

The Impact of Our Work

After School Matters is enriching the lives of Chicago teens through the delivery of high-quality out-of-school time programming. As part of this ongoing commitment to excellence, we participate in independent research that evaluates the effectiveness of our programs and services. After School Matters programs have been evaluated by several top researchers and the findings have been used to continuously enhance and strengthen the organization's work.

One example of this commitment is the research that University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children conducted on After School Matters programs. Researchers followed a group of Chicago Public School high school students for four years and examined the impact of several semesters of participation in After School Matters apprentice programs. The findings concluded that:

- Students who participated in After School Matters had better school attendance than students who did not;
- Students who participated in After School Matters failed fewer courses than students who did not; and
- Students who participated in After School Matters graduated from high school at higher rates than other students.

After School Matters programs have also been evaluated by Dr. Robert Halpern, a nationally-recognized authority on youth development at the Erikson Institute. For two years, Dr. Halpern documented the activities of teens and instructors in After School Matters apprentice programs. The findings concluded that After School Matters programs:

- Produce positive effects in several areas such as improving teens' abilities to work in groups, communicate effectively, plan and meet deadlines, and cooperate with flexibility;
- Teach students not only about the specific discipline that was the focus of their apprenticeship (e.g. arts, technology), but also about how to approach tasks related to the discipline, such as conducting research or envisioning the end product; and
- Enhance students' knowledge of various vocational skills such as how to apply and interview for a position, the importance of regular and prompt attendance, and guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Chicago Public School Department of Career and College Preparation statistics related to the graduating class of 2006 demonstrate that:

- After School Matters participants with a GPA of 3.0-3.4 enrolled in college at a higher rate: 71.9% compared to 63.5% for the district. These participants were also more likely to attend a 4-year college and to attend school full time than their district counterparts.
- Latino students who participated in the After School Matters program had higher college enrollment rates compared to their district counterparts: 50% versus 38.9% for the district.

Community Impact

Investing in after-school programs significantly reaches into some of Chicago's highest need communities in which our programs are run. We offer more than 1,000 paid opportunities every year for instructors willing to share their knowledge and expertise by providing meaningful, real-world activities for young people.

In addition to engaging independent instructors to mentor our teens, After School Matters contracts with over 100 Community-Based Organizations empowering those local agencies to add capacity and support the expansion of high quality programs for teens.

After School Matters programs enrich the communities where they take place by providing more opportunities for youth, making the streets safer, and prompting the creation of products that can then be enjoyed by the entire neighborhood. Many of these communities do not have the necessary programming for youth nor are adequate private or non-profit facilities available in which to run programming. After School Matters leverages safe havens such as parks and libraries to help fulfill this need. By anchoring out-of-school opportunities around high schools, parks, and libraries in high-need areas around the city, After School Matters invigorates Chicago neighborhoods and maximizes the use of the existing public infrastructure. Teens participate in programs such as mural painting, sculpting, and gardening, where program activities result in a final product – such as a mural or public garden – to be shared with the community.

There is substantial research to document that the after-school hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the time when youth are most likely to be involved in a crime, either as a perpetrator or a victim. Unsupervised time after school is also a time when youth are more likely to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Our programs provide a safe environment where teens engage in hands-on activities during those out-of-school hours. Our hands-on, projects-based programs expose teens to critical workplace skills and provide opportunities to explore a variety of careers helping prepare them for their futures and the workforce of tomorrow.