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Quality After-School Programming and Its Relationship to Achievement-Related Behaviors and Academic Performance

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QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO

ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED BEHAVIORS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Nicholas J. Grassi. In the fourth grade, my father sat me down, showed me my first grade card with 3 C's, 2 D's, and a U. He firmly explained to me that these grades were unacceptable and that his daughter was going to work hard, focus on school, graduate and go to college. He told me that anything less would be unacceptable. My father continued to push me to work for my education and to stand on my own two feet. I am grateful for his unconditional love, support and commitment and for instilling in me the value of education.

It is also dedicated to my mother, Cheryl Ann Grassi, who encouraged me to stay focused and to strive toward independence. She inspired by example and provided much-needed loving support each step of the way.

Also to the women in my life who have been an inspiration, including my Great Aunt Philomena (Auntie Philly) who sat at the back door many days waiting for me to come home from school, with math flashcards in hand. She continually reminded me that education is the only thing that no one can ever take from you and to Renee (Dr. NeNe), my cousin, "big sister," role model, and friend. I am blessed to follow in her footsteps. Together my parents and extended family provided the example that demonstrated what children need to achieve their dreams.

Finally, to the many other inspirational women who push to achieve, work hard, and fight for what is right and those younger ladies who inspire me to see hope in our future generations, this is also dedicated to you.

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I want to express my sincere gratitude to those who have helped me complete this 3-year journey. It has been one of incredible growth as I have expanded my knowledge of urban education and further developed my understanding of the inner-workings of our educational system.

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Second, I want to thank Dr. Graham Stead, Dr. Karl Wheatley, Dr. Joshua Bagakas, Dr. Mittie Jones, and Dr. Ellen Rome for their time, energy, and commitment in serving on my dissertation committee. I thank each of you for your time, energy, and support of my doctoral process and final dissertation defense. I am most appreciative of your willingness to accommodate my crazy idea of inviting 300 youth, plus staff, family, and community stakeholders to my oral defense. I know it seemed like a rather crazy idea initially, but seeing the students' reactions, knowing how excited they were about being there, and hearing several of them talk about the day they stand and defend their dissertation, it confirmed that not only was it a great idea, but it was one that truly

embraced engaged learning. Thank you for supporting a moment that most of them would never otherwise experience and one that I will never forget.

I also want to express my appreciation to Case Western Reserve University, Patricia Heilbron, and Gallup for allowing me to utilize the Gallup Student Poll as an instrument for this study, for accommodating my multitude of questions and special requests, and for allowing me to be part of history in test-piloting GSP in an out-of-school setting.

I so appreciate the patience, flexibility and continued support of the board of directors and staff of Open Doors Academy during the past three years. But it is the students and alumni of Open Doors Academy that have been my true inspiration. Their resilience and hope for the future drives me to work harder to ensure that each one is able to break through that glass ceiling and go on to inspire others. Each, and every one of them, are amazing!

Finally, I want to thank my family for their never-ending support and words of encouragement. To my parents, you have always encouraged me to work hard, be independent, and to reach for my dreams. I am blessed to have such incredible parents. Last, but not least, to my brothers, Jonathon and Jason, thank you for always being there, for having my back, and for keeping me laughing, even if you were making fun of me most of the time!

QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED BEHAVIORS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

ANNEMARIE M. GRASSI

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between quality social support networks developed through high quality afterschool programming and achievement amongst middle school and high school aged youth. This study seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how quality after-school programs influence a youth's developmental assets, how quality after-school programs influence achievement-related behaviors amongst youth, and how quality after-school programs influence academic performance amongst youth.

The study measured academic performance, as well as, hope, wellbeing, and engagement amongst youth who participate in high quality after-school programming, in comparison with youth who are not currently participating in after-school programming. Open Doors Academy, a highly recognized and supported after-school program model represents participants in the treatment group and students not currently enrolled in the program represent the comparison group. A total of 191 middle school and high school aged youth living in high-risk environments (aged 11 to 18 years) from Cleveland, Ohio were selected to complete the Gallup Student Poll (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010) and Developmental Assets Profile Survey (Search Institute, 2010a). In addition, quarterly grade cards were collected to assess academic performance. Three models were used to analyze the various research questions proposed in this study, including a general multivariate model, multiple regression, and single-factor analysis of variance.

Findings from the study indicate a statistically significant difference amongst non-Open Doors Academy participants and Open Doors Academy participants in the context of hope, finding youth who participate in programming are more hopeful in comparison to their peers not engaged in programming and youth who engage in programming over a number of years are identified as more hopeful and thriving in comparison to those who participate for zero to one year. Findings also demonstrated a predictive relationship between achievement-related behaviors (hope, engagement and wellbeing) and grade point average. Finally, findings from the current study indicate that youth who participate in programming for four or more years, demonstrate higher academic performance as measured by grade point average in comparison to youth who participate for only one year. Findings from this study argue for a stronger focus on increasing quality across out-of-school time models, including strengthening parent engagement, child-staff relationships, school-community partnerships, and ensuring a continuity of programming over multiple years. Discussions for future practice and research are discussed in chapter five.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The latest report from *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (2007)* states that juvenile

crime rates peak between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. The incidence of adolescents

committing crimes, becoming sexually active and abusing alcohol and other drugs is, at

minimum, twice more likely to happen around 3 p.m. than any other time of day. The

Afterschool Alliance "America After 3 pm" report states that over 600,000 K-12 children

in Ohio are in unsupervised homes after-school an average of 8 hours per week, and more

than 500,000 of these children would participate in an after-school program if it were

available (JC Penney Afterschool, October, 2009). High quality afterschool programs

provide youth with the opportunity to develop into healthy, well-rounded individuals

during those critical hours, as opposed to becoming involved in detrimental and

dangerous activities that could negatively impact their futures.

The role of afterschool programs in today's society has proved critical to the

continuing development of the child. Over the past 20 years, afterschool programs have

shifted from traditional arts and crafts aftercare programs to fully developed enrichment

programs addressing social and emotional development, academic deficiencies, while

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complementing the work of the school day in providing programming, such as, arts, health and wellness, and financial literacy programs. Programs are often cut from the school budgets as dollars become tighter and the push for standardized scores increases. Today, a wide variety of afterschool programs exist, varying in focus from drop-in community centers, from the Boys and Girls Clubs, which provide a safe place for children ages 5 to 18 to grow and explore to intensively focused programs, such as Citizen Schools in Boston, which stresses daily academic support and career focused student apprenticeships for middle school youth, ages 11 to 14 who work as a cohort participating in daily programming. The large range of programs available in afterschool settings has led researchers to many questions regarding the role of afterschool programs and their impact on the youth they serve. Even given best practices, afterschool program models differ in their intensity, duration, depth of programming, and impact on the development of the child. The current study looks at various factors that are important in impacting achievement-related behaviors amongst middle school youth, including: intensity of programming, retention and continuum of programming over time, quality of relationships between adult and child, and quality of relationships between peers.

Many community stakeholders argue that the role of afterschool programs, also known as out-of-school time programs, is to increase academic improvement among its participants. However, a large body of research has repeatedly argued that while afterschool programs foster engaged learning, they do not directly or immediately impact academic achievement. Pittman, Irby, Yohalem, and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2004) argue that while afterschool programs provide a wealth of positive attributes, including engaged learning, these results cannot be attributed directly to academic achievement. One study

in particular, which reviewed 21st Century Community Learning Centers (federally funded grant program, under the No Child Left Behind Act, which funds over 4,000 programs nationwide) over a three year period, found that these federally funded afterschool programs demonstrated little to no direct correlation with academic achievement (Gewertz, 2005).

Whether or not afterschool programs directly impact academic achievement does not immediately argue against their ability to help an adolescent succeed socially, emotionally, and subsequently academically. In 2003, the Nellie Mae Foundation presented a report on afterschool programs which stated that student involvement in after-school activities is linked to greater engagement in learning, increased school attendance, improved work habits, positive attitudes towards school, better social and emotional adjustment, stronger peer networks, healthier peer and adult relationships, and a stronger sense of community belonging.

Previous research does not argue that afterschool programming is incapable of improving academic achievement amongst its students, but rather argues the need for enhanced efforts to be put in place in order to further strengthen afterschool programming. Despite the findings of the studies mentioned above, consensus is emerging among the research that high quality programming in the out-of-school hours can contribute to academic success. Increasing student engagement in learning strengthens other aspects of the child's life, which motivate them to achieve at higher levels. Examples include increased school attendance, improved study habits, increased positive attitude towards school, and fostering positive relationships with peers and adults, thus providing a greater sense of community belonging (Pittman, et al., 2004). A

number of studies have looked at the direct correlation between traditional after-school program models, academic achievement and engagement in learning. However, few studies have considered the impact of high quality after-school programs and achievement-related behaviors, specifically: hope, achievement motivation, engagement, wellbeing, and personal power as they relate to direct academic achievement.

