table 49).

Table 48: Importance of Better Service Hours in Organized After-School Programming by Key Demographic Factors (%)		
Respondents earning 60K or greater	**Importance**	
	Important	**Not Important**
Born in Canada *(N=398)*	77.6	22.4
Born outside of Canada *(N=217)*	89.9	10.1

Demographic Differences in Choice Related to Cost

Again, differences in the perceived importance of cost in future after-school programming were found among the respondents with the highest incomes (see Table 50). While all parents in this group said that cost was important, immigrants (84.9%) were more likely than Canadian-born respondents (78%) to say this.

Table 49: Importance of Lower Cost in Organized After-School Programming by Key Demographic Factors (%)		
Respondents earning $60K and greater	**Importance**	
	Important	**Not Important**
Born in Canada *(N=419)*	78.0	22.0
Born outside of Canada *(N=225)*	84.9	15.1

Number One Choice for After-School Arrangement

When asked about their number one choice for their children's after-school care, six in ten survey respondents (60.4%) chose an after-school program in their school (see Table 51). Another 15.9 percent chose an after-school program in the community and 1.6 percent mentioned daycare in a general way (1.6%), bringing the overwhelming majority to 77.9 percent who would choose an after-school program of some kind over any other option.

Staying with a parent or guardian was mentioned by 14.3 percent of respondents as the ideal after-school choice.

Less than two percent mentioned each of 11 other options.

Table 50: Number One Choice for After-School Care (%)	
An after-school program in their school	60.4
An after-school program in the community	15.9
Staying home with parent or guardian	14.3
Staying at a public library	1.7
Daycare general (qualified, licensed, affordable)	1.6
Staying with a grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin, other relative	1.4
Staying with a paid babysitter	1.2
Letting the child/children take care of him or herself	0.8
A program at my place of worship	0.7
Staying with a friend or neighbour	0.7
Staying with a sibling	0.5
With a tutor	0.2
Combination of after-school care and staying home with a relative	0.3
Other	0.3
N=1,091	

Parents in the focus groups were remarkably congruent in their ideas about the elements that make up ideal programming in the after-school time for their 6 to 12 year old children:

- Programs should be run out of schools, since children are already there and are familiar with the environment. This also addresses major transportation and location challenges for parents, especially parents working outside of the home who are still at their places of employment in the after-school time period.

- Programs should balance physical activity (e.g. gymnastics, ballet, swimming) and academic activities (e.g. reading, writing, math, reading out loud to improve vocabulary), in order to address the needs of children to play and "relax" and also to maximize opportunities to learn. Of all academic subjects, math seemed to be the most important. If offered, parents would also want someone other than themselves to offer culture and language learning to their children as they felt that children would benefit more from someone other than a family member doing that teaching:

> *"I don't want to do it [culture and language classes] at home - school can push them. They follow the teacher, not the mother."* - Focus Group Participant

It was generally felt that specific language and culture learning was sufficient once a week.

- Costs for attending should be either scaled to all income levels (not just on a subsidy or no subsidy basis). Further, costs should generally be made accessible - $5/hour was very often quoted as a "reasonable" amount to pay.

- The key quality that parents wanted in after-school program staff was professionalism and understanding the child's academic needs. This drove a perception that teachers running the after-school programming would be ideal, since they know the child the best and understand their day-to-day needs and assets. However, most parents recognized that this is not within the usual mandate of schools, despite the fact that some schools in Toronto do offer after-school programming.

- Interestingly, when asked about youth running programs versus adults, there was a slight tendency to prefer adults. While youth were seen as perhaps more able to relate to children, they were seen to be "too easy" about things and potentially too "carefree," which would potentially impact quality of programming. A few parents suggested that there should be adults running the program but that youth speakers (e.g. discussing not doing drugs, doing well in school, etc.) be incorporated into programming on a regular basis. Ultimately, however, whether it is youth or adults running programs, many parents stated that consistency was important:

> *"Make it fun, and consistency in who's running it. If every Tuesday is soccer drop-in, don't have a different instructor every week. If they know it'll be Kyle every Tuesday, kids don't like a lot of change. They don't like to be all over the place. They like to know every Tuesday it'll be this, Wednesday it'll be that, and it's more fun that way because there's not the anxiety of 'what's going to happen?'"* - Focus Group Participant

Number One Choice for After-School Arrangement Compared to Actual After-School Care Situation

It is interesting to look at survey parents' preferred after-school options in comparison to their actual after-school options. Bear in mind that the proportions of after-school options are somewhat inflated as parents were able to pick more than one option. However, this still allows for some comparison between the preferred choices and the actual after-school choices that parents have made.

While a majority of parents (77.9%) preferred after-school programming in schools and in the community, only 45.5 percent actually had this programming option for their children (see Table 52). Further, while 14.3 percent of respondents preferred to have their children with them after-school, in fact, 37.3 percent had their children with them after-school. While only 1.4 percent of parents would choose to have their children with a relative after-school, 14.9 percent of the parents in this survey had this situation. Similarly, 1.2 percent would like to have their children with a paid babysitter but 16.3 percent had their children in this arrangement. Additionally, 0.8 percent would want their children caring for themselves after-school but 8.6 percent had their children in this care arrangement; 0.7 percent would want their children with a friend or neighbour when 7.0 percent had this arrangement, and while 0.5 percent would want their children to stay with their sibling, in fact, 7.7 percent of parents had their children staying with siblings after-school.

These results suggest a number of gaps exist between the after-school options that are available and the ones that parents in Toronto prefer.

Table 51 : Number One Choice for After-School Care by Actual After-School Care Options* (%)		
	Number One Choice for After-School Care	**Actual After-School Care Options**
An after-school program in their school	60.4	22.3
An after-school program in the community	15.9	23.2
Staying home with parent or guardian	14.3	37.3
Staying at a public library	1.7	1.1
Daycare general (qualified, licensed, affordable)	1.6	-
Staying with a grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin, other relative	1.4	14.9
Staying with a paid babysitter	1.2	16.3
Letting the child/children take care of him or herself	0.8	8.6
A program at my place of worship	0.7	0.2
Staying with a friend or neighbour	0.7	7.0
Staying with a sibling	0.5	7.7
With a tutor	0.2	
Combination of after-school care and staying home with a relative	0.3	
Other	0.3	3.3
N=1,091 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided.*		

For most parents that participated in the focus groups, their preference was to find at least some reliable after-school programming that met their needs, as opposed to having their children home 100% of the time. The key reasons for wanting to access after-school programs were:

- Depending on the age of their children, accessing after-school programming allowed parents to feel more able to pursue paid employment as having to be home after-school automatically disqualified them from most jobs. This was seen to be critical, as employment was seen to be the most important factor in successful settlement.

- Programming takes children away from the perceived "lure" of television, video games and Internet surfing at home, which were all seen to be problematic in larger quantities, especially when older siblings were at home and engaging in those activities:

> *"More programs would be good. Because they watch TV and play games. Not good. Being in a program means they won't watch TV and play video games."* - Focus Group Participant

> *"I like that they're active. They're out there running around, not sitting at home, and not sitting in front of the computer. As soon as they're left to their own devices, they're inactive. They become inert. It does make me crazy when they're sitting there on the computer, playing or watching a video."* - Focus Group Participant

- After-school programs were also perceived by parents to keep children safer by reducing their exposure to outside influences (beyond media) that could have a negative impact on them:

> *"I don't like in this park [near our house], lots of older kids drinking, smoking. Sometimes kissing. It's a bad example."* - Focus Group Participant

- Programming was seen to positively impact children's sense of happiness and their ability to develop relationships outside the family unit:

> *"When they are at home, it's like an animal in a cage. It's very stressful for them and stressful for us. We are not professionals, even though we are parents, we are tired after work. We're single mothers, and fathers working two or three jobs, and we don't have time. 'Do your homework, eat your food, dress up'. When they are going for homework clubs and joining with other children, they're very happy and socializing... coming home at six and telling stories. We enjoy their stories."* - Focus Group Participant

> *"With my girls, [I see] self-confidence, I've seen them bloom. My 5-year-old can climb 20 feet up, she thinks she's the greatest thing now. My 7-year-old takes ballet, she's getting more body comfort. My 8-year-old is in a hockey league, he's learned a skill, learned a sport."* - Focus Group Participant

Hours For After-School Care

Finally, parents in the survey were asked which hours in the day they needed to have after-school care for their children. Taken together, the majority of parents needed to have care between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. (see Table 53). Only 15 percent needed care after 6 p.m. and only 7.5 percent needed care before 3 p.m.

Table 52: Hours After-School Care is Needed* (%)	
Before 3 p.m.	7.5
Between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.	67.5
Between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.	75.3
Between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.	62.4
Later than 6 p.m.	15.0
N=1,114 *Totals are greater than 100% because more than one answer could be provided*	

Ideally, immigrant parents wanted their children to be brought home from the program by staff. However, understanding this may not be within the resource capabilities of organizations, many parents stated that they would be willing to pick the child up after 6 p.m. The main challenge was much more about getting them to a program at 3 pm or 3:30 pm as opposed to getting them from a program, hence the desire to have programs in schools where children already are after school.

6.0 After-School Personnel Interview Findings

"[Ideally, we want to] provide activities for children that they will enjoy, a place that children would call a second home, a place where children can be active, a place for families as well... "

After-School Personnel Interviewee

6.1   A SNAPSHOT OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING IN TORONTO

In general, the programming being offered after-school in Toronto by interviewees was described by them as follows:

- Programs were held in:
    - Schools:
        i. Programs run by the school.
        ii. Programs run in partnership with schools (e.g. YMCA or other community groups running programs through a negotiated partnership with a school board).
        iii. Programs leasing or renting space from schools.
    - Childcare centres (both non-profit and for-profit centres, licensed and unlicensed).
    - Religious institutions/centres.
    - Stand-alone facilities (e.g. independent service providers, community agencies).

Interviewees often commented that they felt that parents did not necessarily know who was running the program, and knew simply that it was available in their neighbourhood, for a certain cost, at a certain time, etc.

- Costs for programs were variable. Some programs offered parents a special rate if they had children in before-school programs or were also purchasing a lunch for their child. Most programs ran until 6:00 p.m. Some programs charged parents for attendance before and after school (e.g. a rate of $30/day) even if children did not attend the program before school.

- Most program content was targeted to developmental stage and built on previously learned skills; some programs used formalized frameworks (e.g. the 40 Developmental Assets Framework, the High-Five Framework, and other "child-directed" philosophies). Where required, programs abided by relevant funder guidelines (e.g. Ministry of Health Promotion after-school funding that requires that 30% of programming be focused on physical activity, 20% on development of life skills, and 20% on activities related to health and well being).

- All programs provided a snack, and most had some combination of academics/homework help and recreational activities (e.g. arts and crafts, play-based learning, sports); those with facilities took children outside for "playtime" when weather allowed. Some of the faith-based organizations implemented activities based on religious teachings and practices.

- Some programs picked children up from school. This generally entailed a program staff member going to the school and walking with the children back to the program. In these instances, the walk was often part of programming, for example, a hunt for fall leaves was introduced during the walk, etc. Other programs gave parents the responsibility for bringing the child to the program or the children were bussed to the program (two interviewees said that they were in the middle of a residential area and some children walked by themselves from the school to the program). When the children were bussed to the program, staff members met the bus as it pulled up to the building.

- Staff to child ratios was usually 1:15, although some programs had ratios as low as 1:10.

- Staffing was varied and dependent on the mandate of the organization (e.g. childcare centres had Early Childhood Educators [ECEs] and ECE Assistants on staff in a mandated staff to children ratio, ARC programs were staffed by youth, and stand-alone after-school programs had child and youth workers or social service workers).

- Training for staff varied widely. While some staff came fully trained (e.g. ECEs), other staff hired relatively inexperienced youth and gave them on-the-job training. This particular model is linked to a community development/resident skill development approach that has been studies relative to child and youth development by researchers such as Wayne Hammond, and that many funders and organizations in the non-profit sector are interested in at present.

- The typical users of the programming were children from the local community schools, although some programs did bus in children because they offered special programming to meet their needs (e.g. bussing in children from French immersion so they can have programming in French). Many service providers had policies stating that children should only be from the local area or school to qualify for admission to the program.

- Most interviewees felt that word of mouth provided them with the best vehicle to advertise their program, although other strategies used included providing calendars and flyers to parents in the schools, attending parent nights and community fairs/events, advertising on school billboards, promoting through networking with other centres, and posting information on their own and the City of Toronto websites.

- Every program maintained an active waiting list.

6.2   KEY FINDINGS

It is interesting to note that almost every interviewee stated that his or her programs are successful. When probed, the majority relied on anecdotal evidence to support that statement. The two main examples of success included seeing changes in the social skills of children (e.g. seeing a reduction in bullying behaviour) and observing that children go from failing their classes to passing (which was partly attributed to after-school homework help and other activities). Most interviewees conducted an annual parent survey to gather feedback on the programs being provided. Very few conducted more structured, formal evaluation activities.

6.2.1   Toronto's Diverse Ethnic and Racial Communities Have a Major Impact on After-School Programming

All interviewees talked at length about how both the rich diversity in Toronto and the demographics in their individual community of service impact after-school programming, including operations, content and who attends. More specifically, every neighbourhood in Toronto has large numbers of immigrant families and most neighbourhoods are home to particular ethno-specific communities more prominently. As such, the children coming from certain communities may have specific language and cultural needs (e.g. needing services in languages other than English, halal foods, time to pray, etc.). In fact, one interviewee estimated that up to 75% of the children attending their program spoke English as a second language and one characterized his/her centre as a "United Nations." These demographic realities dictated policies, hiring, and activities for most after-school programmers.

