



# After School Program Research Update

## The Impact of After School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills

*Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R. (2007).*

*Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. www.casel.org*

Researchers from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conducted a meta-analysis of 73 after school programs to determine the effectiveness of enhancing youth's personal and social skills.

Research questions were:

- *What types of outcomes can be expected from after school programs that attempt to foster youth's personal and social skills?*
- *What program characteristics are associated with better results?*

Personal and social skills identified were at least one or more skills in the areas of problem solving, conflict resolution, self-control, leadership, responsible, decision-making and enhancement of self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Sixty-six programs had collected post-outcome data and were included in the final analysis. Program characteristics, participants and outcomes were assessed by program. Youth were expected to have outcomes in three general areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. A coding system created 8 specific youth outcome categories. See Table 1.

Evidence-based approaches directed researchers to establish two criteria related to the program's trainings process and program content that promote personal and social skills development.

Thirty-nine programs that were coded as S.A.F.E.– sequenced, active, focused and explicit showed significant positive results as compared to 27 programs that did not meet the evidence-based criteria.

As a result, authors recommend that improving youth's personal and social skills, programs must devote ample time to skills enhancement, explicit about what they wish to achieve, use activities that are coordinated and sequenced to achieve their purpose and require active involvement of all participants.

Table 1. Outcome Criteria	
Outcome Area	Categories of Analysis
Feelings & Attitudes	Self-perception, school bonding
Behavioral Adjustment	Positive social behaviors, problem behaviors, drug use
School Performance	Performance on achievement, grades and school attendance

### Effective programs that enhance personal and social skills were S.A.F.E. :

- **Sequenced** . . . sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives.
- **Active** . . . . . use of active forms of learning.
- **Focused** . . . . . at least one program component focused on developing personal or social skills.
- **Explicit** . . . . . targeting of specific personal or social skills.