The current study looks at assets amongst youth, including support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and personal identity. This study also assesses five context areas in which the assets lie: personal, social, family, school, and community. In addition, this study looks at hope, engagement, and wellbeing. These variables are discussed in more detail in chapter two and three.

Defining High Quality Afterschool Programming

Dr. Robert Granger, President of the William T. Grant Foundation, stated in a brief on quality after-school programming for the Afterschool Alliance,

> The best after-school programs capitalize on the advantages that after-school hours offer compared to the school day . . . these advantages include a greater opportunity to actively involve youth, project-based activities that can extend many weeks and are not constrained by school-day class schedules and the use of the surrounding community as a resource and a place to carry out activities (Afterschool Alliance, 2011).

Unlike the research on outcomes, research on program quality for afterschool programs is largely descriptive, reliant on correlational studies, and expert opinion. Very few studies have looked closely at indicators of high quality program models, until

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recently. Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) from the Harvard Family Research Project put

out a brief on the potential of afterschool programs and the emerging research on

afterschool program quality and its relationship to outcomes. The report argued that in

addition to ensuring adequate physical and psychological safety, quality programs also

share several features, including: well-prepared staff, intentional programming with

opportunities for autonomy and choice, and strong partnerships with school, family, and

community. The Harvard Family Research Project identified a small set of powerful

studies that link key elements of high quality after-school programs and their affect on a

range of developmental outcomes. From these studies, four key elements have been

identified as representative of high quality programs:

1. Appropriate structure and supervision – ensuring a well-organized, planned program with small staff-to-youth ratios and developmentally appropriate programming.
2. Strong relationships between youth and staff
3.   Intentional programming – programs are structured with explicit goals and activities, developmentally appropriate and maximize engagement in school.
4. Sustained student participation and access – in order for youth to take advantage of all that afterschool offers, there must be steady attendance and access to programs over a significant period of time.
5. Strong partnerships with families, schools, and community institutions

In a 2011 Afterschool Alliance brief, additional studies on identifiers of quality

afterschool program models conducted by the Institute of Education Science, Harvard

Family Research Project and the University of Connecticut were correlated and

consolidated to include the identifiers mentioned and added the following characteristics:

1. Alignment with the school day – intentional alignment with school instruction and learning the same content through different and innovative approaches.
2. Promotion of varied youth engagement – programs feature enriching, creative endeavors, such as art, music, or physical activity. Focus on the whole child approach.
3. Safety, health, and wellness – youth are provided with adequate space, supervision and psychological and physical security.

4.   Ongoing assessment and improvement – programs that employ management practices focused on continuous improvement demonstrate increased success in establishing and maintaining quality programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2011).

According to the National Institute of Out-of-School Time, (Hall & Gruber, Fall 2007) quality afterschool programs incorporate a positive youth development approach. The youth development approach focuses on what children and youth need as they mature into responsible and caring adults. As stated in Hall and Gruber (Fall, 2007), high quality afterschool program models that incorporate the youth development approach strive to incorporate program features that align with the key features of positive developmental settings established by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (Eccles & Appleton, 2002). These features include physical and psychological safety, developmentally appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, and support for efficacy and mattering. In the current study, Open Doors Academy will represent the high quality program model, demonstrating physical and psychological safety as its core mission and first priority, engaging youth in programming that is both relevant and developmentally appropriate, seeking opportunities for connection and a sense of belonging, meaningful engagement in learning, and support for self-regulation and self-efficacy.

A Model of High Quality Afterschool Programming

Open Doors Academy is a developmental out-of-school enrichment program that is designed to provide a safe, nurturing environment promoting academic, emotional, and social enrichment for middle-school students in unity with family, school and community. Open Doors Academy's mission is to nurture, protect, inspire and challenge

adolescents to reach their full potential through the provision of meaningful out-of-school enrichment activities in a safe and structured environment.

Open Doors Academy originated in 1992 as a youth drop-in program at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. The idea was born when middle school students, walking home from the local neighborhood school, would linger on church property to socialize with friends. Upon further inspection, St. Paul's staff determined that most of the children were walking to unsupervised homes. In response, the church opened its doors to the youth and began addressing their academic, emotional and social challenges in a structured, after-school program.

Since 2002, the organization has been a fully independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. In 2009, Open Doors Academy was awarded three capacity building grants by the Ohio Department of Education for expansion to three new sites in Cleveland, University Heights, and Euclid. In 2011, the organization expanded further, opening a second site in Euclid, and developed a high school college-prep program serving alumni who attended the middle school program in Cleveland Heights, Euclid, and Cleveland.

Open Doors Academy's primary clients are middle school students ages 11-14. Students who enroll in the middle school program and continue to attend over the three years, are initiated into the high school alumni program, which serve youth ages 15 to 18 years, described below. Enrolled students currently come from twelve schools across the Greater Cleveland community and its east side inner-ring suburbs. Open Doors Academy currently serves 200 middle school youth, 150 high school and college alumni, and approximately 550 parents & family members. Open Doors Academy provides programming for middle school and high school adolescents living in high-risk

environments. With all eight of the locations combined, approximately 88% of students come from low-income households. Of those students, 75% come from families with an annual household income less than $32,000 for a family of four. Despite these challenges, Open Doors Academy students have a 100% high school graduation rate.

Table 1: *Open Doors Academy Population Served*

Population Category	Numbers Served
Number of middle school sites	5
Number of high school sites	3
Number of youth served annually	320
Number of family members served annually (parents and siblings)	1,000
Youth served residing in low-income households	88%

Note. Data provided from 2011-2012 program year

The Open Doors Academy model follows the philosophy that every child has the potential to be successful, with the team's responsibility to help each child realize his or her potential through diverse and individualized enrichment programming. There are four major components to Open Doors Academy year-round programming: the daily extended learning program, which includes tutoring/academic support and daily enrichment programming based on the seven pillars; the summer enrichment program, which provides full day interactive programs throughout the summer; high school college prep programming; and the parent/family support network.

Over the last ten years, Open Doors Academy has demonstrated monumental success, both in its work with its students, and in its growth (expanding from one site to eight sites in the past three years). Several factors in the Open Doors Academy model influence its innovation and success, which are relevant to the measure of quality

programming for the current study.   These include parent engagement, a strong

community-school partnership, and a continuum of programming.

Parent engagement.

Open Doors Academy requires every family to contribute a minimum of 16 hours

of involvement with the organization each year. These hours can be completed through

participation in parent education workshops (offered twice a month in the evenings),

parent support groups (offered on Saturday mornings monthly), attending our family

events with their child (offered five to seven times per year), and volunteering on field

trips, during homework hour, or in our administrative office. During the 2010-2011

program year, 98% of parents completed their hours, totaling a contribution of 2,825

hours (Open Doors Academy, 2011). The two percent who did not complete their hours

were required to finish their hours in the new program year, prior to their child re-

enrolling in the program. Open Doors Academy credits the success of its parental

engagement record due to two critical components. First, the expectation is established at

the beginning of the year that parents will contribute to and participate in their child's

education. Organizational policies clearly lay out the organization's investment, the

child's investment, and the parents' investment, of which each is a critical and necessary

component in creating successful program outcomes. Second, the organization maintains

a designated family liaison whose sole responsibility is to work with the families. Thus,

in the same way that each child has a network of adult supporters in the program, so does

the parent. The family liaison coordinates and implements parental programming and

family events, while maintaining regular communication with each parent enrolled in the

program.

A strong school partnership.

Pittman, Irby, Yohalem, and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2004) argue that creating environments in which students feel engaged and connected increases their interest in learning, while (at the same time) decreasing their experimentation in high-risk behaviors. Thus, we must broaden our understanding of building a community-centered partnership, by starting with a sense of connectedness, incorporating 21st century skills, and creating an environment that both supports and encourages learning, in an effort to promote academic achievement.

Therefore, the second key in the success of the Open Doors Academy model is maintaining a close working relationship with each partnering school. In order for the child to experience the greatest impact, it is critical that the Open Doors Academy staff and school staff work together to ensure strong follow-through of expectations from the beginning to the end of each day. Thus, during the day, Open Doors Academy staff members spend approximately 24 hours per week in the classroom at each school observing students, modeling appropriate classroom behavior, meeting with teachers and counselors, serving as a support to youth during transition between classes, and having lunch with the youth.