Interviewees felt that this diversity was provided the opportunity to enrich the programming and to teach important values to children re: respect and equity. Interviewees stated that parents also felt that such diversity was a positive thing, and came to programs because they hoped that it would increase their child's understanding of other people and ways of life. Many different strategies were used to achieve this:

> *"[Our] neighbourhood is quite diverse with language, but kids talk easily and parents are comfortable. We have an open door policy. We try to implement aspects of the kids' home life in their programs - in the drama class we will have saris, include food from their home-land so they are not ashamed of their culture (chickpeas, samosas, halal food). Music is from different nations and in the language of the culture. The books are English and also in Russian; also Mandarin, Urdu, Tamil, Spanish, and French."* - After-School Personnel Interviewee

Having said that, programming for children coming from many different parts of the world can present a challenge, especially in terms of language:

> *"A challenge is translation. While we have staff who speak a number of languages, we don't know all the languages they [children] need. [Staff] have to be very patient, explain things visually as well as verbally."* - After-School Personnel Interviewee

This challenge extends to communicating with parents about program policies, admission criteria, activities, etc.

> *"[There are] some cultural barriers where parents have just immigrated but [we] try to help them understand what our needs are and what the program needs. The parents are pretty good about understanding. Some parents...want their kids to do homework for the whole time. This is outside of our operating criteria. They tend to understand."* - After-School Personnel Interviewee

Lastly, interviewees consistently stated that immigrant families experience more financial barriers to attending programs and, as such, often have to be on the waiting list to qualify for a subsidy from the City of Toronto before their child can participate. However financial barriers were not seen as the only reason that some immigrant families do not attend after-school programming:

> *"Some cultural communities don't come to programs – they are engaged in other after-school programs through their mosque, other community organizations, many of them want an academically focused after-school program."* - After-School Personnel Interviewee

6.2.2 Finding and Negotiating Space for After-School Programs is an Ongoing Issue

Unless interviewees had dedicated space for an after-school program (e.g. in a church, mosque, or a building that they owned/leased), finding adequate and appropriate space to run after-school programs was a major challenge. This is not a new issue – major stakeholders such as the City of Toronto, United Way Toronto and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) through their Community Use of Schools initiative have all dedicated resources and staffing to the ongoing negotiation of space for a variety of programs in the community. Despite these efforts, interviewees stated that securing space consistently was difficult, especially if the after-school program was being run in partnership with a school. Examples of challenges included inter-mural sports taking precedence over after-school programs and teachers wanting classrooms after school to do their work, both of which left service providers struggling with where to hold their after-school programs on certain days. It also created a situation where programs had to move between spaces on an ongoing basis. This led to further challenges with staff having to move heavy equipment, increased Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario (WSIB) claims, having to do programming without equipment on certain days, equipment storage, etc.

An interesting aspect of negotiating with other groups for space relates to the need to comply with program regulations from various bodies. Some service providers have to follow the regulations of multiple bodies simultaneously, including the Day Nurseries Act, the City of Toronto's Operating Criteria, the Fire Department, Toronto Public Health guidelines, and school board policies. This does not include the organization's own policies and philosophy for services. As such, when one body demands compliance relative to a certain aspect of operations (e.g. certain equipment to be used or particular environmental conditions), it may require the service provider to negotiate with others that share that space. Many interviewees linked this issue to collaboration – if there is a shared framework for multiple stakeholders to follow, then the legislative and regulatory requirements may get streamlined.

Even with secured space, many interviewees said that what they had was simply not adequate (e.g. too small, not enough outdoor space). Interviewees that were in schools felt that these pressures will only increase with full day early learning across Ontario, as the critical issue for many schools will be having the appropriate space to run kindergartens all day. This will tax everyone in terms of finding adequate solutions.

6.2.3 Meeting the Scheduling Needs of Parents can be Difficult

Interviewees said that although they try to provide individualized services, there are many times when families fall through the gaps due to a lack of resources that restrict program flexibility. The key example of this related to times to pick children up from programs. Many parents have to travel long distances from work and need to come later than 6:00 p.m. Still others are shift workers or hold more than one job, making timing a challenge. No interviewee had a set policy to address such concerns, and instead handled things on a case-by-case basis much of the time:

> *"Timelines is (sic) a huge thing too. Organizational daycares close at six but some parents are shift workers...some home care providers are more flexible and allow later pickups."* - After-School Personnel Interviewee

6.2.4 Finding and Retaining Adequate Staffing is Very Difficult for Most Service Providers

> *"Staffing! They need to understand the developmental cycle – the difference between managing behaviour versus supporting positive behaviour. We do provide staff training but hard to know what to focus on, as there are many "standards" out there"* - After School Personnel Interviewee

For those service providers that are not child care centres with full-time ECEs, interviewees stated that staffing their after-school program was a challenge. This was mainly because finding high quality people to come to work for the short period of time that was required was difficult (i.e. ~ 2:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.). This was juxtaposed with the perception that staffing standards are not as rigorous for children ages 6 to 12 in the same way as they are for licensed services for children ages 0 – 6, making it an ongoing struggle to find people who are qualified to do the work. Supervisors of programs spent a great deal of time in pursuit of staff that could be retained over time.

6.2.5 There is Ongoing Debate Over Whether Youth or Adults Should Staff After-School Programs

In Toronto, after-school programs are provided by adults, youth or a combination of both. Many interviewees stated that there are both benefits and challenges with different approaches.

A key issue raised relative to hiring youth staff was training. Those after-school programs that did hire youth were positive about the efficacy of their training and the benefits of the youths' age relative to providing programming. One expert concurred, saying about youth staff "[they are] *cool young people. Kids like them*." And by extension, children saw them as role models. One expert who founded and ran the Program in Education, After-school and Resiliency (PEAR) suggested that the model that they used where leaders were trained over a year period, and then became mentors to other staff, might be a useful one for youth. Other experts involved in a program that hired youth highlighted the benefits of having youth be part of increasing resiliency in children linked to self-esteem and self-awareness. A few other policy experts mentioned that objective tools (e.g. the Pro-Five Quest Tool) have been used to demonstrate the benefits of having youth on staff in some after-school programs.

However, the majority of other interviewees were less positive. There was a perception that a few weeks of training could not be as effective as the year or two that ECEs and ECE Assistants receive. Some experts agreed with this perception, commenting that youth program leaders would need ongoing support to complement their training, and that training needed to be substantial regardless of the age of the trainee. One expert in particular commented that if her regular staff were working with youth, they would

be supported to see actively mentor them. For example, supporting youth to understand their work-related responsibilities relative to their own personal interactions with children in a program can be challenging:

"How do they run a program with their best friend's younger brother… has to be different than how they interact with that kid on a Saturday night. [There is also a] duty to report – they share an apartment wall with the kid – they live in the same apartment building so they may know more about what is going on at home, as a neighbour they might not feel an obligation to report what is going on, but if they know that information in the context of their work, they may need to report." - After-School Personnel Interviewee

While providing support for such issues was considered reasonable, peer mentoring was also seen to take more time than it would take to simply work alongside another staff member.

Lastly, one after-school program expert suggested that the programs that hired youth staff had a "marketing" challenge, where it was up to the programs to convince parents that their staff were well trained to care for their children.

6.2.6   The System for Determining Amounts and Levels of Subsidies Is Not Meeting the Needs of Enough Service Providers and Users

Most service providers and several experts feel that there should be more subsidies available to families in Toronto. Service providers also felt that the system through which subsidies are allocated against income levels in communities may need to be examined (with some communities being perceived to be "over serviced" and some "vastly under serviced"), especially given that demographic data that subsidies are based on is complex and constantly changing. They also stated that one of the consequences of not having more subsidies available is that parents go without a program, go to a program where the quality is unknown, or may be forced to leave their children in informal settings that cause them concern re: safety. In addition, some interviewees stated that the amount of subsidy being received has been lowered for some service providers that only provide after-school programs (not before-school and lunch hour programs). Interviewees stated concern that the reduction has created a challenge to meet the needs of children. Examples provided include the fact that even though programs are only mandated to provide a snack, children often eat larger amounts of food after school, and that extra costs to cover transportation for special trips is not included in the reduced subsidy fee.

As well, it is perceived that a more complicated formula is used to calculate subsidies for parents who work shifts, which often results in a lower dollar value for their subsidy and yet their schedule usually demands more from the service provider (e.g. staying late or odd hours with the child).

Lastly, more operational funding was seen to be urgently needed by most interviewees in order to run quality programs. This need for funding was directly connected to the often long wait times to access programs:

"I have people on the waitlist when they get pregnant now." - After-School Personnel Interviewee

Especially frustrating was the situation when funders offer resources for a "special initiative" or pilot that allow service providers to run good programs and open up to more families, only to have the funding stopped, forcing the service provider to end the activity or try to find the money elsewhere.

6.2.7 Having Strong Relationships with Schools Is an Important Part of Providing Higher Quality After-School Programming

"... the child is the same, no matter whether they are in school or after-school... " - Policy Expert

As stated earlier, the school boards in Toronto dedicate resources to help after-school programmers negotiate space, broker communications and understand how to interpret school board policies and procedures. Beyond these issues, many interviewees felt that community-based after-school programs being able to connect and partner with local schools is a big part of being successful. They felt that a stronger relationship with schools results in a continuum of supports for children. For example, some programs have disclosure agreements with local schools regarding children with behavioural issues. This kind of agreement allows for consistency in dealing with situations that arise with children, especially those with special needs. It also allows for more seamless communication with the parent and can create increased transparency between all stakeholders. Interviewees also felt it was easier to track the development of children and to get feedback that the child is being well supported when there is a good relationship with the local school.

A good relationship also led to collaborative programming in some instances, with some programs providing content that complemented the school curriculum. In this way, children were able to finish their projects during after-school programming time and have it relate back to what was being studied in school. The children were also able to go further in after-school time with some topics, doing additional activities that could not be completed during school hours. As one expert explained:

"If the after-school program knows where the curriculum is and can use the same themes alongside the school curriculum, this will help. This is the same as when the teacher sends a note home to the parents on curriculum, then the parents can complement this with their activities at home." - Policy Expert

The school-community relationship was seen to begin with having the administration of the individual schools on side. Many interviewees stated that buy-in is needed from the principal. Others felt that even if the administration is supportive, individual teachers may not be. Most interviewees wanted the school boards to play a role in sending the message that working with after-school programs (whether in the school itself or in the community) is valuable. Others felt that City of Toronto could also play a role in this kind of messaging:

"It could just take one principal who does not agree with it and then my school-aged program could be a mess. Communication from the City with the school and maintaining open communication on the needs of the kids is important." - After-School Personnel Interviewee

6.2.8 Collaboration Is Critical in Successfully Meeting the Needs of Children Ages 6- 12 After-School

"The City, the school board, and Ministry of Education should be able to work to-gether. For parents it would be seamless." - After-School Personnel Interviewee

"The infighting is wearisome."- Policy Expert

Many interviewees talked about the need for better collaboration between the main stakeholders in after-school programs in Toronto. Indeed, one expert felt that the state of the sector in terms of lack of a coordinated approach was the same today as it was 35 years ago. Most interviewees stated that the City of Toronto, the TDSB and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), community agencies, and child care centres need to together find a way to work together in various ways. Policy experts cautioned that because this is a community issue, families must also be at the table. Key areas for collaboration include:

- The development of a shared framework for after-school programs in Toronto; the framework could include shared values, principles, strategies for success, and outcome measures (including the development of shared standards for programming that can inform hiring, activity development and evaluation).

- Shared resources for hiring, training, and supervision of staff.

- Shared resources for parents and children (including resources in languages other than English).

- Shared agreements regarding partnerships between the City, schools boards and community agencies to provide services, including memorandums of understanding regarding space, shared staffing, and meeting legislative requirements.

- Collaboration at the local and provincial level to streamline multiple accreditation, legislative and regulatory requirements that put heavy burden on service providers, especially multi-service organizations that must comply with numerous bodies/laws, etc.

One expert gave a striking example of effective after-school programming through partnership. He spoke about an experience he had visiting an elementary school in Brussels, Belgium where at 3:00 p.m., the principal said to the expert, "Okay, now we are going to go for a walk." They went for walk that was maybe three or four blocks. Behind them were 150 kids from the school. They went to a park or community centre where students from three other schools joined them. Within 20 minutes to half an hour the kids signed up for what they wanted to do. Sixty percent of them left the community centre and went to do community based activities, arts and crafts, and sporting activities of various types. At around 6:30 all the kids came back to the centre and the parents picked them up. This initiative came about because several principals got together and decided that they needed to provide after-school activities for these children.

> **"***Partnership has to exist so that the community stays engaged.***"**
> – Policy Expert

A few experts explicitly mentioned that children should be a part of the coordination and planning process. As one commented:

"Kids want meaningful participation in the planning of the programs and a really strong connection with an adult who reflects their needs and interests."

Most interviewees felt that the City of Toronto is the natural institution to lead collaboration efforts, especially, as one interviewee stated, "...the accountability [and monitoring] in the City has been done extremely well." Interviewees stated that the City has excellent resources to offer any and all service providers training, are in the best position to lead dialogue at the sectoral level and can support consultations to determine what collaboration should look like. However, a few interviewees and policy experts questioned why the City of Toronto was the lead in these efforts and asked whether another model could be used whereby the City provided resources for another institution or agency to lead the efforts.

6.2.9 Interviewees Are Aligned in Terms of an Ideal Scenario for After-School Programming

"Affordability, quality, and parental choice need to be at the top of the list." - After-School Personnel Interviewee

Interviewees were consistent on what they saw as the characteristics of an ideal scenario for after-school programming in Toronto:

- Accessible for everyone regardless of income.
- Adequate number of after-school spaces that are fully funded to offer parents full choice.
- Adequate resources to offer programming beyond 6:00 p.m.
- Ability to offer specialized programming that is cost-effective.
- Competitive wages for workers.
- Offered in the school as the ideal environment/ hub or in another community hub; this includes the sharing of space but also ensures that messages and programming are aligned so that children's developmental needs are addressed in a holistic way.
- Ratio of 1:15 or lower.

