

# After-School Programs Evaluation, 2009/2010

## Background

In 2007, Saskatoon Health Region (SHR) and the United Way of Saskatoon and Area partnered to increase funding for after-school programs in ten of Saskatoon's lower income neighbourhood schools. This work was prompted by the discovery of large health differences between residents in lower income neighbourhoods compared to residents of other neighbourhoods in Saskatoon.

## Our purpose

In the 2009/10 school year, we evaluated the processes (e.g., potential program improvements) and outcomes (e.g., effects on students' self-esteem) associated with the after-school programs.

## What we did

Students were asked to complete a pre-program survey in February 2010 and a post-program survey in May 2010. Staff members were asked to complete a post-program survey in May/June 2010.

## What we looked at

The student survey looked at the psycho-social climate in after-school programs, as well as program effects on students' self-esteem, school performance, and behaviours. The staff survey asked about how staff thought the program affected the students' behaviours and other outcomes, as well as challenges and successes of the programs.

## How we interpreted the data

Frequencies and paired sample t-tests were used for the student survey. Thematic analysis was used for the staff survey.

## What we found

- A total of 216 students took part in the after-school programs evaluation. Nineteen staff members participated in the evaluation.
- The most common reason students attended a program was that there were interesting activities. Other reasons included: to meet new people, friends were participating, or their parents thought it was a good idea.
- When asked how the programs helped them, the most common response from students was it helped them learn new things. Other responses included: personal development, making friends, and being more active.

*"I love the teachers and people in it. I love laughing and being silly and drama helped me be the person I want to be. It was awesome..." -Grade 5 Student*

- Students did not rate opportunities for autonomy/privacy very highly (the average was 13.2 out of a possible 24). However, opportunities for peer development was rated more highly (the average was 18.9 out of a possible 24).
- Staff believed the programs helped students learn more respect, increased confidence, improved social skills, and students were more committed/responsible. The majority of staff felt that the programs increased students' self-esteem. Some staff also indicated the programs increased positive peer interaction.

*"We have been able to see some of our participants go from being quiet and shy to outgoing. We offer the opportunity for participants to be independent which in turn improves their confidence and self-esteem. We teach them the skills needed to be independent in all areas (social, academic, recreation, physical activity, etc.)." -Program Staff*

- Some of the challenges noted by staff included: funding, lack of time, and student commitment.

## Limitations

- No control group.
- Pre-program survey took place after some of the programs had already started.
- Attendance data was not available for all programs.
- Programs varied a lot from school-to-school, which was difficult to track and these differences may have produced different outcomes.

## Summary

This evaluation suggests that the majority of students felt that their programs had positive effects such as improving personal development. Staff suggested similar themes, with the programs helping to improve student self-esteem and relationships. However, due to the limitations of this evaluation, further study is required to determine whether these positive effects are entirely attributable to the after-school programs and how long-lasting these effects may be.

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