These partnerships benefit the youth, as well as, provide support and a clear commitment to the school staff. Open Doors Academy is no longer seen as an outside entity running an "afterschool program," but rather as "part of the team." For instance, school administration and teachers often call upon Open Doors Academy staff to assist with youth (both those enrolled in our program, and those who are not), to share additional resources, and even stop in after-school to help tutor youth. In addition, the

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all-day presence of the staff contributes to a culture of inclusion that whets the appetite of youth not currently enrolled in the program to become a part of it. This frequently occurs amongst younger youth in the K-8 buildings; who eagerly anticipate entering the sixth grade and joining Open Doors Academy. Therefore we see our close partnerships with the schools assisting in student recruitment for our program for the following year.

Most importantly, as a result of the close partnership, the organization has seen an increase in academic performance among student participants. Based on results reported from quarterly grade cards, 85% of Open Doors Academy students earned a C or better in Math and Reading. As referenced in figure 1, at one Cleveland based program site (site 1), 94% of the students earned a C or above in math and 89% in reading. A second program site (site 2) was close behind with 88% in math and 87% in reading; and finally a third program site (site 3) reached 79% in math and 88% in reading. This is just one measure of academic success, due in part to the strong relationship with the participating schools.
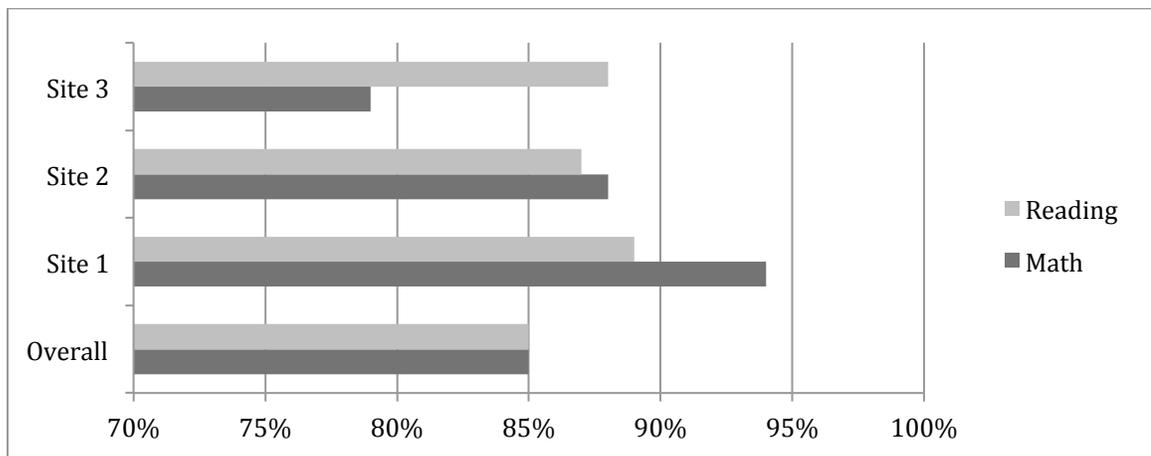
Note: Data provided from 2010-2011 program year

Figure 1: *Percentage of Open Doors Academy youth who earned a C or above in math or reading*

Continuum of programming.

Most critical to the organization's success as a holistic enrichment program is the long-term service provision offered to our students and their families. Open Doors Academy is the only program in Ohio that works intensely with youth, starting in the sixth grade, and continuing through high school, college, and beyond. Throughout middle school, each student receives intensive daily programming that focuses on strengthening organizational study skills while addressing the social and emotional developmental needs of the child. As youth move into high school, the focus shifts towards college preparation and career exploration. Youth continue to receive academic support twice a week and are provided opportunities to invest in service learning (volunteering, on average, 75 hours per year). In addition, the organization provides evening apprenticeship programs geared toward the development of 21st Century Skills, college tours, financial aid education, and seminars geared towards preparing youth for the next big transition. Boldly underscoring the success of this innovation is Open Doors Academy's 100% high school graduation rate.

Purpose of the Study

Many afterschool programs provide a safe place and an array of activities, including homework help. However, few programs truly create a sense of community or establish a framework for social networks amongst its participants. Open Doors Academy builds community by incorporating peers, parents, teachers, and adult mentors into a child's life. It is no surprise that peer relationships are a critical component of early adolescence. Research indicates that as an individual moves from childhood into adolescence, they seek independence from their immediate family, specifically parents,

and look to their peers for guidance and support (Granot & Mayseless, 2005; Mayseless, 2005). Both developmental theorists and clinical researchers have demonstrated that during adolescence young people assign considerable significance to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their peers (Coleman, 1980).

Upon the emergence of adolescence, a more fully integrated social identity surfaces, establishing different levels of relationships from intimate friendships and romantic attachments to casual cliques and large crowds of individuals seen as acquaintances. These facts argue for a deeper understanding of the contribution of social networks and peer-to-peer friendships to the development of a socially capable adult (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009). Therefore it is important that we look closely at the quality of a youth's support network and the impact of that network on academic achievement and achievement-related behaviors in high quality out-of-school programs.

Aims of the Study

This study seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the following:

1. Do high quality after-school programs influence a youth's developmental assets?

2. Do high quality after-school programs influence achievement-related behaviors amongst youth?

3. Do high quality after-school programs influence academic performance amongst youth?

Context of the Study

Self-determination theory.

Self-determination theory, a process closely aligned with intrinsic motivation, requires that people accept their strengths and limitations, be aware of forces acting on

them, make choices, and determine ways to satisfy needs (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Self-determination theory argues that human will and self-determination are linked. In order to be self-determining, one has to decide how to act on their environment and these decisions are managed through three basic innate needs. First, individuals need to feel and be competent in their interactions with others and their environment; second, individuals must feel a sense of control, or autonomy in their interactions with their environment; and third, individuals must feel a sense of belonging to a group. Self-determination theory, as supported by research, predicts that intrinsic motivation will be diminished when individuals believe their actions are extrinsically determined (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, Spring 2001; Wheatley, Spring 2012).

Social capital.

Social capital carries with its name a myriad of definitions and has been criticized in the field for lacking theorization. However, it is generally agreed upon across studies that social capital refers to resources embedded in social relations that individuals can use to garner benefits and improve their life chances (Offer & Schneider, 2007). Social resources, including resources attained from friends, neighbors, and teachers, are often referred to as social capital. In addition, in looking at social networks, Lin argues that we consider the social resources theory which proposes that the benefit of greater socioeconomic status is the result of an individual's ability to access and use resources that are embedded within social relationships in the contextual environment (as cited in Rizzuto, LeDeoux, & Hatala, 2009).

Marcus & Sanders-Reio (2001) state, "The likelihood that children will complete school is enhanced by their healthy attachment to others and to key institutions" (pg.

427).   While much research has focused on early attachment among young children, more recently research has begun to look at attachment as the child emerges into adolescence. A study conducted by Granot and Mayseless (2005) looked at the association between student attachment and academic performance among 4th and 5th graders. Findings of the study indicate that children who had stronger connections with adults and peers demonstrated better adjustment to school and higher scholastic, emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. Students who did not demonstrate strong attachments showed the poorest adjustment and lower scholastic, emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. Findings have demonstrated that as a child grows, their attachment shifts from parents to school, peers, and adults outside the home. A framework comprised of social capital, social resource theory, and attachment theory together build the context of the current study in looking at how relationships in high quality after-school programs impact the achievement of youth.

Definition of Key Terms

The following operational definitions will be utilized to carry out the current research study, and relate directly to the variables studied.

Achievement Motivation - refers to an individual's desire for significant accomplishment, mastering of skills, control, or high standards.

Boundaries and Expectations – having good role models, clear rules at home and school, encouragement from parents and teachers, and monitoring by family and neighbors (Search Institute, 2005).

Commitment to Learning – enjoys reading and learning, cares about school, works on homework, and is encouraged to do new things (Search Institute, 2005).

Constructive Use of Time – participation in religious or spiritual activities, involvement in a sport, club, or group, participation in after-school programming, and quality time at home (Search Institute, 2005).

Engagement – Involvement in and enthusiasm for school (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010).

Hope - The ideas and energy for the future. Involves a person's ability to conceptualize the future along with clear goals, develop specific ideas, strategies or pathways to reach those goals, and initiate and sustain the energy or agency for using those strategies (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010).

Personal Power – When a young person feels he or she has control over the things that happen to them.

Positive Values – Standing up for one's beliefs, taking responsibility, avoiding alcohol, tobacco and drugs, valuing honesty, healthy behaviors, being encouraged to help others, and helping, respecting, and serving others (Search Institute, 2005).

Positive Identity – optimism, locus of control, and self-esteem (Search Institute, 2005).