One policy expert gave the example of programs that worked with partnerships in Alberta where the snacks and space were donated in one instance and hockey helmets were donated in the other.

- Spacious facilities, with both indoor and outdoor space; programs need reasonable access to facilities that promote physical activity and flexible programs.

- Legislated or mandated training and employment standards for staff so that the providers are more skilled (e.g. development of leadership skills) and so that service providers can go beyond simply hiring ECEs to ensure a certain level of quality.

- Administrators and leaders that are fully trained in how to run and govern programs, including volunteer Boards of Directors (e.g. ensure that they understand wage issues when determining centre fees).

- Increased support from the City to offer high-quality programming and address emerging issues.

- Shared policies, shared framework, and joint funding such that space, staff, and resources are equitable among service providers.

- Increased partnership between community agencies so they can offer specialized programs (e.g. dance and music from different diverse communities).

- Increased collaboration around development of specialized resources and training.

- Funding support from the City of Toronto for translated materials and supplies.

- More research on the needs of this age group in the after-school time and research that separates children ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12.

- Increased education and engagement of parents to help them understand importance of after-school programs and to contribute their assets to them.

> One expert mentioned that moms at a program in her jurisdiction volunteer at an unlicensed program in order to build parent connections but also to save on costs.

> When after-school program personnel were questioned on the whereabouts of the children who were not in their programs, they gave a range of ideas: the children were on the street outside the program looking at the kids inside the program,. they were home caring for siblings, and they were home alone.

7.0 Statistical Analysis

7.1 PROJECTIONS ON THE DRIVERS FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING IN TORONTO

In order to determine the drivers for parents to use after-school programming in Toronto, a stepwise logistic regression was performed on the survey data.

Regression is a statistical procedure which is used to predict the values of a given variable, (the dependent variable) based on the values of one or more other variables (independent variables). The result of a regression is usually an equation (or model) which summarizes the relationship between the dependent and independent variable(s) and details how well the independent variables predict the dependant variable.

One type of regression, stepwise regression is used in an exploratory phase of research. Exploratory testing makes no assumptions regarding the relationships between the variables, so this regression technique is used to discover which relationships exist. In this regression procedure, the variables that could be predictors of the outcome variable, in this case, whether children are in after-school programming or not, are added on different "steps" under the presumption that each of these accounts for a certain amount of the relationship between the independent and dependant variables.

When the final model is produced, one looks to see how large the Nagelkerke R^2 is. This statistic provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model. As well, there is a reference to how often the final model with the variables that have been selected, is able to predict the outcome.

Only variables with significant Beta-weights are included in the final model. They are used to determine the nature of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables for example, either living with extended family makes it more or less likely that the child will be in after-school programming.

For our purposes relevant demographic and attitudinal variables, based on the key informant interviews and the literature, were included in the regression. As such, the predictor variables were:

- Income.
- Hours that after-school programming was needed (whether it was needed after 6:00 p.m. or not needed after 6:00 p.m.).
- Age categories of children (6 to 9 and 10 to12).
- Whether the survey respondent lived with extended family.
- The number of parents in the household.
- Importance of lower cost in a new after-school program.
- Importance of better location in a new after-school program.
- Importance of language-specific programs in a new after-school program.
- Importance of better staff in a new after-school program.
- Importance of better service hours in a new after-school program and full-time employment of parents (full time employed or not).

The dependant variable was formal after-school programming which included after-school programming in a school, after-school programming in a community, being at the public library, and being care for by a paid babysitter.[12]

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12   In this instance a "paid babysitter" actually refers to a person who is running an after-school program in her home.

In the resulting regression equation, Nagelkerke R^2=0.189, and in the final classification table, 66.7 percent of the time the final regression model was able to predict attendance in an after-school program. This means that these variables are predictors of attendance in an after-school program were accurate in about two-thirds of the situations, which is quote reasonable for this type of data and research.

Of greatest interest were the significant predictor variables. They were:

Full time employment of parents (ß=-1.141, p<.001, Exp (B)=0.319). This means that full-time employed parents were significantly more likely to use after-school programming than parents who were not full-time employed (regardless of whether it was a two-parent or a single parent family).

- Age of the children (ß=-861, p<.001, Exp (B)=0.423). This result suggests that children between 6 and 9 were significantly more likely to use after-school programming than children between 10 and 12.

- Living with extended family (ß=1.192, p<.001, Exp (B)=3.292). This means that parents who lived with extended family were significantly less likely to need after-school programming than parents who did not live with extended family.

- Better location of after-school programming (ß=1.167, p<.001, Exp (B)=3.211). This means that the more important the location of after-school programming was, the less likely that the parent had their child in after-school programming.

- Hours that after-school programming was needed (ß=-0.717, p<.001, Exp (B)=0.488). This result suggests that those parents who needed after-school programming after 6:00 p.m. were significantly less likely to use organized after-school programming as a result.

These predictor variables were taken into account in the after-school space projections outlined below.

7.2. PROJECTIONS OF NEED FOR AFTER-SCHOOL SPACES IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Part of this project involved a calculation of projections of the need for after-school spaces for the middle childhood children in the next five years. Because the data are readily available for licensed after-school spaces, these are the spaces that will be projected.

7.2.1 Methodology

In order to calculate the projections, a number of assumptions were made. They are that:

- Past trends will continue.

- Some external factors will continue to affect Ontario including "the economy of the United States as well as the global economy; oil and energy prices, decisions on federal policy as well as interest rates." (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2005, p.v).

The Ontario Ministry of Finance produces a current set of population projections every year for planning purposes. While they produce these projections under three scenarios, the reference, the low-growth, or the high-growth scenario, the reference scenario is most expected to occur. For this reason, we use the reference scenario data for our childcare space projections in this analysis.

The population projections "are developed using a standard demographic methodology in which assumptions for population growth reflect recent trends in all streams of migration and the continuing evolution of long-term fertility and mortality patterns in each census division." (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2010, p. 3).

7.2.2   Calculations

The Ministry of Finance has projected the population for the next five years by age, as outlined below in Table 53.

Table 53: Projected Toronto Population Distribution* by Age to 2016						
Age (in years)	**Year**					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
5-9	133,810	135,550	137,330	138,870	140,540	142,040
10-14	132,510	131,450	131,080	131,990	132,510	133,880
* Data for Metropolitan Toronto						

Given that middle childhood is defined as being between the ages of 6 and 12, it was decided to assume that the proportions of these age groups within the groups for which there were data was equal. As a result, we estimated that 6 to 9 years olds were 80 percent of the total 5-9 year olds and, similarly, that 10-12 year olds were 60 percent of the total 10-14 year olds. As such the population distribution changed to that seen in Table 54.

Table 54: Projected Distribution of Middle Childhood Children in Toronto to 2016						
Age (in years)	**Year**					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
6-9	107,048	108,440	109,864	111,096	112,432	113,632
10-12	106,008	105,160	104,864	105,592	106,008	107,104
Total 6-12	213,056	213,600	214,728	216,688	218,440	220,736
* Data for Metropolitan Toronto						

The data for the current after-school spaces in the City of Toronto were provided by the City of Toronto's Children's Services Division and is outlined in Table 55 below.

Table 55: Projected Distribution of Middle Childhood Child Care Spaces* in Toronto by Quadrant** in 2011	
Quadrant	**Middle Childhood Care Spaces**
North	4,054
South	4,872
East	2,841
West	3,946
Total	15,713

* Child care spaces refer to licensed child care spaces for middle childhood children
** The definition of quadrant is that used by Children's Services Division in the City of Toronto.

Using population changes and the assumptions in 6.2.1, the after-school spaces should change as outlined in Table 56.

Table 56: Projected Distribution of Middle Childhood Child Care Spaces in Total in Toronto to 2011					
Year					
2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
15,713	19,725	21,844	23,778	25,341	26,985

* Data for Metropolitan Toronto

Making the assumption that the distribution of after-school spaces will remain the same in 2016 as it is in 2011, the distribution of after-school spaces by quadrant in 2016 is outlined in Table 57 below.

Table 57: Projected Distribution of Middle Childhood Child Care Spaces* by Quadrant in Toronto in 2016	
Quadrant	**Middle Childhood Care Spaces**
North	6,962
South	8,367
East	4,879
West	6,777

Given that the stepwise regression analysis indicated that parents' need for childcare after 6:00 p.m., parents living with extended family, full-time employment of parents, age of children, and location of programming were factors that predicted whether there was uptake of organized after-school programming, available data on these factors for parents of children between 6 and 12 in Toronto were sought.

Available data on unemployment rates from the Ontario Ministry of Finance (2005) were examined. It was decided that the projections of unemployment rates in Ontario were not necessarily the most reliable, given that the average projected unemployment for the period from 2010 to 2014 is 5.4 percent and that for 2015 to 2019 is 4.8 percent (p. 46) against the known unemployment rate in July in Toronto of 8.9 percent (Service Canada, n.d.). There are no publicly available projections of unemployment by quadrant in Toronto. That being said, the survey analysis indicated that between 61 and 72 percent of parents (depending on the quadrant) were full-time employed and also that full-time employed parents were significantly more likely to use after-school programming than were parents who were not full-time employed.

All of this taken together suggests that even if the unemployment projections are somewhat accurate and unemployment drops, and the employment rate increases, there may be an increase in employment rate of between 3.5 and 4.1 percent. This would suggest that more parents would be full-time employed and would require after-school care for their children. However, the proportion of parents with children between 6 and 12 years of age would be small enough that, given the fluidity of the current economic situation in Ontario, it is not wise to attempt to modify the current after-school space projections and to assume that these will be minimally affected. However, when data becomes more concrete these projections can be modified.

As well, when specific data are available for the need in the general Toronto population for parents of 6 to 12 year-olds to have after-school care after 6:00 p.m. and the number of parents of 6 to 12 year olds living with extended family, these projections can be modified.

8.0 Next Steps

The following considerations and next steps come directly from the analysis of the data gathered for the Middle Childhood project. They have been developed with the recognition that the City of Toronto, as a complex organization that has vested interests at the local, provincial and national level, must be strategic and thoughtful about the manner in which it invests its resources for children ages 6 to 12. Much work regarding the City of Toronto's commitment to middle childhood is planned for the coming days and months. These considerations and next steps are intended to complement and support those ongoing efforts.

When it comes to after-school programming, the data gathered for this report data clearly show that parents want their children to be in after-school programming and feel that it has many benefits for their children. However, parents are struggling with accessibility of after-school programs in Toronto. Specifically, transportation to and from programs, cost, and availability are pressing issues that prevent families from accessing the programs they need and want. After-school personnel and policy leaders echo these concerns and also raise additional issues of inadequate space, lack of collaboration between schools, community groups and municipalities, and a lack of shared standards of quality. All of these issues combine to reduce the quality and potential impact of after-school programming to maximize the well being of the community.

There are many stakeholders with a vested interest in middle childhood children in Toronto. The City, local school boards, community agencies, academic institutions and the provincial government all come to various tables to dialogue on issues and create action. The considerations and next steps outlined below focus on the role the City of Toronto can play in after-school programming and policy going forward. They suggest areas where the City of Toronto can potentially lead the work and where it can play a supporting role.

It is important to note that these suggested next steps intersect and can address more than one gap or need in after-school programming. While they are presented as a list, it is strongly encouraged that they be taken together to inform the Middle Childhood Strategy currently in development by the City of Toronto (see Context Section for more information on the Middle Childhood Strategy).

A. LOCAL SERVICE COORDINATION AND PLANNING

The research shows that most parents do not feel that after-school programs are adequately available in their communities. In fact, some parents in inner suburban areas of Toronto stated that there are no programs in their local area, making access for them a particular challenge. In addition, parents and planners alike in Toronto do not have information on where after-school spaces in Toronto are relative to available funding and local community needs. Lastly, the lack of available spaces in programs is a major issue in Toronto and is preventing the use of after-school programming as a tool for community well-being.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

A1. Lead a Toronto-wide after-school program mapping process, where programs, available spaces, and service priorities can be determined. Conduct this in conjunction with data already available through tools such as the Child Finder tool and Well Being Toronto.

A2. Gather detailed utilization data on after-school programming.

A3. Use mapping and utilization data (along with other data found in this report) to inform dialogue at a sectoral level about service gaps and inequities in program distribution. These dialogues should eventually inform the Middle Childhood Strategy.

A4. Look to models such as Toronto First Duty to explore how the services in Toronto can be coordinated to produce a more seamless approach relative to integration of staffing, resources, administration, and facilities such that meaningful efficiencies and streamlining of resources can be achieved.

B. ACCESSIBILITY OF PROGRAMS

The existence of barriers to accessibility of after-school programs in Toronto for families is the most significant finding of the data collected for this project. While many barriers were raised (e.g. locations of programs, cultural and language barriers), the two that were considered most pressing were:

- Cost.
- Transportation to and from the program (and the link to programs hours).

Beyond causing considerable frustration, these issues prevent many families from accessing after-school programs, no matter what their socio-economic status. It should be noted that the data demonstrate that issues of accessibility are multiplied for immigrant families, who struggle with language and cultural barriers and are over-represented in the lower income population groups that experience cost and transportation barriers most significantly. Many families would put their children in after-school programs regularly if these access issues could be meaningfully addressed.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

B1. Increase the number of subsidized spaces available for after-school programming in Toronto based on mapping, utilization, and projection data, as well as City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles and Well Being Toronto.

B2. Explore alternative funding models in conjunction with accurate and up-to-date utilization data; consider where the fewest spaces and greatest need for programs exist, taking into account the economic, living, working and transportation conditions of families.

B3. Streamline registration processes for programs and increase availability of most popular recreation programs in the after-school period (e.g. swimming).

B4. Pilot an initiative for after-school programs in local communities to share costs and plans for transportation to and from programs; evaluate and use results for longer-term planning.

