

# 2006-2007 Evaluation of the Before- and After-School Program (21CCLC Grant) in the Independence School District, MO

Conducted by The Edward Zigler Center in  
Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University  
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## Executive Summary

Researchers at The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University completed the 2006-2007 evaluation of the before-and after-school program operating in nine elementary schools in the Independence School District, MO (ISD). They found that the program excelled in its approach to providing services and has had a positive impact on students and the schools as a whole. Students who participated in the program had significantly higher achievement test scores and lower problem behaviors than non-participating students. Low special education rates and high percentages of students reading at grade level were among the findings indicating the program is having an impact on the schools as a whole.

The program, known as **Kids' Safari**, has been implemented with the support of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) grants from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Among other major findings reported by the Yale research team has been the high quality of services provided to students and parents. Quality assessments conducted at the nine schools show that the schools provide programs in the good to excellent range. Program staff is well-educated, experienced and collaborates with community agencies. Coordinators, teachers and staff provide homework assistance, tutoring and creative enrichment activities including music, art, and health and fitness, as well as a free period to enable students to participate in recreational activities.

Fifty-four percent of the student body in the nine schools participates in the school-age program, with an average program attendance rate of 63 percent. When examined in relation to national studies on before- and after-school programs, both the enrollment and attendance rates for the ISD program are found to be exceptional and indicate that parents and students enjoy and support the program and the activities it offers. As one of the parents (from Procter) indicated, ***"Kids' Safari is a wonderful program. My son cannot wait to arrive and never wants to leave. The staff is excellent at creating structure and providing numerous activities for a variety of interests. I never worry about my child while he is there."***

The program is based on a club system, in which students can opt to participate in before-and after-school activities of their choice. The program's operational principles are to: 1) provide quality before- and after-school services to all students, including those from the most at-risk families; and 2) provide enrichment learning opportunities to the students. All students are eligible to participate in the before- and after-school program activities which use research-based approaches focusing on all developmental pathways. The program has a sliding scale fee, to ensure participation of low income and other at-risk students. Schools that have identified a need also offer a late bus for transportation.

The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University has been evaluating the program since 2003 using both implementation and impact studies. The latest evaluation findings for the nine program sites indicate that the program serves an increasing number of at-risk students. The students have access to supervised program services and activities from 6:30 in the morning until the school day begins and after the school day ends, until 6:00 in the evening.

Researchers also evaluated the program's impact to ascertain if it was making difference to students and the schools. They analyzed student academic behavior, school attendance rates, grades, achievement test scores, social skills, and problem behaviors as well as school-wide variables indicative of academic success, such as special education, grade retention, student turnover, absenteeism and suspension rates, school climate, and parental involvement.

Consistent with last year's evaluation, they found significant differences in almost every measurable area between students who participated in the program and those who did not participate. Participating students had higher teacher ratings of academic-related behavior. They brought needed materials to school, they followed directions and completed assignments. Participating students had higher grades in communication arts, math, and physical education. Participation in the program also predicted student performance on the state of Missouri's achievement test, with participating students scoring an average of 7 to 9 points higher on both the communication arts and mathematics tests than non-participating students.

Equally important, participation in the program was associated with better school attendance. On average, participating students attended school 24 more days a year than those students who did not participate. Similarly, students involved in the program were two times less tardy to school. These findings are significant as school attendance and arriving to school on time reflect student interest and engagement in school and provide a greater opportunity for learning.

In addition to differences in student academic behavior, attendance, grades, and achievement test scores, teachers and parents rated students participating in the program as having higher social skills and lower internalizing problem behaviors, such as sadness and anxiety than non-participants. This indicates that the program's impact extends beyond academics; it also makes a difference to students' social and emotional development.

Researchers analyzed school-wide data from 2005 to date to ascertain the program's impact on the schools. They found that at the nine schools implementing the program, special education rates were six percent lower and that seven percent more students were reading at grade level. Rates of excessive absenteeism, student turnover and suspension were found to be lower than they were in 2005. School climate and most indicators of parent involvement remained high. Additionally, despite being identified as at-risk schools, the achievement scores for the nine schools were higher than the state average.

No major areas of concern emerged. The research team recommends, however, a review of club offerings. These were found to be exceptional and of interest to participating students, as indicated by the high program attendance rates. Nevertheless, the addition of some activities in such areas as science may be of benefit and consistent with newly established educational goals for the State of Missouri.