Social Competencies – building friendships, properly expressing feelings, planning ahead, resisting negative peer pressure, being sensitive to and accepting others, and resolving conflicts peacefully (Search Institute, 2005).

School Engagement - students' feelings, behaviors, and thoughts about their school experiences (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011).

Support – support from parents, family and other adults; parent adolescent communication; receiving advice and help from parents; helpful neighbors; and caring school environment (Search Institute, 2005).

Resiliency – the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. (Henderson, Bernard, & Sharp-Light, 2007).

Wellbeing – How we think about and experience our lives (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010).

Organization and Overview of Dissertation

Chapter two contains a review of the literature and explores the value of high impact afterschool programming, the importance of strong relationships, both peer relationships and adult/mentor relationships, the importance of strong school-community partnerships, and the link between achievement-related behaviors and their impact on academic performance.

Chapter three further explores the research questions for the study and the population being studied. In addition, the identification of participants, methods of data collection and analysis as well as the limitations are also identified. Table 2 provides a timeline for completion of the dissertation process.

Summary of Chapter I

Chapter one introduces the topic being researched in this study and highlights the research problem: we continue to fail in helping our youth achieve independence in adulthood through education. In 2009, in the state of Ohio alone, 32,753 youth dropped out of high school and only 64% of eighth graders were unable to do math or read at grade level (US Department of Education, 2010). We continue to fail our children as

government argues over where dollars should be spent and how to build successful

school districts. Community organizations offer flexibility, creativity, and cost efficiency

in helping provide support to the schools, students, teachers, and families through

collaborative high quality models, like Open Doors Academy. As we move forward in

the 21st Century it is critical that we begin to look at education as life-long process that

encompasses more than what occurs between the hours of 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. across the

country, in order to make our children successful. The significance of this study is the

focus on building strong programming that bridges the gap between home and school,

and that provides a network of support throughout the critical years of adolescence. This

study focuses further on how these networks impact a youth's academic performance and

their overall social and emotional development.   Chapter one also included the definition

of terms that are used throughout the study and the research questions used in this study.

Table 2: *Study Timeline for Data Collection*

	Date to be started	Date for completion
Completed IRB Process	March, 2012	April, 2012
Collected Parent Consent Forms	April, 2012	May, 2012
Collect Survey Data (current students)	May, 2012	June, 2012
Collect and enter grades	June, 2012	June, 2012
Collect Survey Data (new students)	August, 2012	September, 2012
Begin Data Entry/Analysis	May, 2012	September, 2012
Data Analysis	July, 2012	August, 2012
Dissertation Completion	August, 2012	September, 2012
Dissertation Defense	October, 2012	October, 2012

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's educational system is limited in its capacity to reach beyond the scope of academic assessment. A middle-school student's achievement is determined based on two measures: quarterly grades and annual achievement assessment. Very few schools and education departments look beyond these measures for metrics of achievement and success. Failure to see the child as a "whole" leads to limitations in the development of their self-esteem, motivation to learn, and self-efficacy, which further hinders their ability to be successful in school and in life. Most students, particularly middle school adolescents, need to have supportive environments that foster not only academic excellence, but also incorporate opportunities for social and emotional development. While the schools may be limited in their time and resources, non-profit organizations, churches, and other community based organizations are afforded an opportunity to partner with the schools to provide these outside opportunities in order to support the holistic development of the child both during school and through out-of-school time.

Most afterschool programs provide a wide array of activities, such as homework help, with opportunities for youth to socialize. However, few succeed at engaging parents, and setting high expectations with supportive relationships. In addition, very

few manage to generate a community network that creates opportunities for the adolescent to achieve. The following sections highlight previous research on those factors, which most closely align with quality out of school time programming and achievement-related behaviors.

Youth Resiliency

Resiliency is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity (Henderson, Bernard, & Sharp-Light, 2007). In the 1970's the Resiliency Model was developed out of research that aimed to identify the factors that place young people at risk of developing various problems, such as drug abuse, delinquency or school failure. An increasing body of research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology demonstrate that people can bounce back from risks, stress, crises and trauma, and experience life success (Henderson, Bernard, & Sharp-Light, 2007). Utilizing a holistic approach to understanding the different factors that affect the resiliency of human development, there are both internal strengths (humor, self-control, creativity) and external factors (caring adult relationships, opportunities to give back) that help a child bounce back from adversity. These internal and external assets are identified and then categorized into the framework of a wheel with six spokes that are critical to the development of a child. These spokes include: clear and consistent boundaries, high expectations, caring adult relationships, teaching life skills, increasing pro-social bonding, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. Together these factors have proven to impact the life of a number of youth, despite factors, such as alcoholic parents or living in poverty, which cannot be changed. Studies have found that 50% to 70% of youth growing up in high-risk conditions developed social competence

despite exposure to severe stress and overcame the odds to lead successful lives through factors attributed to "resiliency" (Bernard, 1999).

Following the youth resiliency model, forty developmental assets were developed in 1985 by the Search Institute, a leader in positive change for young people since 1958. The forty developmental assets are comprised of commonsense, positive experiences and qualities that help influence choices youth make and help them become caring, responsible adults (Search Institute, 2010b). These assets are broken into external assets comprised of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time; and internal assets comprised of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Each sub component is broken down further to identify specific assets related to growth and human development. A complete list of the 40 assets can be found in Appendix A. In 2003, the Search Institute completed a five-year longitudinal analysis of the average number assets youth possess. One hundred and fifty thousand sixth through twelfth grade youth across 202 communities in the United States completed the Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey. Results of the survey indicated that most assets were identified by only 50% of the sample or lower. For example, under support, only 28% of respondents identified positive family communication and only 29% identified a positive school climate. Internal assets, overall were higher, yet only 65% of those surveyed identified achievement motivation and 55% identified school engagement as an asset they possessed. Research of the developmental assets has found that the more positive assets youth possess, internal or external, the more they are protected from negative behaviors and unhealthy choices. Findings from the study indicate that average young person in grades sixth through twelfth; possess 18.6 out of 40 developmental assets. The average

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middle school student possessed 23.2 in the 6th grade, 20.2 in the 7th grade, and 18.7 in

the 8th grade. The findings, as displayed in figure 2, found that youth who possess 0 to 10

of the developmental assets, 45% identified problems with alcohol use, 62% identified

engagement with violence, 38% illicit drug use, and 34% sexuality. Those who

experienced 11 to 20 assets, 26% experienced problems with alcohol use, 38%

experiences problems with violence, 18% experienced illicit drug use, and 23%

experienced sexual activity (Search Institute, 2010a). Those who possess 21 to 30 of the

developmental assets, 11% demonstrated problem with alcohol use, 18% violence, 6%

illicit drug use, and 11% sexual activity. Finally, those youth who held 31 to 40 of the

assets, 3% had problems with alcohol use, 6% violence, 1% illicit drug use, and 3%

sexual activity.
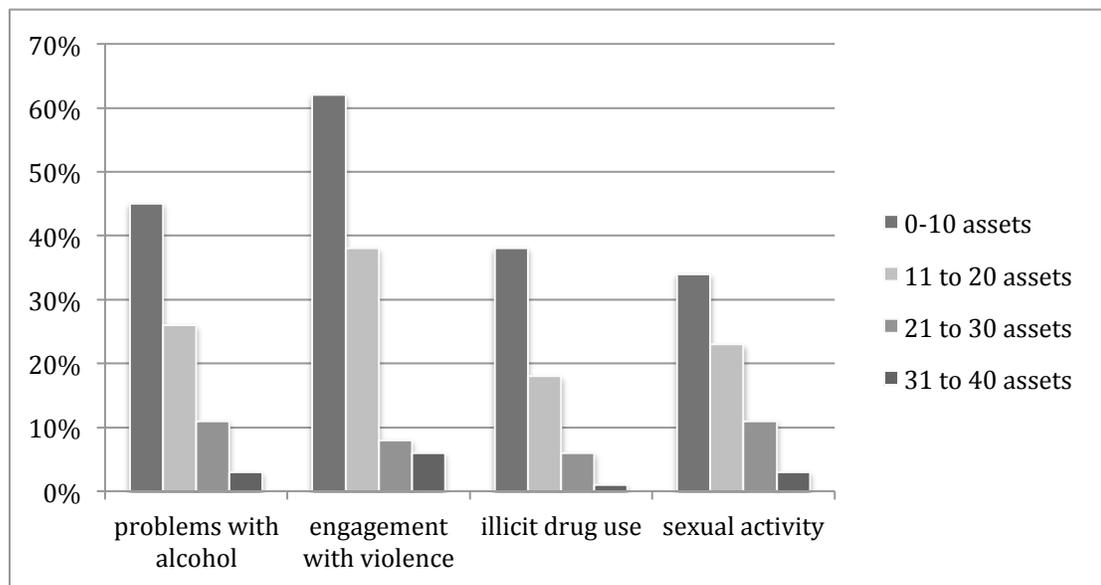
Figure 2: Findings from the Search Instituted longitudinal analysis of the impact of assets

These findings clearly demonstrate that those youth with more assets are at a

much lower risk of making unhealthy choices. From the opposing perspective, those

youth with increased number of developmental assets also tend to outperform those with fewer assets. Findings from the study further indicate that those youth with 0 to 10 assets, 48% exhibit leadership, 27% maintain good health, 39% value diversity, and only 9% succeed in school. On the contrary, those with 31-40 assets, 87% exhibit leadership, 88% maintain good health, 89% value diversity, and 54% succeed in school (Search Institute, 2010a). The findings of this study are critical to understanding the detriment the different factors that can impact a child's overall development and the need to increase the number of internal and external supports that help a young person thrive in today's society.