C. PROGRAMMING CONTENT

The data show that most parents want a balance between recreational or "enrichment" activities and academic support as part of after-school programming. Parents, particularly immigrant parents also want programming that meets their language and cultural needs. After-school program personnel, who feel that an indicator of their success is to provide high-quality programs to Toronto's diverse communities, agree on accommodating language and cultural needs of communities. Additionally, the importance of engaging families is crucial. While many programs in Toronto do engage families as part of their programming, the literature shows that more work to meaningfully engage families needs to be done. Within all of this, a one-size-fits-all approach to program content will not work, even within the same family. One expert noted that there are some after-school programs have adopted a "factory-model" where the focus is on serving as many children as possible for the lowest cost per child without a proper emphasis on content and program structure. Programs must allow for the realities of families wanting varied options for their children.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

C1. Support after-school programs in Toronto to conduct program evaluations to determine parental satisfaction and program impact on children and families ; support can be provided through the provision of evaluation capacity building resources (e.g. training, tools) or through funding program evaluation. Engage other capacity building organizations such as United Way Toronto in collaborative efforts to build the competence of the sector in program evaluation, thereby contributing to the body of evidence-based practice in this area.

C2. Support research in Toronto to determine best practices for after-school programs. This includes supporting new and innovative after-school models that, if successful, could be funded and adopted by more organizations. Potential program pilots include:

- Studying outcomes related to recreation-only, academic-only and mixed programs.
- Targeting specialized after-school programs to children in lower-income neighbourhoods in Toronto
- Exploring programming needs of children of colour, immigrant children, and English learners.
- Developing parent-child programming (building on the success of programs such as Beyond 3:30 in Toronto).
- Targeting programs that are designed to meet the needs of potentially marginalized groups such as girls or children with special needs.

C3. Fund innovative collaboration pilots in after-school programming, especially school-community collaborations that increase access for families and measure longitudinal changes in children's academic performance and skill development. Such pilots can eventually contribute to a business case and framework for integrated responsibility in after-school programming.

C4. Work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) to assist them to engage families (e.g. provide funding for awareness and engagement, make family engagement a part of funding criteria, support the development of outreach tools).

C5. As part of the Middle Childhood Strategy create a collaborative, integrated service delivery model for after-school programming in Toronto; the model can include driving values and principles for programming, key program strategies and higher level outcomes. This model should be developed with full participation of all stakeholders with a vested interest in after-school programming for children ages 6 to 12 in Toronto. This also includes working with the Province of Ontario to develop quality standards and key indicators that could ultimate form the basis for licensing or accreditation.

> *If we had more resources, we would do more with parents to help them advocate for their child, to get [them] more involved with their child's homework* – Policy Expert

D. PUBLIC AWARENESS-RAISING

> *"[After-school care for middle childhood kids is] not even a front page issue, not even a back page issue."* - Policy expert

Many parents engaged in this project did not know where after-school programs were located, why they were important from a child development point of view, or how to find more information about them. In fact, parents who participated in the focus groups often wanted to take the discussion in the direction of a "mini information session," where they could talk to each other to find out what was available and to find out each other's opinions about programs. The literature also shows that many parents want programming as a way to ensure that children are safe and taken care of during after-school time, but many parents lack an understanding of the benefits beyond these basic needs. The focus group findings bear this out – many parents stated that they did not always know what was going on in the programming their child attended. Experts said that there is a dire need for a public-relations campaign on the needs of children in this age group and on the value of after-school programming. All of this indicates that more outreach to the public is needed.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

D1. Work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) to develop and implement a public awareness raising campaign on after-school programming in Toronto, including:

- What it is.
- Why it is important.
- Where to go for more information.

This kind of campaign must be multi-sectoral to be effective. The City, community service agencies, schools, childcare centres and other community groups (e.g. religious groups) need to take part. Shared key messages should be determined based on data coming from this project and from the literature.

E. RESEARCH/KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

While the literature has made important gains in our understanding of after-school programming, there is still more to be done. Administrators and researchers are still trying to understand in more detail why after-school programs are effective and what elements of programming need to be prioritized relative to the needs of certain target populations. The body of current research lacks enough longitudinal data to be able to track the outcomes of after-school programming over the longer-term.

Toronto is an important setting for further research in Canada. The number of middle childhood children in Toronto, the rich diversity of our community, the number of programs, and the size of the academic and education institutions in the City make it ideal ground for exploring this growing field. Research in Toronto can begin with studies in two or three neighbourhoods that vary significantly by population. Research should be pursued in partnership with local schools, various City divisions (e.g. Toronto Public Health), community agencies, and other non-profit organizations. Research on after-school programming and policy should also be widely disseminated in Toronto and beyond, in order to ensure that we have a place in this exciting knowledge exchange community.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

E1. Work with the MCMC and key stakeholders such as the Atkinson Foundation to conduct research that particularly resonates with the needs of Toronto communities, including:

- Research that directly asks middle childhood children in Toronto about their experiences, needs, and hopes for after-school programming, including how they would choose an after-school program, how they sustain their involvement and what makes a program a "quality" program.

- How to make programming relevant and meaningful to diverse cultural and other communities and groups (e.g. children with disabilities, children with special learning needs, girls).

- The impact of programming on children who speak English as a Second Language (in terms of their development and their academic performance).

- Research on younger middle childhood versus older middle childhood from program, planning and policy perspectives.

- Longitudinal empirical research on the impacts of after-school programming on the 6 to 12 age group.

- Further studying the effectiveness of models such as ARC, where youth staff after-school programming.

E2. Create and coordinate an information-sharing hub for providers to improve access to after-school program resources, tools, and knowledge exchange opportunities (e.g. conferences). Providing this opportunity will allow the body of best practices to grow and will further lay the foundation for the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy. It will also be an opportunity for after-school programs to come together to explore joint training, marketing, and fund-raising initiatives.

E3. Create a Middle Childhood Knowledge Translation position at the City of Toronto in the Children's Services Division that will be responsible for coordinating the sharing of information on best practices, lessons learned, and innovations.

F.   DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF STANDARDS AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

The literature indicates that there is a need for high-quality staff and common standards for staff hiring and training to guide the after-school field, similar to what has evolved for the early years sector. After-school personnel and policy experts support this need, mentioning the retention of highly-qualified staff as a challenge against the reality of irregular and limited hours and pay. Parents, too, indicated that more than anything, they want people of high quality to be engaged with their children in the after-school hours.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

F1.   Work with the MCMC, policymakers, researchers and provincial groups/ministries to develop standards regarding staff qualifications and certification for the after-school field.

F2.   Work with the MCMC, policymakers, researchers and provincial groups/ministries to develop staff training resources for after-school program personnel (including training manuals, toolkits, and resources).

F3.   Offer ongoing staff development training and resources (e.g. on serving diverse communities, gender-sensitive programming, supervision of program staff, etc.)

F4.   Provide Train the Trainer sessions to after-school managers and leaders in order to support the standardization of staffing quality; consider making such training mandatory for City-funded programs.

F5.   Engage in dialogue with employers and funders to establish fair and equitable salary scales for staff in after-school programs, based on required training and skills as well as the type of programming being provided.

G.   SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

In accordance with the literature, all the different stakeholders engaged for this review (parents, community groups, after-school program providers, school representatives, and experts) stated that schools and the community must find ways to collaborate and work more effectively together to provide better after-school programs for middle childhood children in Toronto. This, beyond the challenge for parents of negotiating access barriers, was the strongest message from the data. Collaboration was seen to be needed in numerous areas, including use of space and equipment, negotiation of legislated requirements for programs, determination of program content, continuity of curriculum, etc. Out of all of these, the greatest challenge for after-school program personnel was finding affordable, accessible, and appropriate space. Perhaps in response to these challenges, there is also broad support for the development of community hubs, with some models focused on the school as the hub and others focused on community-based organizations. A report released by the government of Ontario, *Roots of Youth Violence* (McMurtry and Curling, 2008), identified recommendations for urgent action against youth violence. One of these is to establish community hubs and after-school programs, especially in at-risk communities. Furthermore, experts suggested that having hubs in communities is not an onerous task and would definitely result in cost savings and service streamlining.

In general, the reality is that schools, community groups, and the City of Toronto are struggling to find ways to work together, and that struggle shows in the frustrations of key players and the end experience of parents. This is happening in the context of sweeping reform in the early years sector that has impacted the way in which schools and community relate to one another. Toronto, as the largest municipality in Canada, must participate in demonstrating best practices in collaboration of this kind. And collaboration at the local level between major institutions must have strong leadership if it is going to proceed. The Middle Childhood Strategy has, as one of its key areas of action, the development of partnership opportunities, making the City of Toronto a natural choice to provide that leadership by engaging partners from within the City, schools and the broader community.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

G1. Participate in solutions-building at the local level to address space and equipment issues in the after-school programming arena. This could include:

- Sharing facilities and resources between schools and community groups to reduce redundancy and costs.

- Brokering joint community-school initiatives and facility-use agreements.

- Overcoming inter-organizational competition by re-casting of space as "community resources" to encourage collaborative models rather than cost-recovery models.

G2. Support the provincial government to encourage all relevant ministries to work together to engage in inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral planning, including allocating funding to support school-community collaborations and providing systemic infrastructure support such as:

- Amending board policies to allow shared responsibility for space.

- Creating technological support for joint data collection and sharing.

- Providing training and personnel at the local level to support school-community collaborations.

- Providing capital support to renovate existing schools to facilitate community usage.

- Addressing liability, rental, and caretaker costs of school facilities for community groups.

G3. Promote dialogue between schools and community groups to participate together in the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy for Toronto, including developing shared outcome measures and benchmarks, sharing aggregate data at the local level, and supporting research and the dissemination of best practices.

G4. Support research into the development of criteria for determining appropriate school-community collaborations.

H. SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO PLANNING, POLICY AND PROGRAMS

> The idea of enabling providers to build a strong after-school network is often cited as the key factor to achieving success in programs because they enable communities to enhance the capacity of individual program and service providers, and thus serve more children and youth. Provincial, state and national networks build the critical mass needed for effective advocacy, evaluative research and spreading of best practices.

Repeatedly in this project, the need for a broader, provincial response to after-school programming in Toronto and Ontario arose. It was raised in relation to almost all aspects of after-school work including programming, costs, staffing standards, quality improvement, licensing, and funding. Other provinces in Canada have made strides towards provincial approaches that create shared frameworks and agreements to guide work (e.g. Alberta Parks and Recreation is spearheading the development of a provincial after-school recreation strategy) and Ontario is on its way through the effort of such groups as the Ontario After-School collaborative (See the Context section for more information). This report offers additional information to the City of Toronto to continue to participate in the process of developing a provincial strategy for the critical after-school hours in Ontario.

Suggested Next Steps for the City of Toronto:

H1. Enhance awareness of after-school programming among key stakeholders. Along with the MCMC, use this report to proactively raise awareness of the importance of after-school programming with the following groups:

- Political leaders at the municipal, provincial and federal level.
- All four Toronto-based school boards.
- Funders (community-based and government).
- Relevant community leaders.

Awareness-raising can come in the form of roundtables or other forums to discuss the findings and recommendations of this report. Such forums can inform the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy help lay the foundation for a Provincial After-School Strategy and continue to build momentum at the federal level to invest in the after-school time period. Key messages include the potential of after-school programming to improve the lives of children and families, the need to address service gaps and access issues in after-school programming, and the need for collaboration at a program and policy level (including bringing various groups together to explore the issues, plan and create a community of practice).

H2. Work with provincial groups to advocate for a Provincial After-School Strategy that outlines:

- A province-wide vision for how to meet the after-school needs of middle childhood children that complements and expands on the directions outlined in "With Our Best Future in Mind" (Pascal, 2009)

- Shared definitions and guiding principles and values.

- A provincially coordinated training and certification program for after-school workers and managers.

- Desired child, community and system outcomes, benchmarks and measurement tools based on a strong theory of change.

- Minimum quality assurance standards and indicators of quality for all after-school providers (including the development of tools and standards for program quality that consider both developmental differences in how instruments will be implemented for middle school programs as well as how the local context can be incorporated in their usage. Consider if it is possible to adapt Toronto Operating Criteria as part of this process, or other tools such as the University of North Carolina FPG Child Development Institute School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, (SACERS), designed to assess group-care programs for children of school age, 5 to 12, or the California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool)[13]. Long-term, this step could potentially lead to accreditation or licensing for programs.

- Collaboration on streamlining legislative, accreditation and regulatory process for after-school providers

- Research and knowledge exchange plans

- Policy expectations and standards for inter-sectoral collaboration and that use innovative models such as network weaving; collaboration can include the shared use of space, equipment, staffing and other resources that are consistent with the best interests of families and communities. Collaboration should be considered between all stakeholders in the field, including community agencies, school, the City, faith-based groups, private providers and others.