A key external protective factor of the Resiliency Model and the forty developmental assets is caring adult relationships. These relationships include not only the relationship between a parent and child, but also mentors, extended relatives and teachers. Findings from the Search Institute study conducted in 2003 found that only 68% of young people experience family support, 43% experience support from an adult outside of their parent, 37% experience a caring neighborhood, 29% experience caring school climate, and only 29% experience parental involvement in their schooling (Search Institute, 2010a).

Impact of After-school Programs

No amount of focus on academics, no matter how critical, will considerably change the fact that the core of classroom life is social and emotional. Therefore, structuring school experiences in a way that foster community may be helpful in achieving school completion (Marcus & Sanders, 2001). Today's educational system is limited in its capacity to reach beyond the scope of academic assessment. Year-round nearly 80% of a young person's waking hours occur outside the traditional school day

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(Stedron, 2007). Most students, particularly middle school adolescents, need to have supportive environments that foster not only academic excellence, but also incorporate opportunities for social and emotional development. While the schools may be limited in their time and resources, many non-profit organizations are afforded an opportunity to partner with the schools to provide these outside opportunities in order to support the holistic development of the child.

Research on the impact of afterschool programs varies greatly and is often dependent on the quality and nature of the programs. Several studies claim that afterschool programs demonstrate increased self-esteem, confidence, and academic achievement (Beck, 1999; Bergin, Hudson, Chryst, & Resetar, 1992; and Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, and Macias, 2001; Halpern, 1992; Hanlon et al., 2009; and Ross, Saavedra, Shur, Winters, and Felner, 1992). Others have argued that while afterschool programs may mediate declining behaviors, they do not necessarily improve academic achievement (Morrison, Storino, Robertson, Weissglass, & Dondero, 2000; Tucker et al, 1995; James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke, 2007).

Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, and Brown (2004) reason that afterschool programs can have a positive or negative impact on young people depending on the context in which they are experienced. They identified risk and protective factors associated with participation in afterschool activities and programs. Risk factors, which may lead to negative impacts for afterschool programs, include reduced parental engagement and communication with the child regarding school, lack of coordination with classroom teachers in relation to homework support, and required participation in homework activities after-school, which may prevent participation in other activities that would benefit pro-social bonding between peers and school. Protective factors that may

demonstrate a positive impact on young people, included homework assistance when it may not be available at home and may relieve stress at home. Peer modeling (students in homework programs see their peers studying) reinforces the norm of academic achievement and helps establish good study habits, and students are better able to participate in class with homework support. Other protective factors for afterschool activities included providing opportunities for parent involvement, supporting student talents in nonacademic arenas, positive peer group connections, and supervision in a safe place. Botvin and Office of Juvenile Justice and Detention Programs argue that those programs which demonstrate the greatest success focus on reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors, not only among the individual youth, but also within the environments in which they live and influence families, schools, peers, and community (as cited in Hanlon, et al., 2009).

For the purposes of this study, high impact after-school programming will be defined based on the following best practices: engaged high quality relationships with adults; parent involvement; strong peer social networks; strong partnerships between home, school and community; and duration of engagement in programming.

Quality adult relationships.

In looking at the model of resiliency, a critical factor and one of the six spokes of the framework wheel includes, caring adult relationships.

Shaun, name changed to protect his/her identity, a ninth grade student, joined Open Doors Academy at the start of his seventh grade school year. Two teachers referred Shaun to the program. Shaun lives at home with his older brother, sister, his sister's daughter, and his mother. He knows his father and seeks to have a relationship with him; however, his father seldom demonstrates any interest in his son. Shaun's mother

struggles to pay her bills and is often dealing with financial concerns, working multiple jobs, and often does not return home until after Shaun is asleep. Shaun also encountered a traumatic, life altering experience a year prior to joining ODA, after which he received no counseling. Upon entering Open Doors Academy, Shaun was reported by teachers as having severe anger management problems and was failing most of his core subjects. He demonstrated very little confidence in himself, sought little desire to work on school, and spent majority of his time distracting his peers. Despite his challenges, Shaun also demonstrates a strong sense of humor, creativity, a loveable personality, and a desire to be a leader amongst his peers.

Over two years, Shaun built relationships with the staff of ODA. Staff spent time with Shaun during programming, encouraging him, coaching him, and disciplining him. They sat in his classes during the school day, they talked with him on the weekends, and several times took him out on the weekends, helping with chores or going to the movies. Staff communicated with Shaun's mom, not only when he did something wrong, but also when he did things well. Staff communicated to Shaun clear expectations and boundaries, and followed through when Shaun crossed boundaries. As a testament of Shaun's relationship with the staff, Shaun frequently emailed or called staff when he feels overwhelmed or needed support. As a result of the support network, Shaun has demonstrated great strides in his school performance, his coping skills, and his self-confidence. When asked about his relationship with Open Doors Academy, Shaun most often states, "Open Doors is my family."

Calvin Coolidge once stated,

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up

in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but

the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work

and the tempering heat of experience and maturity (Calvin Coolidge,

2011).

Much like the comparison of knowledge and wisdom, we must too look at the difference

between measuring the quantity versus quality of relationships. Most research studies

conducted on social/peer networks and student adult relationships have looked at the

number of relationships that exist. Past studies have focused on the size of the network,

the connections between networks, and the presence of relationships that exist. In

contrast, very few studies have looked at the quality of the relationships between peers,

students and adults.   Much like that of wisdom, strong quality relationships require

discipline, hard work, and experience over time.

According to Masten and Reed (2002), "the best documented asset of resilient

children is a strong bond to a competent and caring adult, which need not be a parent"

(p. 83).   In an effort to narrow in on the importance of these relationships, we must

develop an understanding of the impact of caring adult relationships in the home,

school and community setting and how these relationships can affect a student's

achievement.

Many complex factors are seen as contributing to the achievement gap in today's

educational system.   Over the years, a comprehensive list of social factors has been

produced to explain the achievement gap including: cultural context, social economic

status (SES), inequities in teaching and learning styles, family history, gender, and

parental involvement. When working with youth we cannot change all of these societal

factors. However, we might consider the opportunity of influencing additional

environmental factors, such as those identified by the 40 developmental assets (Search

Institute, 2010a), in an effort to strengthen a child's achievement, including engaging the family, developing culturally sensitive curriculums, and providing outside supports to strengthen the identity of the child. Huitt (2004) states that there are basic experiences that students need for their social development, which are facilitated by the adults around them. These include having nurturing and caring adult-child relationships, adult modeling societal values, critical thinking and discussions regarding moral and ethical issues, collaborative learning experiences with peers and other social groups, and experiences that promote empathy and concern for others.

A study conducted by Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004), looked at the quality of relationships between intervention staff and elementary/ middle school students involved in the Check & Connect program, and its association with improved student engagement in school. Participants included 80 elementary and middle school students who were referred to the intervention program for poor attendance and student risk, (ethnicity, special education services, eligibility for Title I services, school disengagement, etc.). The students completed the Monitor-Student Relationship Survey, and teachers completed the Engagement in School-Teacher Rating Scale, upon finishing a 20 to 31 month intervention period, as was attendance measured. The Monitor–Student Relationship Survey is a project-derived measure designed to measure the closeness and quality of relationships between students and monitors. The Engagement in School— Teacher Rating Scale is a project-derived measure. Items on this scale were written to represent aspects of student engagement and support for learning (e.g., academic initiative, behavior in the classroom) and to be sensitive to the impact of the Check & Connect intervention on these important intervention components. The 13 items that reflected the student's academic and behavioral performance were selected as measures

of student engagement. Results of the study found a significant association between the quality of the relationship between the student and teacher and improved school engagement. Students who engaged with their mentor demonstrated improved school attendance, increased class preparation, work completion, and persistence.

Other studies have also argued for the establishment of culturally sensitive learning environments, arguing that African American students work best in environments which support their communal values and allow for shared learning (Dill and Boykin, 2000; Padron and Waxman, 1999). Building a community of learners is a critical component to increasing motivation of students. Teachers tend to teach in a manner that is comfortable for themselves, rather than reaching outside the box to meet the needs of the diverse classroom. In reviewing the literature on resiliency, a multitude of studies point to the importance of caring adult relationships, not only through parents, but also outside adult mentors including mentors and teachers (Roehlkepartain, Benson, & Sesma, 2003; Rhodes, 2004, Jekielek, et al., 2002; Griffin, 2010).

Non-parental caring adults.

Historically, the focus of research has studied the impact of the parent-child relationship. However, empirical support has begun to emerge on the impact of the student-teacher relationship and their association with social, emotional, and school related adjustment and functioning (Murray, 2005). Much of the literature points out adolescents are more likely to indicate similar-aged peers as part of their social network, in contrast to parents, teachers, and other adult role models. However, a strong body of research has indicated that strong relationships between youth and adult mentors also play a significant role in the academic and social achievement of youth and might therefore serve an important role in a youth's social network. For many students in

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schools, relationships with school staff are among the most salient and influential relationships in students' lives (Anderson et al., 2004; Griffin, 2010).

Studies have also looked at the impact of the teacher-student relationship and its impact on the social and emotional development of the child. The relationship between teacher and student can also influence a child's social preferences, confidence, sense of self, students' motivation, achievement, feelings of belonging, and affect in school (Hughes, Cavell, & Wilson, 2001; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). Murray and Greenberg (2000) examined aspects of children's social and contextual experiences in schools. Findings of the study indicated that students classified as having poor relationships with teachers and poor bonds with school had poorer scores on self and teacher rating of social and emotional adjustment in comparison to students classified as having positive relationships and bonds.

Studies have also found that those students who do not have a relationship with their teacher are at higher risk of engaging in negatively associated behaviors. Resnick et al. (1997) examined the association between school connectedness and emotional health utilizing data from over 12,000 middle and high school youth who were part of a National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Self-reports of school connectedness were negatively associated with emotional distress, suicide ideation, violence, alcohol use, drug use, and tobacco use after controlling for confounding variables including poverty, family structure, race, and gender. On the contrary, students who have stronger connections with their teachers demonstrate a higher level of engagement with learning, perform better academically, and display a stronger bond with their school.

In addition, studies of successful high-poverty urban schools consistently report personal caring relationships between youth and adults (Towns, Cole-Henderson, &

Serpell, 2001). A study conducted by Murray and Malmgren (2005) investigated the effects of a program designed to improve adolescents' relationships with at least one teacher in a low-income urban high school. Eight teachers and 48 students participated in the study. Students selected for the study were identified by their teachers as having significant emotional and behavioral problems. Half of the students were placed in a control group, while the second half received a five-month intervention that included increased positive involvement between the students and at least one of the eight teachers. Teachers completed pre and post-intervention surveys. Student grades, absences, and classroom engagement were also measured utilizing pre and post-intervention. Results of the study found that participants in the intervention group had higher grade point averages than those in the control group following intervention, however, no differences were observed on other variables, including student absences, school engagement, and social competence. However, in consideration of this study, it must be addressed that one of the major limitations of this study was the short five-month period of intervention. In addition, the teachers alone rated social competence and adjustment and the students only had the opportunity to build a relationship with one teacher, rather than multiple adults.

Many educators indicate that one experience with a caring adult can significantly impact the future of that young person. Many successful charter schools and youth development programs base their success on the impact of their staff on the young people they serve. Studies of successful high-poverty urban schools consistently report personal caring relationships between youth and adults (Griffin, 2010; Murray and Malmgren, 2005; Towns, Cole-Henderson, & Serpell, 2001). A study by Ryan, Stiller, and Lynch (1994) sought to understand the relationship between student relationships with peers,

teachers, and parents and their correlation to motivation and self-esteem. Findings of the study indicated that parent representations predicted those of both teachers and friends, whereas friend and teacher variables were not significantly associated. The research also indicated that increased positive representations of relationships to parents and teachers predicted school functioning indices, whereas representations of friends was largely unrelated to school-related outcomes. Representations of teachers, parents and friends all were correlated with self-esteem relevant outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, both the youth resiliency model and the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets make a case for the importance of caring adult relationships as a key to successful youth development. Too often out-of-school time programs are led by well-intended, yet unprepared, adults who with all good intentions seek to impact youth, without understanding how to establish caring adult relationships. The current study will look at how properly trained adult staff and parents, supported by a culture that places high value on relationships with youth, can positively impact the development of youth in an out-of-school setting.   In Open Doors Academy, parents are provided with additional resources and tools, including support groups and workshops on how to support their child's academic development. In addition, the program's Education Directors often meet with parents to go over areas where their child is struggling and provide them with resources and examples for helping their child surpass the barrier. Parents are also expected to review homework each evening with their child, a rule that is explicit amongst the organization, ensuring carry over at home. These are a few examples of how the ODA model engages parents in their child's academic achievement.

Parental involvement.

One of the most widely held beliefs in education is that parents are vital for the academic success of their children. It is also widely held that all parents should actively participate in their children's education to foster higher academic achievement (Hanlon, et al., 2009; Search Institute, 2003; Sheldon, 2003). "Practices that help parents develop secure emotional attachment with their children will foster pro-social orientation, reduce aggressive behaviors, diminish defiance of authority, and promote healthy relationships with peers and teachers" (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001).

A study on the effectiveness of homework programs and after-school activities found that parent involvement serves as an important symbol for students about the importance of school activities and educational achievement (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, and Brown, 2004). Research clearly demonstrates a need for parental involvement in both school and out-of-school time programs; yet few organizations successfully engage parents in their child's development, especially youth living in low-income, high-risk communities. A recent study looked at the effectiveness of quality afterschool programs targeting 6th grade urban African American youth. The study sought to understand whether youth engaged in an afterschool programs that promoted remedial education and an appreciation for African American cultural heritage and parental involvement would result in stronger school bonding, social skills development and academic achievement. Findings of the study indicated that among other factors, greater participation of parents in the program positively related to academic improvement as measured by grade point average. Of those parents who participated in the study, quality of engagement was measured by attendance and involvement in family events, 88 (slightly over one-third) were judged to be good to excellent. The remaining

145 parents were rated fair to poor, in terms of engagement. Findings of this study indicated that those parents who demonstrated strong involvement, was correlated with student increase in grade point average from baseline to follow-up. These findings were significantly different from those parents who demonstrated fair to poor involvement, indicating that youth with more involved parents demonstrated greater strides in academic performance (Hanlon, et al., 2009).

A recent study conducted by Wang and Fahey (2011) looked at trends in parental volunteering trends since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation. NCLB law stipulates that schools involve parents in decision-making and offer volunteer opportunities to parents. Findings from the study indicate that the rate of parental volunteering has actually decreased since the implementation of NCLB from 14% in 2002 to 12.8% in 2008. While the study did not provide any reasons for this decline, it did stress the importance of maintaining open communication between parents and teachers, encouraging parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, and attending parent workshops. Afterschool programs provide parents and schools the perfect venue to overcoming barriers to participation. Research indicates that parent involvement in afterschool programs provides the same benefits to children, families and programs as parent involvement in the regular school day, presenting a gateway into the school for many parents who do not otherwise feel connected to their children's school (Perkins, 2004).

The current study will look more closely at the role of parent involvement in afterschool programming and the importance of stressing this role as a means to success.

In alignment with the model, Open Doors Academy requires each parent to engage a minimum of 16 hours per year with Open Doors Academy. Parents can

participate in parent education classes, volunteer on site, attend family events, or chaperone field trips. For many new families in the program, this often comes as a culture shock and requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of the staff to ensure that parents meet their parent involvement obligation. ODA has a full-time family liaison whose sole responsibility is working with the parents, connecting them with resources, and connecting them with opportunities to engage with their child. Last year, 98% of the Open Doors parents completed a minimum of 16 hours of engagement. This study looks at the impact of these requirements on the development of the young people as it relates to their overall development.

Peer social networks.

In considering the relationship between developing successful out-of-school time programs and academic achievement, we must first look at the research on social networks, and peer adult relationships. "The likelihood that children will complete school is enhanced by their healthy attachment to others and to key institutions" (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001, pg. 427).   While much research has focused on early attachment amongst young children, research has begun to look at attachment as the child emerges into adolescence. Findings have demonstrated that as a child grows their attachment shifts from parents to school, peers, and adults outside of the home (Granot & Mayseless, 2005; Mayseless, 2005).