All key stakeholders in Toronto must contribute to the process of developing a provincial strategy; the City of Toronto and MCMC are key vehicles for participation. At the provincial level, the work should be guided by a multi-sectoral committee involving provincial umbrella groups (e.g. Parks and Recreation Ontario), provincial child and youth service organizations, and ministries mandated to oversee children, recreation, education, health, and social needs. The work should be aligned with efforts of existing provincial and local groups (e.g. Ontario After-School Collaborative, current speech and language pilots being funded provincially on collaboration, Atkinson Foundation). The Committee's work can be supported by this report, as well as other relevant mapping, utilization data, and best practices research at local and provincial levels.[14]

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13   http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers & http://www.after-schoolnetwork.org/files/QSATool.pdf

14   It should be noted that some interviewees for this project suggested that the province focus their efforts on integrating any policy framework for after-school programming (and indeed child and youth services) across all ages – that is, frameworks should be developed that consider children ages 0 – 18, as opposed to the current approach of compartmentalizing children 0 to 6, 6 to 12 and 13 and up. While studying this approach is outside the scope of this project, it warrants mentioning here.
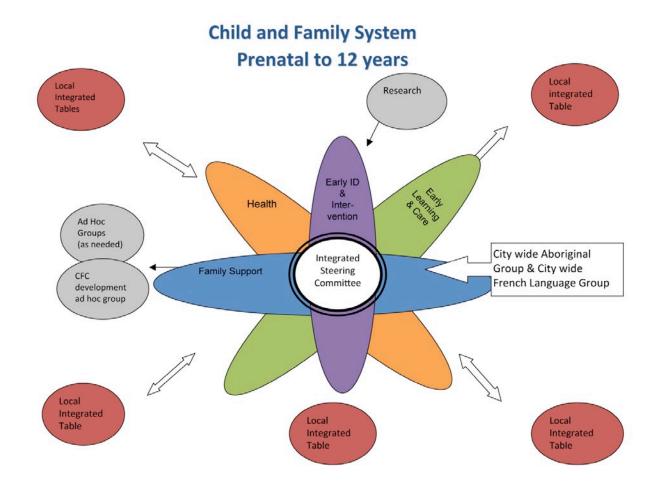
H3. Advocate for the sustainability of an accessible quality after-school system by encouraging the provincial government to provide ongoing core funding and subsidies to support a network of community-based programming for children ages 6 to 12. This should include encouraging provincial ministries to work with and local funders to explore how they can integrate their funding priorities, eligibility, and outcome requirements so as to streamline the development and implementation of programming at the front-lines, and to reduce funding administrative and accountability burden on after-school providers.

In terms of these next steps, exciting models are being developed that can provide a basis for implementation. One in particular, called the Collective Impact Framework, has been used successfully by other municipalities (i.e. Calgary) to create a more holistic, systemic response to the needs of children ages 6 to 12. This framework states that the five conditions to experience collective success are creating incentive for a common agenda and understanding of the problem, shared measurement systems (with a few key indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations), mutually reinforcing activities where each group offers what they are best suited to contribute, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations (dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting) (Kania & Kramer, 2011). It is suggested that Ontario's stakeholders in Toronto and in the province look to such frameworks to guide their efforts.

Lastly, any recommendations about developing a systemic response to after-school programming in Toronto must take into account the changeable environment in which programs are currently being offered. As such, regular reflection and updating on system strategies must occur.

Appendix A
Child And Family System Prenatal To 12 Years

Child and Family System
Prenatal to 12 years

Local Integrated Tables

Local integrated Table

Research

Early ID & Inter-vention

Early Learning & Care

Health

Ad Hoc Groups (as needed)

CFC development ad hoc group

Family Support

Integrated Steering Committee

City wide Aboriginal Group & City wide French Language Group

Local Integrated Table

Local Integrated Table

Local Integrated Table

Appendix B
City Of Toronto Middle Childhood Research Parent Focus Groups Moderator's Guide

Introduction   10 Minutes   0:00

Hello, my name is _____. I am doing work for the City of Toronto, Children's Services Division, looking at what children who are between 6 and 12 years of age are doing after school. We are interested in getting your views on this issue through this group discussion. If you do not want to stay for any reason, you can feel free to leave at any time and there will be no penalty for you or your child.

- These discussions allow us to get more detail on topics and issues than we can from telephone surveys (thoughts, feelings and opinions)

- We are not here to reach a consensus. There are no right or wrong answers - you help me by giving me your opinions, thoughts and ideas. It is important to respect the view of others in the room. It is also okay to have differences of opinion with each other.

- This meeting will be recorded in order to help me write my report later. No-one will listen to the recordings except the 2 other consultants I work with on this project. Everything discussed here will be kept in complete confidentiality - no names will be attached to the results in any way. Feel free to use your first name or the first name of your child only.

- Point out the refreshments and encourage participants to help themselves when they would like to. Point out bathrooms.

- Round table introductions. Start with moderator giving their name and the ages of their children.

Ice-breaker: Being a Parent in Toronto Today   10 Minutes   0:10

Just to start off, I would like to ask you a few questions about what it is like to be a parent in Toronto today.

- Off the top of your head, can you tell me what you love about being a parent in Toronto right now? What really works? What are some examples of how being in Toronto helps you as a parent?

- Of course, on the other side, can you tell me about some of the challenges to parenting in Toronto today? What are the parts of parenting that you really could use support with? What isn't working?

Where children are staying before and after school   20 Minutes   0:20

One of the challenges that we often hear about is where children who are between 6 and 12 years of age stay and what they do after school. As well, we understand that some children in this age group are able to take care of themselves without adult supervision. So, can you tell me where your child or children stay after school?

- PROBE: at home, in a program at the school, in a program outside of the school, with a friend, with a relative, with a paid caregiver

And what are the reasons behind having your children in these places after school?

- PROBE: cost, comfort level, meeting needs, language and cultural support, recommended by a friend, convenience, no other option

Where do you find information about programs? Is the City of Toronto a source for you?

Programming Satisfaction and Needs   35 Minutes   0:40

What activities is your child doing in this program or arrangement?

- PROBE: follow curriculum, recreational activities, sports, the children can choose activities, don't know exactly what they do, homework

So now that we have an idea of where your children are and what they may be doing, can you tell me whether you think this program or arrangement is meeting your needs and your child's needs? What do you like about this program or arrangement? What do you dislike about this program or arrangement?

- PROBE: like the curriculum, the activities, like the safety, know what children are doing, like the homework help, children seem happy, children want to go, they are better adjusted as a result of attending program, enjoy the logistics (easy to get to and pick up from), cost reasonable, programming values our culture and traditions
- PROBE: high cost, the programming does not meet my child's needs, the programming does not value my cultural or traditions, dislike the lack of security, the personnel in the program, still worry about child, child does not like situation, feel like there are few options, logistically challenging

Who is in charge of the program or arrangement?

- PROBE: school staff, Program staff, other adults, friend, relative, a paid caregiver, an older child, child his/herself

What would make your after school arrangement better for you and/or your child?

- PROBE: lower fees, better or longer hours, better location, cultural accommodation, reduced language barriers, training of workers, more varied activities

Ideal Before and After School Arrangement   10 Minutes   1:15

So we have talked about what is working and not working in your current arrangements and programming for your kids, after school. Let's talk now about what you would think of as the ideal arrangement.

- Where would be the best place to have your kids after school? Why?
- What would they be doing?
- Who would be in charge?

If the City of Toronto had a database of programs, would you use it? What information would you look for?
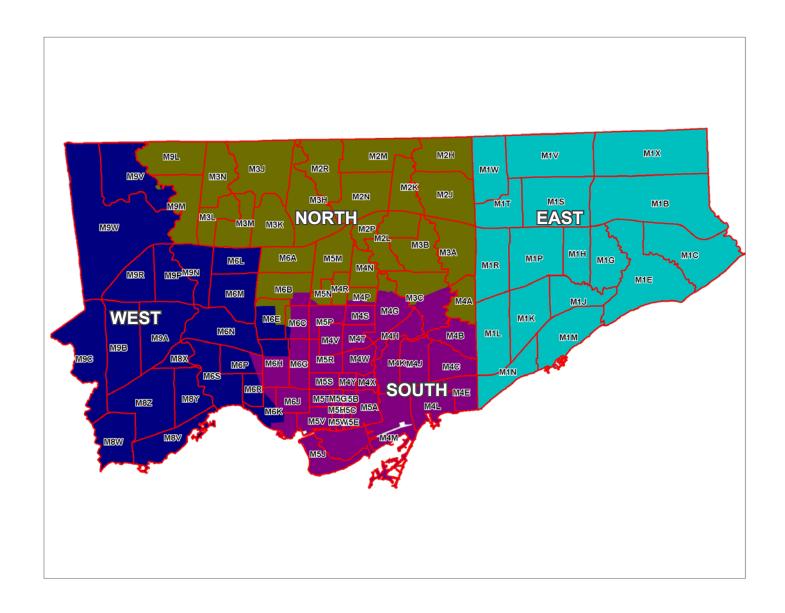
Wrap-up   10 minutes   1:25

- Any last comments you want to make on the after school arrangement or programming for your child?

Conclusion   1:30

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C
Quadrant Map

TORONTO

Middle Childhood Project City of Toronto, Children's Services Division

Parent Survey

The City of Toronto Children's Services Division is doing research on programs for children who are 6 to 12 years old. We want to learn more about how children ages 6 to 12 spend their time after they leave school and before their parent or guardian arrives home. We would like you to complete this 10 minute survey to help us find out more about this topic. The City will use this information to plan programs for your children. If you want to stop this survey at any time, feel free to do so. There is no effect on you or your child/children if you do not do this survey. All of your responses will be kept confidential.

1. Are you the parent or guardian of any children between 6 to 12 years old who live with you?

○ Yes

○ No --- *This survey is only available to parents or guardians living with children between 6 to 12 years of age. Thank you for taking the time to take this survey.*

2. There are many things that parents worry about when it comes to their children. Which of these things – if any – worries you most?

○ How well my child is doing in school

○ Who my child's friends are

○ What my child is doing when not in school (before I get home)?

○ None

○ I don't know

3. Where does your child spend their time after school and before a parent or guardian comes home in the evening?

4. Who takes care of your child/children after school?
Select all that apply.

- ☐ I do or other parent/Guardian
- ☐ Paid babysitter
- ☐ Friend/Neighbor
- ☐ Grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, other relative
- ☐ Sibling
- ☐ Staff at an after school program in the community
- ☐ Staff at an after school program in their school
- ☐ Staff in the public library
- ☐ Someone at our place of worship
- ☐ Child is able to take care of him/her self
- ☐ Other _____

5. Please check all of the activities below that your child/children do after school.
Select all that apply.

- ☐ Help with homework
- ☐ Tutoring
- ☐ Free play
- ☐ Structured games and recreational activities
- ☐ Religious teaching
- ☐ Movies/TV
- ☐ Relaxing
- ☐ Snack time
- ☐ Other _____

6. How satisfied are you with what your child/children ages 6 to 12 do after school?

- ○ Very satisfied
- ○ Somewhat satisfied
- ○ Not very satisfied
- ○ Not at all satisfied
- ○ I don't know

7. Please rate your satisfaction with the following about the after school care for your children ages 6 to 12: Note - please only answer this question if your children are with a paid babysitter, with staff at an after school program in the community, with staff at an after school program in their school or staff in the public library. Everyone else please go to question 8a.

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied	I don't know/Not applicable
Cost	○	○	○	○	○
Location	○	○	○	○	○
Hours	○	○	○	○	○
Activities offered	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of staff	○	○	○	○	○
Safety	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to meet our cultural needs (i.e., relevant foods, respect for our traditions)	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to meet our language needs	○	○	○	○	○

8a. Have you ever looked for after school programs for your child/children in your community in Toronto?

- ○ Yes --- Go to question 8b
- ○ No --- Go to question 9

8b. Please tell us how easy or hard it has been for you to find after school programs for your child/children in your community in Toronto that:

	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat hard	Very hard	I don't know/Not applicable
Are run by adults you feel you could trust	○	○	○	○	○
You can afford	○	○	○	○	○
Are in a convenient location (i.e. close to work or home)	○	○	○	○	○
Have activities your child/children are interested in	○	○	○	○	○
Are high quality	○	○	○	○	○
Have someone pick children up from school and take them to the program	○	○	○	○	○

9. Other than safety, why would a child/children be involved in organized after school care?

○ To develop their interests and hobbies

○ To keep them busy and out of trouble

○ To have fun

○ To help with school work

○ To learn about our religion and culture

○ None of these

○ I don't know

10. If you could choose how your child/children spends their time after school, would you keep things the way they are now or would you change them?

○ Keep things the way they are now

○ Change things

○ I don't know

11. Which of these after school activities would be best for your child/children's needs?

- ○ Help with homework
- ○ Physical activity or sports
- ○ Art, music or dance
- ○ Religion and culture
- ○ Free play
- ○ I don't know

12. If you could choose any one of these for your child/children's after school care, which would be your number one choice?

- ○ An after school program in their school
- ○ An after school program in the community
- ○ A program at my place of worship (e.g. my mosque, temple, church, gurdwara)
- ○ Staying at a public library
- ○ Staying with a paid babysitter
- ○ Staying with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, other relative
- ○ Staying with a sibling
- ○ Staying with a friend/neighbour
- ○ Staying home with me or other parent/guardian
- ○ Letting the child/children take care of him or her self
- ○ Other _____

13. What hours that you need after school care for your child/children?
Select all that apply.

- ☐ Before 3:00 pm
- ☐ 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
- ☐ 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm
- ☐ 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm
- ☐ Later than 6:00 pm

14. If you were to choose a new after school program for your child/children in the future how important would each of these be?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	I don't know/Not applicable
Lower cost	○	○	○	○	○
Better location	○	○	○	○	○
Better service hours	○	○	○	○	○
Better activities	○	○	○	○	○
Better staff	○	○	○	○	○
Language-specific programs	○	○	○	○	○

The following questions will help us get a better picture of who you are.

15. Are you?

○ Male

○ Female

16. Please tell us the ages of each of your children who are currently in after school care. For each of these children, please tell us if they are a girl or a boy.

	Age	Girl or Boy
Child 1		○ Girl ○ Boy
Child 2		○ Girl ○ Boy
Child 3		○ Girl ○ Boy
Child 4		○ Girl ○ Boy
Child 5		○ Girl ○ Boy
Child 6		○ Girl ○ Boy

17. Which of these best describes your family's current employment situation?

○ Both parents work full time

○ One works full time and the other works part time

○ One works full time and the other is mainly at home

○ Both parents are working part time or mainly at home

○ I am a single parent working full time

○ I am a single parent mainly at home

○ Other _____

18. Do you live with extended family?

- ○ Yes _____

- ○ No

19. Were you born in Canada or did you come here from another country?

- ○ Born in Canada --- Go to question 21

- ○ Came to Canada from another country --- Go to question 20

20. How long have you lived in Canada

- ○ 0 to less than 3 years

- ○ 3 to less than 5 years

- ○ 5 to less than 10 years

- ○ 10 years or longer

21. What are the first three characters of your postal code?

22. Can you pick the option that best describes your total household income before taxes?

- ○ Less than $10,000

- ○ $10,000 to less than $20,000

- ○ $20,000 to less than $30,000

- ○ $30,000 to less than $40,000

- ○ $40,000 to less than $50,000

- ○ $50,000 to less than $60,000

- ○ $60,000 and more

Appendix E
Organizations that Participated in Disseminating the Electronic Survey

Organization

4 Villages Community Health Centre

After-School Recreation Care Program (ARC) – City of Toronto

Agincourt Community Services Association

Canadian HIX/AIDS Legal Network

Central Eglinton Day Care

Community Social Planning Council - Toronto

Blessed John XX111 Early Learning Program

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre

Family Day Care

Family Support Institute of Ontario

First Stage Child Care Centre

Hughes Child Care Centre

Learning Enrichment Foundation

Local Immigration Partnership – North Etobicoke

Local Immigration Partnership – North West Scarborough

North York YMCA

Not Your Average Daycare (NYAD) Community Inc.

Scarborough YMCA

St. Christopher House

St. Leonard's Society of Toronto

Terry Tan Child Centre

Toronto Children's Aid Society

Toronto Community Housing Corporation Inc.

Toronto District School Board

Toronto Public Library

Women's Habitat of Etobicoke

Weston Village Child Care Centre

YMCA

*Please note that there may have been organizations that did post or send out the link to the electronic survey without our knowledge, as the link was sent to all relevant stakeholders and some of them may have participated without informing us. We apologize for any omission to this list.

Appendix F
Electronic Survey Postcard

If you live in Toronto and have children who are 6 to 12 years old, the City of Toronto wants to hear from you.

The City is doing research about after school programs for children 6 to 12 years old. We want to learn more about how Toronto children spend their time after they leave school and before their parent or guardian arrives home.

Please complete a short online survey to tell us what you know about your child's after school program options.

The City will use this information to plan programs for children. All responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you for participating!

Survey deadline is **June 30, 2011**

Please go to www.toronto.ca/family and complete a short online survey.

TORONTO

City of Toronto

Middle Childhood Project

Online Parent Survey

www.toronto.ca/family

Appendix G
After-School Interviewees - Organizational Affiliations

Organization

Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton
Central Eglinton Children's Centre
Champion Childcare Centre at Grenoble Public School
Childspace Day Care
Churchill Chums
Eastview Centre
Eastview Boys and Girls Club
Family Day Care
Family Day Care Services
Family Day Centre
Howard Park Children's Centre
Macaulay Child Development Centre
Mackie Sunshine Day Care
Martin Luther Day Care
Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre
Orde Daycare
Peele Public School
Pride in Heritage Children's Centre at Gateway Public School
Private Service Provider
Red Apple Daycare
Runnymede Public School
St. Christopher's House (2)
St. Leonard's Society of Toronto SNAP (Stop Now and Plan)
Terry Fox Junior High School - Calgary
Terry Tan Child Care Centre
Thomason Junior Public School
Toronto City Mission
Toronto District School Board – Child Care Services
Toronto District School Board – Community Use of Schools
Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs
West End Home Child Care Services
YMCA

Appendix H
City of Toronto Middle Childhood Project Interview Guide for After School Program Personnel

Introduction

As you may know, the Middle Childhood Project is supporting the City of Toronto; Children's Services Division to explore what programming is being used by middle childhood children (between the ages of 6 and 12) in Toronto. This includes exploring the parent's satisfaction levels with the programming being offered, the challenges in offering this programming and the ideal programming that should be offered. The City of Toronto is interested in increasing access to high quality after school care through policy development and centralized data base development. As part of this research project, we are conducting interviews with after school program personnel and other related personnel. You have been suggested as a potential interviewee. As an individual involved in developing and implementing policy and programming, as well as assessing the effectiveness and impact of the same, you are a critical key informant. We plan to speak to you for approximately 45 minutes. Even if you agree, you can opt out at any time in the interview without any penalty whatsoever. We will record the interview for our notes and no one outside of our research team will hear the recording. Your responses will be kept confidential. All data being gathered will be analyzed and presented in a final report with key findings and recommendations to the City of Toronto in late fall, 2011.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the project or about the interview before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. To start, can you tell me your role in any after school programming?
2. Can you describe the after school programming that you are involved with?
3. Who are the typical users of that programming? Who do you see as not accessing that programming? In your view, why do users access or not? How are these programs advertised?
4. What are the main successes of the after school programming being offered? What are the main challenges in terms of offering the programming?
5. From your perspective, what is the ideal scenario in terms of after school programming?
6. Who should be responsible for the delivery of such programs?
7. How should the City of Toronto, school boards and other agencies and institutions be working together in order to provide appropriate programming?
8. Do you have any recommendations for the City of Toronto as they continue to explore their policy and program framework for Middle Childhood?

Thank you for your time and participation. We will be sending you a memo containing the high level findings from our project in the coming months. When the project is concluded, we will also be making information from the final report available to you. If you have any follow up questions or comments, please contact either Team Lead:

Radha Nayar at radha@nayarconsulting.ca or 416.925.9356

Amanda Parriag at amanda@parriag.com at 613-523-8993

Appendix I
City of Toronto Middle Childhood Project Interview Guide for Researchers/ Policy Makers

Introduction

As you may know, the Middle Childhood Project is supporting the City of Toronto; Children's Services Division to explore what programming is being used by middle childhood children (between the ages of 6 and 12) in Toronto. The City of Toronto is interested in increasing access to high quality after school care through policy development and centralized data base development. This includes exploring parents' satisfaction levels with the programming being offered, the challenges in offering this programming and the ideal programming that should be offered given the context in which programming in Toronto operates. As part of this research project, we are conducting interviews with researchers and policy makers who are considered experts in this area.

You have been suggested as a potential interviewee. As an individual involved in research and/or developing and implementing relevant policy, as well as assessing the effectiveness and impact of those policies relative to outcomes for middle childhood children, you are a critical key informant. We would like to speak to you for approximately 45 minutes. Even if you agree, you can opt out at any time in the interview. We will take notes during the interview and no one outside of our research team will be privy to these notes. Your responses will be kept confidential. All data being gathered will be analyzed and presented in a final report with key findings and recommendations to the City of Toronto in late fall, 2011.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the project or about the interview before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. To start, can you tell me your role in conducting research or developing policies related to middle childhood (including any organization/government affiliation)?

2. What do you see as the main successes of after school programming being offered in Toronto/Ontario/Canada in terms of outcomes? What are the main challenges of the after-school programs experience?

3. What are the best outcomes we can and/or should aim for in after-school programming for middle childhood children? What are the key indicators relative to those outcomes?

4. How do we assess a "quality" after school program?

5. What are the key issues facing this age group that require further research and/or policy attention? What is the genesis of those issues?

6. How can the City of Toronto, school boards, the Ministry of Health Promotion and other agencies and institutions that are involved in after school programming, work together more efficiently in order to provide appropriate programming? Is there anything preventing improved collaboration? If so, how should those issues be addressed?

7. Do you have any recommendations specifically for the City of Toronto as they continue to explore their policy and program framework for Middle Childhood?

Thank you for your time and participation. We will be sending you a memo containing the high level findings from our project in the coming months. When the project is concluded, we will also be making information from the final report available to you. If you have any follow up questions or comments, please contact either Team Lead:

Radha Nayar at radha@nayarconsulting.ca or 416.925.9356

Amanda Parriag at amanda@parriag.com at 613.523.8993

Appendix J
City of Toronto Middle Childhood Project Interview Guide for Researchers/ Policy Makers

Interviewees: Researcher and Experts

Name	Position
Chris Arsenault	Project Manager, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area
Elaine Baxter-Trahair	General Manager, Children's Service Division, City of Toronto
Rosalee Bender	Program Director, Toronto Foundation for Student Success
Phil Carlton	Director, UpStart Champions for Children and Youth - Calgary
Jeff Calbick	Director, Strategic Priorities, United Way of the Lower Mainland
Christine DeVlaming-Kot	Manager, School Health Elementary Programs, Niagara Health Region
Tony Diniz	Executive Director, Child Development Institute
Shellie Dodd	Coordinator Community and Site Based Programs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area
Sara Farrell	Community Development Officer, Toronto Public Health
Elizabeth Glass	Manager, Planning and Development, Toronto Public Library
Wayne Hammond	President and CEO, Resiliency Initiatives
Cindy Himelstein	Community Worker, Community Development and Prevention Program, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Zeenat Janmohamed	Atkinson Centre/OISE
Larry Ketcheson	CEO, Parks Forestry and Recreation
Cindy McCarthy	Executive Director for the Terry Tan Child Care Centre, sits on the Middle Years Strategy Group and the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition
Gil Noam	Founder and Director of the Program in Education, After-school and Resiliency (PEAR) and Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital
Charles Pascal	Professor of Human Development/Applied Psychology OISE/University of Toronto and Special Advisor on Early Learning to the Premier of Ontario and Conseiller Principal/Senior Advisor: Fondation Lucie et Andre Chagnon Foundation
Brenda Patterson	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Diana Raaflaub	After School Recreation Care Recreation Supervisor, Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation
Kimberly Schonert-Reichl	Associate Professor in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia.
Sally Spencer	CEO, Youth Assisting Youth
Amanda Thompson	Director of Community Impact, United Way St. Catharine's & District
Judi Varga-Toth	Former Assistant Director, Family Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks
Lorna Weigand	Co-Chair of the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition

Appendix K
Literature Review

The process used to create the literature review is detailed in the Methodology Section of this report. However, it should be noted here that while this review is significant, it is not representative of all available literature on best practices or of literature on after-school programming. A wide net was cast to identify seminal works that could inform a subsequent "drilling down" to find more research on identified best practices. Where possible, meta-analyses were accessed in order to manage the volume of literature available. As opposed to being representative of literature, the reader is encouraged to consider this review a "snapshot" of what is currently available, and to use it to build on other reviews that have been done or are in currently in progress.

SETTING THE STAGE

"Children 6 to 12 experience developmental transitions that are a continuation of critical changes that begin in the early years. These transitions affect a child's ability to be healthy, safe and secure, able to learn, and socially engaged and responsible" (Varga-Toth, 2006, p.5).

The middle childhood years mark a distinctive period in which there are important developmental changes and transitions (Schonert-Reichl, Buote, & Jaramillo, 2006). In fact, children experience important cognitive, social, and emotional changes in this period that establish their identity and set the stage for development in adolescence and adulthood (Eccles, 1999). A key experience includes encountering new settings, such as schools, that present new developmental challenges for children. More specifically, developmental milestones in middle childhood can be classified into the following four broad areas:

1. Physical Development
   - Rapid spurts in height and weight.
   - Improvement in athletic abilities.
   - Onset of puberty at varied ages (changes in physical appearance and behaviour).

2. Cognitive Development
   - Gradual increase in logical reasoning using concrete examples.
   - Increased awareness of memory and learning strategies.
   - Achievement and consolidation of important academic skills, such as reading, writing, and computing.

3. Affective Development
   - Acquisition of personal competencies through participation in academic, athletic, or artistic activities.
   - Emotional attachments to family members and others.
   - Deepening sense of who they are and what they can achieve through serious effort and commitment.

4. Social Development
   - Development of reciprocal understandings of others through family and peer interactions.
   - Deepening same-sex friendships.
   - Seeking fairness in their family, school, and peer groups (Zembar & Blume, 2009)

Clearly, much is happening in the middle childhood years. As such, it is critical to study children during this time in order to identify the factors that promote positive development. Yet middle childhood development (in contrast to early childhood or adolescence) is not thoroughly understood. However, what has emerged in the past decade is an interest in the relationship between healthy development in middle childhood and the after-school hours.

THE "CRITICAL HOURS": WHY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE IMPORTANT

Robert Halpern (2002) states that after-school programs began to be important with changes during the Industrial Revolution, when the need for child labour began to decline and children began to attend school, creating "discretionary time" in the period between school ending and taking the evening meal. Over time, many after-school programs began to spring up in America and in Canada, hosted by religious groups and community organizations.

In the last ten years, there has been a dramatic increase in literature related to after-school programming for children ages 6 to 12. The pace of the research being done seems to be directly influenced by the fact that across Canada and around the world, policy makers, programmers, researchers, and parents alike are realizing that the after-school hours (generally considered to be from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.) are a critical time. Research has often started with where children are and what they are doing in the after-school period. For example, Alberta Parks and Recreation found that children whose parents work full-time spend an average of 20 to 25 hours on their own each week (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2009.). Another report states that the average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of discretionary time each week, which is more time than they spend in school (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2007). A study conducted by the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto found that only 9.5 percent of children in Toronto spend their time in the after-school hours in a structured program. These programs included licensed childcare and community-based programs (Lyn, 2010). Yet another study found that three in 10 children say they are home alone after-school at least three days a week (Duffett, Johnson, Farkas, et al., 2004).

> One expert pointed out that the mismatch between the end of the school day and the end of the work day was based on historic needs where children needed to finish early in order to help on the farm. She also pointed out that, historically, mothers were "home with cookies for the children" when they arrived from school, but that now that 80% of women with school-aged kids are in the workforce, this new reality is not being reflected.

These periods of after-school time present a challenge to parents and others with a vested interest in the quality of children's lives. A Boys and Girls Club of Canada commissioned a study of Canadian parents of children aged 6 to 14 and found that two out of three parents are "very concerned" about their child's safety. That proportion rises to three-quarters in families where parents work full-time and have no one at home to care for the children (The Child and Adolescent Development Task Group of the F/T/P Committee on Population Health and Health Security, 2004).