Research on social relations in adolescence has suggested that adolescents create emotionally supportive relationships in three major frameworks: family, school, and peers. Emotional supports provided by individuals in these areas are likely to enhance coping skills with school and job-related matters (Cotterell, 1992). Given the importance of social networks during the developmental stage of adolescence, it can be understood

that this process is even more critical for youth living in high-risk environments. For these youth, a positive social environment and proper support system can provide opportunities and resources that other social networks might otherwise hinder or prevent resources from being accessed. A study conducted by Granot and Mayseless (2005) looked at the association between student attachment and academic performance amongst 4th and 5th graders. Findings of the study indicate that children who had stronger connections with adults and peers demonstrated better adjustment to school and higher scholastic, emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. Students who did not demonstrate strong attachments showed the poorest adjustment and lower scholastic, emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment.

An early study completed by Garbarino, et al. (1978) looked at the characteristics of children's social networks as a function of neighborhood type, social economic status, and degree of physical maturation.   The results of this study indicated that for the most part, the characteristics of the child's social network map are not redundant and display a measure of independence. Data reported that children from the rural school listed more people as part of their network when compared to urban or suburban children. However, urban children reported less interconnectedness within their networks (the mean number of people within the top ten list known for each child is lower for urban children). In addition, when considering the number of people taking interest in the child, low socioeconomic children (as reported from the mother) demonstrated only half of the number of adults than that of the upper socioeconomic children. The findings from this study indicate that peer social networks vary and tend to be homogeneous in nature for social economic status and physical environment. It also indicates that youth living in high-risk environments are less likely to develop strong peer/adult social networks.

As a follow up to the earlier work of Garbarino et al. (1978), Ennett and Bauman (1996) looked at the adolescent friendship patterns that use a social network approach. Specifically, they looked at the variability of friendship structures across schools, the stability of friendship patterns over one year, and the gender, racial, and socioeconomic homogeneity of friendship structures. A social network analysis was used to describe adolescent friendship patterns, as well as to compare them across schools and over a period of time. The results of the study found that clique memberships were the lead social position pattern; however liaisons and isolates were also well represented. In all sample networks, gender, race, and mother's educational level were found to be homogeneous within the network and largely stable over the period of a year. These findings further supports the findings in Garbarino, et al. (1978) that social networks are correlated to social economic status, race, and gender.

In looking beyond the general structure of the peer network, it is important to also understand the importance of the quality of the network and how it is nurtured and developed. An example of a successful quality network is the development of strong cohorts or communal groups that reflect the values of a community or family. Dill and Boykin (2000) studied the impact of the power of a communal cohort amongst low-income urban youth. They hypothesized that students will give greater endorsement to communal values as compared to individual values, communal learning will facilitate more text recall than individual criterion context and at least as much as the traditionally structured peer learning contexts, and communal orientation will be positively related with performance and experience under the communal learning context. Results of the study indicate that students assigned to the communal learning group outperformed students assigned to peer tutoring or individual learning. Higher communal

endorsements were associated with increases in caring about their peers and a decreased preference for studying alone. In addition, higher communal endorsement was positively correlated with liking the learning phase and caring about their peers, and under individual criterion, endorsement of individual beliefs correlated negatively with desire to participate in the project again.

Another study, conducted by Ortiz, Hoyos, and Lopez (2004), further explored the impact of social networks on academic performance amongst students living in low socioeconomic environment. The findings of this study indicated that the eigenvector (the importance of the node/person in the network) and closeness centrality position were significant predictors of high academic performance. The eigenvector implies that a central member of the student's social network may communicate how to improve academic performance to other members of the network who then spread the word to all members of the network. Gender and occupation were also independent predictors of high academic performance. The findings from this study maintain that the strength of a network and its ability to transfer information and influence depends on its proximity and power within the network.

Another factor to consider is the connection between peer social networks and social/ emotional intelligence. Cauce (1986) conducted a study that explored the relationship between friendship social network variables and social competence indicators. Findings from the study found a significant relationship between the number of reciprocated best friends and the friendship independence orientation. Additional findings indicated that the number of reciprocated best friends a student has and perceived social support from friends, both contributed to social competence, whereas, friends' school orientation did not. In addition, the number of reciprocated best friends a

student has, perceived support obtained from friends, and friends' school orientation, all contributed significantly to school competence, thus further arguing that the power of the network can influence student academic achievement. Future studies may look closer at these variables, specifically, how school competence is related to achievement-related behaviors.

In considering the impact of the social network on overall wellbeing and school adjustment, Cotterell (1992), conducted a study that examined the relationship between adolescents' adjustment to school and their supportive relationships with others. The study looked at the exchange between adolescents' interactions with parents, peers, and non-parental adults. Results of the study found only moderate relationships between adolescent's number of supports and the strength of the attachments to members of the respective support systems. For both males and females, the strength of attachments to parents and teachers was associated with adolescents' positive feelings about themselves. Finally, among female participants, support from parents and non-parental adults was related to academic self-concept, whereas support from friends among boys was negatively related to self-concept and educational plans.

Strong school-community partnerships.

Strong out-of-school time programs serve as a bridge between the school and home. The concept of community in schools, as described by Battistich (1995), involves students experiencing the school as a community when their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence are met within that setting. Students who exist in a community feel that they are respected, valued and cared for by the other community members, and they make meaningful contributions to the group's plans and activities. Consensus is emerging among the research that programming in the out-of-school hours

can contribute to academic success by increasing student engagement in learning. Student involvement in after-school activities is linked to greater engagement in learning (increased school attendance, improved study habits, positive attitude towards school, etc.) as well as positive relationships with peers and adults and a greater sense of community belonging (Pittman, et al., 2004). Afterschool programs can play a critical role in reconnecting schools and communities. These programs help schools move beyond the constraints of the classroom and embrace many areas of programming that have gone untapped due to limitations in funding, time, and resources. Strong partnerships can closely align the work of the school day to the interactive nature of after-school, providing a rich environment for learning. Successful afterschool programs recognize the importance of strong community connections and actively pursue them. The benefits of these collaborations include: greater relevance of curriculum for students; increased student responsibility for learning; improved connections between school and community; stronger problem-solving skills, teambuilding, higher order thinking, time management, and other critical skills that benefit students' school achievement; expanded learning environments; greater motivation of reluctant learners; enhanced problem solving and conflict management skills; and reduced behavior problems (Decker, 2000).

Open Doors Academy strives to maintain close ties with each school it serves. Program staff work closely with teachers, counselors, and principals during the school day, observing classes and providing reinforcement support to teachers in and outside of the classroom, meeting and identifying resources for students with academic needs, sharing academic resources, and serving as a bridge between the teacher and parent. In return many teachers also stay after-school to support tutoring efforts and often

participate in programming. Afterschool staff is no longer seen as an outside

organization that conducts aftercare services, but rather as an educator who seeks to

support the work of the school day through an extended learning model.

Duration of exposure to programming.

Recent studies have identified an association between participation in organized

activities over multiple years and positive adolescent and young adult outcomes,

specifically educational outcomes. A longitudinal study conducted by Darling (2005)

looked at student attitude and engagement in school among students who participated in

extracurricular activities for the duration of one, two, or three years. Results of the study

found that students who remained in programming for two or three years demonstrated

greater academic aspirations than those who only participated one year or did not

participate at all. Results also revealed a positive relationship between middle and high

school students who engaged in programming for three years and multiple young adult

outcomes.

In addition, a follow-up study examined the relationship between the duration and

intensity of participation in organized activities during high school and educational, civic,

and occupational success in young adulthood. It found that youth who participated in

organized activities for two years demonstrated more favorable educational and civic

outcomes as young adults than those who participated for one year. In addition, more

intensive participation was associated with greater educational, civic, and occupational

success in young adulthood (Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Open Doors Academy requires students to participate every day for the duration

of three years. On average 70% of students return for their second year, and of that group

93% return for their third year. Majority of the attrition (64%) can be attributed to

students moving outside the district. Upon completion of their third year, students move into the ODA Alumni Club, which incorporates further programming and support throughout high school and into college. One of the critical components of success for ODA is the continued reach to our students throughout middle school and high school. Without continued support and direction, those relationships that had been initialized in the sixth grade would have faded, thus limiting long-term student impact.

The next section addresses the variables that are impacted by high impact afterschool programming. These variables include the following achievement-related behaviors: academic self-regulation, hope, engagement, wellbeing, personal achievement, and academic achievement.