Beyond safety, there is an increasing understanding of the importance of the after-school time on the physical, social, emotional, and academic development of children and youth (Clyne, 2010; Miller, 2003). The notion of after-school programs is thus created:

> *"Because young people spend only 20% of their time in school, how and where they spend the remaining 80% has profound implications for their well-being and their future. Quality after-school programs provide engaging learning activities in a safe and supportive environment. These programs can meet students' needs for personal attention from adults, inclusion in positive peer groups, and enjoyable experiential activities that build self-esteem."* (Miller, 2003, p.2)

After-school programs serve important functions for parents. Given parental concerns about safety, perhaps the primary function is the provision of supervision for children. As many parents are still working in the after-school time period, programming provides the opportunity for children ages 6 to 12 to have the benefit of supervision by adults or older peers, which can reduce risks of harm through accidents or injury, and possible experimentation with alcohol and other risk behaviours (Lyn, 2010; Velleman, 2005 [as cited in Solk, 2006]). In addition, after-school programs can offer the opportunity for what are termed "enrichment" activities for children, which can include learning arts, dance, culture, sports, and social recreation. Lastly, an important focus for many after-school programs is improving academic achievement (Lyn, 2010). This often comes in the form of homework help, special tutoring programs, or a homework club setting.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS CAN WORK

> *"...a recent review conducted in the US concluded that the available studies offer evidence of program benefits for many children, especially in contrast to the risk associated with self-care. Evidence for beneficial effects is strongest for low-income children, children in urban or high-crime neighbourhoods, younger children and boys. Program benefits depend on program features such as opportunities for children to make choices and a positive emotional climate. These aspects of program quality can, in turn, be linked to structural factors such as child-staff ratios and staff qualifications. It is important for all programs to foster a positive climate in which children know that they are valued, respected, and liked."* (Hanvey, 2002, p.32)

The rise of research on after-school programs has provided evidence that they can and do work in terms of enhancing the development of children ages 6 -12. A few examples are provided below:

- Researchers in the Study of Promising After-School Programs (Vandell & Reisner, 2007) found that in comparison to a less-supervised group, school-age children who frequently attended high quality out-of-school programs showed better work habits, social skills and academic performance at the end of the school year."

- Miller (2003) found that after-school programs can address the socio-economic inequities that homework can exacerbate, including differences in access to computers, adults who can help with assignments, and spaces conducive to study.

- Chung (2000) found that after-school programs help middle childhood children to raise their self-confidence, develop social skills, and set higher aspirations for their future.

- Durlak & Weissberg (2007), in a study called *The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills*, found that children who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioural adjustment, and school performance. More specifically, after-school programs succeeded in improving children's feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, school bonding (positive feelings and attitudes toward school), positive social behaviours, school grades and achievement test scores. They also reduced problem behaviours (e.g., aggression, noncompliance, and conduct problems) and drug use. They further found that it was possible to identify effective programs. The researchers found that programs that used evidence-based skill training approaches (i.e. were sequenced, active, focused and explicit) were consistently successful in producing multiple benefits for children in seven outcome categories (including improved feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, increased positive social behaviours and reduced problem behaviours), while those that did not use such approaches were not successful in any outcome area.

While such results are exciting to see, the research is also very clear that not all programs work, and that some programming seems to be working but exactly why it is working is not well understood. Evaluations suggest that strong after-school programs might help participants academically, socially, and behaviourally, but not all programs produce these benefits, and in those that do, the benefits are often modest (Birmingham et al., 2005). What we can take from this is that the notion of "best practices" in the after-school field, while clear in many ways, is still evolving. More work needs to be done to add to the strong foundation laid by researchers and programmers in this ever-growing area.

> *Follow-up studies on students with long-term involvement (at least 4 years) in the LA's BEST Program (which provides a wide range of after-school programs to 180 neighbourhoods in Los Angeles deemed to be "most vulnerable" to gang activity, drugs and violence) demonstrated "positive achievements on standardized tests of mathematics, reading, and language arts that were strongly correlated to their sustained participation in the program"* (Desa, 2010).

BEST PRACTICES[15]

The literature reveals the following best practices when it comes to planning and sustaining programming in the after-school period for children ages 6 to 12:

1. Appropriate staffing is crucial to successful after-school program planning and delivery.

Staff need to be caring and committed

Having caring and committed staff is seen as a foundational aspect of successful after-school programming. More specifically, staff need to be truly engaged, easy to approach and interested in providing supports and feedback to children. Children's needs and assets should be addressed during programs, evidenced by such staff behaviours as active listening, modeling positive behaviour, and being respectful to children. (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2009; Chung, 2000; C.S. Mott Foundation, 2005; Frontier College, 2006, 2008; Granger, 2008; Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008; Harvard Family Research Project [HFRP], 2006; Metz, Yohalem, Pittman & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004; Pierce, Bolt, Vandell et al., 2010; Raley, Grossman, & Walker, 2005).

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15   The following definition of best practice was used to guide analysis of the literature: "...an approach that helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation" (Bennett & Holloway, 2010, p. 411).

> *"Beginning to show more autonomy, middle school youth need to be given opportunities to make decisions, take on leadership roles, co-construct program offerings and policies, set personal goals, and develop their potential as role models. This cannot be done without the skilled help of stable staff members who are connected to participants and who are able to both explicitly instruct and subtly model these positive behaviors."* (HFRP, 2006, p.1)

Staff need appropriate compensation

Research indicates that in order to have fully engaged staff, after-school programs need qualified people who understand the need for and the goals of after-school programming. Yet after-school service providers describe a chronic inability to find and keep the right people. Limited funding for salaries is a big challenge, resulting in low wages and reliance on part-time and temporary positions, as are the odd hours staff need to be available to work (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2009; Chung, 2000; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Raley, Grossman and Walker, 2005; Reisner, White, Russell, et. al., 2004). These challenges often mean that staff eventually find full-time, higher-paying jobs, leaving children disappointed and burdening the remaining staff members with heavy workloads that foster burnout:

> *"Having permanent staff is the most critical factor for creating the program's culture and climate. But having a staff that shares a common vision and relates well to young people is also essential. Hiring, supervision, activity monitoring and careful allocation of available resources all contribute to strong programs."* (Raley, Grossman, & Walker, 2005, p.5)

> *The LA's Best Study concluded that students who feel supported and encouraged by staff are "also more likely to place a higher value on education and have higher aspirations for their futures. Furthermore, staff members who are caring and encouraging fostered values of education. Their students appreciated school more, found it more relevant to their own lives, and, ultimately, were more engaged both in the after school program and in school."*
> (Desa, 2010)

Staff need to be well trained and have ongoing professional development support

Beyond engagement, the literature has started to show that when staff have access to substantive training and professional development, a link can be directly made to more positive outcomes for children (Chung, 2000; C.S. Mott Foundation Committee, 2005; Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008; Reisner, White, Russell et. al, 2004; Yohalem, Pittman, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004). For example, staff need to be trained to balance flexibility and structure. They also need to create opportunities for children to be social and independent. All of this requires understanding how to develop relationships with children that are nurturing and challenging. It also involves being taught the developmentally appropriate set of tasks that will help programs achieve their goals. Ongoing resources for training and development are required, which most programs do not have access to.

Strong managers are important

Managers are also important, and there is a link between staff achievement and management practices (Wilson-Ahlstrom & Yohale, 2009). The manager ensures that the after-school program provides services that meet the needs of children and families. Managers set the stage for a certain level of quality, and provide ongoing support to staff to do their jobs the best way they can. They also play a critical role in developing strong relationships with schools and community partners.

Staff qualifications

Perhaps most importantly, there is an urgent need for the sector to develop a shared understanding of minimum or required staff qualifications and standards for after-school programming. This gap is a crucial one, and one that needs to be filled in order to continue to make gains on evidence-based practice (Reisner, White, Russell, et. al., 2004).

2. After-school activities should be planned and purposeful.

> *"Individual activities should operate according to a few basic principles: They must be interesting to participants and doable at participants' current level of skill or knowledge but intentionally and incrementally challenging to help them grow."* (Raley, Grossman & Walker, 2005, p.4).

Many researchers state that after-school programs are comprised of three foundational elements: safety, positive youth development, and academic enrichment and support (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2009; C.S. Mott Foundation Committee, 2005; Desa, 2010; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Frontier College, 2006, 2008; Granger, 2008; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010; Reisner, White, Russell et al., 2004). Within this, programs can focus on any combination of academics, cultural activities, life skills and recreational activities. Raley, Grossman and Walker (2005) caution that to increase successful outcomes, programmers need to decide their focus based on available resources and the needs of their community, instead of trying to be all things to all children. This includes being clear about who is being targeted, why and how.

Within these elements, the literature indicates the following strategies to maximize the quality of activities offered in the after-school time:

1. Have clear goals for programs that create intention about outcomes.

2. Make activities sequential, focused and explicit (which can improve school performance).

> Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner (2007) use the acronym SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit) to describe ideal features for after-school programming. They state that SAFE features are a much better predictor of program effectiveness than other structural features discussed in the literature and are practices of effective programs. However, Durlak and Weissberg's (2007) caution that programmers should use a "...flexible structure that is 'adaptable and responsive to individual wants, needs, talents, moods or one in which children 'move smoothly from one activity to another' at their own pace." (p. 7).

3. Ensure activities are explicit to goals (e.g. if improving academic performance is a program goal, have a component of the programming that is explicitly academic).

4. Make programs relevant to children's interests.

5. Combine elements of learning and play both in groups and in one-on-one settings.

> Schonert-Reichl et al. (2010) states that participation in collaborative activities increases children's pro-social behaviour, which is a key element of developing a sense of social responsibility.

6. Promote informal peer engagement (balanced with structure).

7. Engage children in development of programming by getting their feedback and ideas:

8. Ensure that after-school programs complement, rather than replicate, in-school learning and development by offering more depth on specific topics and skills and by offering students options and choices to pursue individual interests.

9. Offer clear instructions/structure and use purposeful strategies to motivate and challenge children.

10. Offer a diverse array of developmentally appropriate activities that provide opportunities to build skills in the younger years (ages 6 to 7).

11. Offer flexible programming that allows for student choice and autonomy in the selection of activities in the older years (ages 8 to 12).

Most importantly, the literature shows that it is a variety of activities that will expand the range of positive outcomes and improve retention rates in programs. Specifically, this means providing both academic learning opportunities as well as "enrichment" opportunities (e.g. recreation activities, arts, culture, etc.) (Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010; Granger and Grant, 2008). A range increases the odds that children, regardless of their age, will find activities that interest them:

"Evaluations of 550 OST [out-of-school] Programs run by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development conclude that while developing a highly focused academic component aligned with academic goals may be important, exclusive, all encompassing focus on just academics can actually be detrimental. Extra time for academics needs to be balanced by a variety of engaging, fun and structured extra-curricular activities that promote youth development in a variety of real-world contexts, and multifaceted OST programs that are able to do this have the most impact on academic achievement." (Desa, 2010, p.9)

It should be noted that there was no consensus in the literature regarding how long programs should run in a day, how often they should be offered in a week, an appropriate division of activities, and appropriate ratios of children to staff (the range is 1:10 to 1:15). Also, while it seems clear that attending programming over time seems beneficial, there is no consensus on how long a child should attend programming to begin to reap the most benefits; it appears to be difficult to mandate a specific duration or intensity (Metz, Goldsmith, & Arbreton, 2008; Desa, 2010). Some evaluators look to goals theory, which suggests that time spent on a task is critical to mastery, signaling that the length and intensity of required participation depends on the program's objectives. Achieving academic progress, for example, takes longer and requires more intensive participation than does achieving improvement in social skills (Raley, Grossman and Walker, 2005). It may also be that children who are already on a positive trajectory will be more likely to participate over time. It seems that further research is needed to determine the best service model.

3. Programs need to place priority on being affordable and accessible in order to have the best reach and outcomes.

"Generally there are a lot of programs out there, but for various barrier reasons, many children aren't connecting with them, especially in poorer neighbourhoods, and it's to the detriment of their well-being and health. The community and schools and parents need to get together and talk about how children can tap into opportunities." (Cooper, 2011, p.1).

The literature indicates that in order for programming to have an impact on the broader community, it must be accessible and affordable (Chung, 2000; C.S. Mott Foundation Committee, 2005; Desa, 2010; Frontier College, 2006; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008). Key barriers consistently cited include transportation (especially to programs), availability, and cost (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2010).

These access issues are important, especially cost. Studies show that families living on lower incomes access programs less often and for shorter periods than children coming from higher income families, and are more likely to participate in "enrichment" programs. As well, children from lower-income families are more likely to participate in tutoring programs, thus not reaping the benefits associated with enrichment experiences (Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2010).

Addressing high costs means offering programs that:

- Are at reasonable rates.
- Are tied to subsidy opportunities for families who are living on lower incomes.
- Provide incentives for attendance such as stipends, school credit, food, etc.

Beyond cost, accessibility is also viewed from a number of different lenses in the literature and can mean offering programs:

- In languages other than English.

- At sites where parents can easily reach (e.g. schools or places where there can be easy transport).

- At sites that are accessible to children with disabilities.

- At times that are convenient for families (usually meaning beyond 6:00 p.m., especially for shift workers or parents working at more than one job).

- Are culturally inclusive and relevant.

- From staff that share and/or deeply understand the children's cultural and/or racial backgrounds and experiences.

The points above speak mostly to the needs of immigrant families. In fact, serving immigrant families presents interesting challenges for the after-school programmer. One of the most striking gaps in the literature is related to the needs of children and families who do not speak English as a first language or who are immigrants. In fact, only a few papers were found to specifically focus on the needs of children who are "ESL (English as a Second Language) Learners." One of those studies found that "…low-income and minority families are significantly less likely to be satisfied with their options. On virtually every measure of satisfaction—whether it's quality, affordability or availability of activities—low-income and minority parents are substantially more likely than their respective counterparts to indicate they encounter problems. Both groups, by overwhelming margins, indicate their communities could realistically do much more for kids…" (Duffett, Johnson et al., 2004, p.11). Specific issues include the fact that:

- Few programs seek to address explicit equity issues such as cross-cultural awareness or identity development.

- While many after-school programs provide valuable academic interventions, a significant number do not yet have the level of knowledge or capacity to be effective with groups frequently targeted for support—namely low-income youth, youth of colour, immigrant youth, and "ESL Learners".

- Many programs do not understand equity and diversity dynamics and struggle to respond to the challenges that these dynamics present.

- Many programs in lower-income areas face intense sustainability challenges.

- There is a considerable gap between the desire of program staff for training on issues of equity, access and diversity, and the degree of training that staff actually receive (California Tomorrow, 2003).

In Toronto, immigrants are over-represented in low-income families, meaning that they must potentially traverse cost barriers as well as other barriers listed above. This creates even more roadblocks for some immigrants to reaping benefit from after-school programming. It is, therefore, an urgent priority to embrace the learning and growth needed to serve our many diverse communities when it comes to after-school programming. Certainly the literature indicates that there is still a significant amount of progress that needs to be made in this area.

OST PROGRAMS FOR ESL LEARNERS

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory conducted a literature review on literacy in after-school programs. Based on their findings they make the following recommendations for OST Programs for ESL learners:

• Pay particular attention to the social, cultural, linguistic, and literacy needs of participants.

• Strengthen cultural connection and identity through incorporation of cultural and language components.

• Include programming for the entire family including family literacy.

• Carry out ongoing needs assessments.

• Use curricular design and materials that emphasize development of the family as a whole.

• Use curriculum and provide experiences that are culturally and linguistically supportive, accessible, and responsive.

• Provide first language tutoring.

• Assist youth and families to gain cross-cultural skills and understanding.

• Come from a place that wishes to address the conditions that produce social disparities and inequalities (solidarity).

• Provide support and programming that helps to heal the wounds of social distress, exclusion and discrimination.

• Provide exposure to strong, culturally relevant role models.

4. Engaging families is an integral part of high-quality program planning and delivery.

The literature consistently states that engaging families in after-school programming is an important way to improve the benefits and outcomes that children experience (Chung, 2000; Desa, 2010; Frontier College, 2006; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Jeynes, 2005; Kakli et al., 2006; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Metz, Goldsmith, & Arbreton, 2008; Raley, Grossman and Walker, 2008). The following is considered to be important when it comes to engaging families:

• Focus on families' assets.

• Consider the concerns and needs of the families and children served.

• Solicit family input.

• Communicate frequently and in positive ways (e.g. regular communication through multiple methods [including in-person, flyers, email, telephone] about the program and the needs and progress of the child).

- Provide leadership opportunities for families.
- Designate a staff member with family engagement responsibility.
- Hire staff with family engagement experience.

Family engagement typically falls into one of three categories:

1. *Support of children's learning* – this relates to ways parents can directly support the child in their development and academic performance. Strategies include:

   - Giving information to the family about programming on a regular basis - both information that is sent home and offered when parents drop off/pick up child from program.
   - Engaging family in the program setting, and tapping into their expertise (see Text Box).

2. *Support of family itself* – this means providing families with needed supports for their quality of life in order to enhance their ability to participate in programming. Strategies include:

   - Supporting parents to get the information they need to address their challenges, including direct information and referrals to other supports (e.g. settlement supports, support for family relationships, workshops on how parents can obtain the services their children need, and how they can develop relationships with schools).
   - Encouraging positive family-child interactions.

3. *General support for programming* – this means getting families to support programming by:

   - Acting as a liaison between families and schools.
   - Helping parents develop advocacy skills.
   - Having parents volunteer for programs as activity assistants, advisory board members, tutors and translators/interpreters.

Factors influencing family involvement in programming include:

- Parental attitudes toward their children's education or school.
- Opportunities for family to formally engage in program activities.
- Parental interest or availability.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- Families' residence outside the program neighbourhood.

It seems that programs that are able to forge strong relationships with family members can bridge the often-compartmentalized life of middle school students. Further, family involvement in after-school programming improves a program's chances to successfully meet its outcomes, improve relationships between parents and children, and possibly even increase family engagement with the school that children attend.

The Math and Parent Partnerships Program (MAPPS), which began in Phoenix, Arizona, takes a strengths-based approach to parent education. MAPPS offers workshops that address parents' desire to gain new math skills in order to help their children with schoolwork. Workshops simultaneously appreciate parents' knowledge base and offer them leadership opportunities. Specifically, parents' knowledge and lived experience with math are explored in the workshops. For example, building tables becomes a way to explore ideas of geometry while drawing on families' own expertise, such as construction and mosaic tile work. Parents are also supported to later lead the workshop for other parents. (Desa, 2010, p. 15).

5. Partnership and collaboration are the keys to moving after-school programming forward.

"Programs are more likely to exhibit high quality when they effectively develop, utilize, and leverage partnerships with a variety of stakeholders like families, schools, and communities. However, strong partnerships are more than a component of program quality; they are becoming a non-negotiable element of supporting learning and development across all the contexts in which children learn and develop." (Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008, p.8)

The literature is clear that creating strong, genuine partnerships results in improved outcomes for children. Diverse partners need to be engaged - parents, educators, community residents, service providers, community-based and civic organizations, colleges, park and recreation services, and public officials. Clapp Padgett, Deich, & Russell (2010) suggest that in every community, multiple stakeholders must support after-school programs and that it is municipalities that must lead the charge. For example, municipal leaders can play a pivotal role in bringing a wide range of partners together from inside and outside of government. They can encourage interagency collaborations, as well as engage partners from schools and the community. Municipal leaders can also engage "unusual" partners (e.g. corporations) that do not have an obvious connection with out-of-school time programs.

In fact, the research coming from the Harvard Family Research Project takes this notion one step further, and indicates that the notion of Complementary Learning, where municipalities move toward the intentional integration of both school and non-school supports as the best way to give children what they need to succeed. Their belief is that all sectors of the social environment influence the growth and development of young people, and they suggest focusing alignment of the following supports to create a seamless system that supports children best:

- Effective schools.

- Families.

- Early childhood programs.

- Out-of-school activities.

- Cultural and community institutions.

- Colleges and universities.

- Health, social services, and other safety net services.

In Canada, many after-school collaborative initiatives focus on senior level government investments and inter-sectoral strategies to enhance the capacity of current program providers and create a stronger network of service providers. Networks build the critical mass needed for effective advocacy, evaluative research, and spreading of best practices.

Of course collaboration is not easy and requires all partners to potentially change the way they think and act. Building consensus among stakeholders is the key challenge, especially given differences in institutional cultures, values and beliefs. Time must be provided for collaborators to establish relationships of mutual respect and understanding.

The literature spends the most time considering an obvious starting place when it comes to partnership – the need to strengthen the relationship between community-based after-school programmers and schools (Chung, 2000; Frontier College, 2006; Miller, 2003; Vandell & Reisner, 2007; Yohalem, Pittman and Wilson-Ahlstrom 2004). This includes coordinating after-school learning with the regular school day and creating linkages between school-day teachers and after-school personnel. Ideally, partnerships should include regular cycles of assessment, feedback, and evaluation to meet children's needs as they evolve both in the classroom and in the after-school setting. It should also include coordination between school and after-school staff regarding use of facilities and equipment.

In addition, schools are also an obvious location for after-school programming to happen, whether provided by the school or in partnership with an after-school programmer in the community. This kind of collaboration has many potential benefits, including supporting children in their homework and academic achievement, supporting transitions between grades, and providing shared information to address issues regarding children and learning before they become problematic. One promising strategy is to cross staffing boundaries, e.g. hire school teachers to staff after-school programs, while schools hire teachers and staff with past experience in after-school programs. The ultimate goal is that schools and community groups work in conjunction with one another to create an expanded learning system with shared vision, mission, and outcomes (Desa, 2010).

"Middle school after-school programs need to be inherently different from the school day yet inextricably linked to its curriculum, personnel, and other after school offerings. Youth want engagement and fun that is distinct from school, but they also need a complementary web of academic, social, and emotional support. Middle school after school programs should build an integrated vision with schools to support youth development. This moves after school programs away from aligning or competing with schools toward collaborating with them to think holistically about how best to serve middle school youth." (HFRP, 2006, p.2).

Ultimately, support from all levels of government is a common denominator among strong after-school initiatives and networks. Crucial forms of support include enabling policy statements and frameworks, accompanied by some form of sustained resources. A blend of support from federal and/or provincial governments, as well as local school districts and the community enables agencies to design and expand programs that meet local needs, is deemed essential. (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2009)

OUTCOMES OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Although exploring desired and actual outcomes of after-school programs was not a focus for the literature review, a number of reports and also interviewees for the project spoke about them. Many researchers and interviewees state that outcome measurement is not well-developed in this field, and that there is a need for better program evaluation to truly understand what the outcomes of after-school programs are, and why they occur. Having said that, some of the outcomes raised as important to continue to explore include:

Academic outcomes:
- Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations
- Higher school attendance rates and less tardiness
- Less disciplinary action (e.g., suspension)
- Lower dropout rates
- Better performance in school (e.g., literacy rates) as measured by achievement test scores and grades, paving the way for better employment opportunities
- Improved homework completion
- Improved engagement in learning and program activities

Social/emotional outcomes:
- Decreased behavioural problems
- Improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with others (peers, parents, teachers)
- Increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy
- Increased leadership skills
- Development of initiative
- Improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school

Prevention outcomes:
- Avoidance of drug and alcohol use
- Decreases in delinquency and violent behaviour
- Increased knowledge of safe sex
- Avoidance of sexual activity
- Reduction in juvenile crime
- Increased knowledge of community resources
- Increased engagement of family and/or community

Health and wellness outcomes:

"There could be another outcome around healthy eating, that is, are kids making better choices in the types of snacks they eat after school? If you can say our program helped kids learn to make healthier choices in their foods … we know that kids can have influence over family agendas, those would be standard basic outcomes you would want" – Policy Expert
- Better food choices
- Increased physical activity (measured through carried pedometers and other physical activity measuring devices)
- Increased levels of energy
- Increased knowledge of nutrition and health practices
- Reduction in BMI
- Improved blood pressure
- Improved body image

A number of experts advised that outcomes must be tailored to programs. For example, an arts-based program cannot have the same outcome as a recreation program. That being said, "you can still have [overarching] city-wide outcomes." Outcomes could be development outcomes, socio-emotional outcomes and academic outcomes, among others. As well, outcomes related to the families experience of the program are important – i.e. ease of initial access, fees, meeting language and cultural needs, etc.

Gaps

"The after-school field now has strong research reviews showing what many in the field have argued; these programs can have an important impact on academic and other policy-relevant youth outcomes. The research also shows that many programs do not make a greater difference than other services in the community, and … learning how to intervene effectively to improve programs is now the primary issue facing the field…" (Granger, 2008, p.15).

There are some important gaps in the literature that must be noted:

- There is remarkable consensus among researchers that after-school programming is important, meets critical developmental needs, and that children's lives are enhanced by it. Having said that, we still do not have a clear understanding of why it impacts children the way that it does. For example, we know that the longer children are in programs, the more they can benefit, but why that is the case is unknown. We also still lack an understanding on the differential impact of programming on populations of children.

  Longitudinal studies that engage families, schools, and communities are needed, as is more research that targets certain populations of children.

- Many studies go outside the 6 to 12 age range, especially studying the older age range (e.g. children up to age 16 or 18). Further, many studies also explore "out-of-time" (e.g. before-school, after-school, weekends, and summer breaks) as opposed to just after-school time. More research is available on the needs of older middle childhood (i.e. ages 9 to 12) as opposed to early middle childhood (i.e. ages 6 to 8), and our data and the literature clearly indicate that the needs of children in this age range are unique.

[I] worry that not all children ages 6 to 12 are the same! Older children are on the verge of youth – they need capable staff who can guide them and support them in making their life relationship, decisions. Developmental appropriateness in programs is so important – you get that more in childcare and home child care – After-School Personnel Interviewee

- The literature is clear that programs must be evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis. While outcomes (or desired outcomes) are more developed, strategies to actually measure those outcomes are lacking. This is not surprising, given that the sector lacks standardized ways of implementing activities. Flexible, standardized tools that are asset-based and support programs to measure changes in children as they happen over time are needed. Monitoring program activities and collecting data on what is working in programming and what is not seems a realistic place to start to measure impact of any program (Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton, 2008, HFRP, 2006). This will help inform a shared understanding about the process used to plan and deliver after-school programming, which can eventually lead to better measurement of the quality of programs. Funders also have a role to play here by exploring what type of accountability and monitoring supports continuous improvement and by leading the development of quality improvement standards for the sector.

> Experts discussed the issue of quality as one that was important and not yet resolved. Quality was seen as an issue of program supervision as well as program structure and content. Some policy experts suggested some hallmarks of quality such as literacy-based programming and proper staff training as a starting point for discussion. While some interviewees suggested that this issue was one that specialists should grapple with from a research perspective, others suggested that a collaborative approach was needed with engagement from stakeholders across the sector.

- While we were able to find some studies that focused on the differential impact of after-school programming on boys versus girls (e.g. Pierce, Bolt & Vandell [2010] found that boys who attended more flexible after-school programs that allowed children greater autonomy and choice in selecting their activities had better social skills with peers at school), more research needs to be done on how to tailor programming to maximize outcomes from a gender perspective. Further, very few reports delve into the needs of particular populations (e.g. children with disabilities) although the Canadian Active After School Partnership did some consultations in this area in 2011, which holds promise.

- The impact on the struggle to find sustainable funding for programs, while mentioned repeatedly, has not been studied in terms of how programs achieve their outcomes, as well as the impact of losing/reduced funding on children and communities.

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