Academic Achievement

The achievement gap between race and socioeconomic status continues to expand, despite numerous efforts to close the gap over the last twenty years. In general, the achievement gap illustrates variation among groups of students usually identified by racial, ethnic, linguistic, or socioeconomic status with respect to a variety of measures, including attrition and enrollment rates, alienation from school and society, attitudes toward mathematics, and test scores. The achievement gap is not a result of inclusion in any demographic group, but rather of disparities in the way that learners are treated on the basis of racial, class, and language differences. These disparities can be conscious or unconscious, blatant or subtle, personal or institutionalized. Students internalize others' perceptions of the group to which they belong. Teachers' expectations and belief systems also affect students' mathematics achievement (Strutchens, 2000).

Lubienski (2002) used data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders to look at trends related to race

and SES. Lubienski used samples for 1990, 1996 and 2000 consisting of 8,072, 21,000, and 42,000 students respectively. An analysis of race and SES for 1996 data revealed black-white testing gaps to be significant at the lowest and highest levels. There were significant race and SES-related disparities in both 1990 and 1996, but the changes from 1990 to 1996 were not significant. Other findings were that the lowest SES white students consistently scored equal to or higher than the highest SES black students across the grades in both 1990 and 1996.   Following Lubienski's study, Wenglinski (2004) utilized NAEP data for eighth graders to illuminate instructional practices related to closing the achievement gap at between-schools and within school levels. In addition, this study queries the different kinds of instructional practices that might help to reduce the achievement gap. A sample of 15,694 eighth graders was used for this study. It was found that middle school teachers could reduce the achievement gap depending on the instructional strategies employed in the classroom. Another finding of this study was African Americans scored 15 points lower than their White counterparts. These studies demonstrate the clear gap that is present between white and black students in the American education system, as well as, the additional disparities presented for youth who are also from low-income households.

In addition to race serving as a significant factor in academic achievement, social economic status has also been demonstrated to be closely linked to the academic achievement of youth. Buchanan (2006) studied the relationship between student SES and post-secondary educational attainment among 12,144 students over a 12-year period beginning in eighth grade. The sample comprised male and female students of which 73% were black, 12% were white, 10% were Hispanic and 4 % were of other ethnic backgrounds. They reported that SES is a strong predictor of educational attainment for

the white sample compared to the black. A second study conducted by Zhang and Cowen (2009) examined the achievement scores of 137 public elementary schools (urban, suburban, and rural) in South Carolina for factors of failing and their ability to provide access to school choice as mandated by NCLB legislation. They found that the proportion of minority enrollment, rate of poverty, teacher turnover and lower SES had a significant inverse relationship with achievement scores. In addition, student poverty rate, educational attainment and teacher turnover rate showed significant predictive power for 75% of the variation in academic achievement as measured by the test scores. Zhang and Cohen's study also points to the importance of teacher consistency from year to year, demonstrating that teacher turnover can significantly influence academic achievement amongst low SES students.

A large body of research has pointed to the importance of quality relationships between students and teachers. Students who have stronger connections with their teachers demonstrate a higher level of engagement with learning, perform better academically, and display a stronger bond with their school. For many students, relationships with school staff are among the most salient and influential relationships in students' lives (Anderson et al., 2004). Hughes, Cavell, and Wilson (2001) found that relationships between specific students and teachers influence the peer's perceptions and social preferences for those individuals. Another study found that relationships between middle school students and their teachers have been associated with students' motivation, achievement, feelings of belonging, and affect in school (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). Research conducted by Decker, Dona, & Christenson (2007), examined the associations between the student-teacher relationship and outcomes for African American students who were at-risk for referral to special

education. Participants were identified by their teachers as having behavior problems.

The sample consisted of forty-four students and twenty-five teachers from two suburban

and three urban elementary schools were selected to participate in the study. Results of

the study found that as teacher reports of the quality of student-teacher relationships

increased, positive behavioral, engagement, and academic outcomes simultaneously

increased.

Numerous studies argue that afterschool programs demonstrate increased self-

esteem, confidence, and academic achievement (Beck, 1999; Halpern, 1992; Bergin,

Hudson, Chryst, & Resetar, 1992; Ross, Saavedra, Shur, Winters, and Felner, 1992;

Hanlon et al., 2009; and Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, and Macias, 2001). Others have

shown that while afterschool programs may mediate declining behaviors, they do not

necessarily improve academic achievement (Morrison, Storino, Robertson, Weissglass, &

Dondero, 2000; Tucker et al., 1995; James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke, 2007). Pittman,

Irby, Yohalem, and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2004) reason that while afterschool programs

provide a wealth of positive attributes, including engaged learning, these results cannot

be attributed directly to academic achievement. A study which reviewed 21st Century

Community Learning Centers (federally funded grant program, under the No Child Left

Behind Act, which funds over 4,000 programs nationwide) over a three-year period found

that these federally funded afterschool programs demonstrated little to no direct

correlation with academic achievement (Gewertz, 2005).   In 2003, the Nellie Mae

Foundation presented a report on afterschool programs which stated that student

involvement in after-school activities is linked to greater engagement in learning,

increased school attendance, improved work habits and positive attitudes towards school.

In addition, the report linked better social and emotional adjustment, stronger peer

networks, healthier peer and adult relationships, and a stronger sense of community belonging to involvement in after-school activities. However, this brief also did not report a direct link between after afterschool programs and improved academic performance.

Academic Self-Regulation Behaviors

As our nation struggles to understand the great dilemma of the achievement gap, several researchers have looked at protective and risk factors that can be attributed to low and high achieving academic performing students, including the Search Institute study mentioned above. These factors have come to be defined as achievement-related behaviors. A wealth of achievement-related behaviors have been analyzed in their relationship to academic performance, but for the purposes of this study, I will look more closely at three core behaviors: hope, wellbeing, and engagement.   These three behaviors have been chosen as they are often associated with peer group modeling and peer social networks, social support, caring adult relationships, and non-school contexts. All three behaviors have been linked with academic achievement and engaged learning (Lopez, 2010; Snyder et al., 1997).

      Hope and achievement motivation.

As defined by Lopez (2010), hope incorporates the ideas and energy for the future, and may be perhaps one of the most potent predictors of success in our youth. It involves a person's ability to conceptualize the future along with clear goals, develop specific ideas, strategies to reach those goals, and initiate and sustain the energy for using those strategies. Hope is a very powerful tool in predicting achievement in youth and is most closely linked to attendance and credits earned (Gallup, 2009). A study by Marques, Pais-Ribero, & Lopez (2009) found that middle school students identified as

hopeful have better grades in core subjects and scores on achievement tests (Snyder, et al., 1997). In addition, hopeful high school students (Gallup, 2009; Snyder, et al., 1991; Worrell & Hale, 2001) and beginning college students (Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Snyder, et al., 2002) were found to have higher overall grade point averages. A person who is high in hope will express more optimism, hold greater levels of happiness, and experience less anxiety and depression when compared to a person who is lower in hope (Snyder, 2002; Snyder, et al., 1991). In the education field, higher-hope students set more challenging school-related goals for themselves and tend to perceive that they will be more successful at attaining these goals even if they do not experience immediate success when compared to lower-hope students (Snyder, et al., 1991).

Closely aligned with hope, achievement motivation refers to an individual's desire for significant accomplishment, mastering of skills, control, or high standards. Often associated with achievement motivation is intrinsic motivation, which has been directly linked to academic achievement, IQ, and perception of competence, as well as a negative association to anxiety (Gottfried, 1990; Gottfried, 1985). The lower the intrinsic motivation, the higher the level of anxiety associated with academic performance. In looking at intrinsic motivation, Hauser and Anderson argue that intrinsic motivation is often reliant on a number of outside factors including culture, race, and socio-economic status. Minority youth who are low-income are at a greater risk of facing barriers in achievement motivation when compared to their peers (as cited in Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011). In addition, perceived favorable and unfavorable experiences with parents, teachers, and other outside supports lead to implications in academic motivation (Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011). A recent study sought to determine the importance of social support as a predictor of academic

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motivation and academic success across cultures, using socioeconomic status and generation with college experience as predictors. Findings from the study found SES, family generation with college experience, and perceived social support were predictive of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for African Americans. However, the role of perceived social support was not significant for other cultures. For European Americans and Hispanic Americans, none of the variables were predictive of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011).

In addition socioeconomic status, race, and social support as predictors to intrinsic motivation, research has found that intrinsic motivation tends to decline as a young person moves from early childhood through adolescence (Gottfried, 2007). Open Doors Academy strives to create a culture that promotes hope and a vision for one's future. Providing youth not only with the support they need to be successful, the organization sets both short term and long term goals with each youth, designs a culture that inspires a vision for advancing one's education and for demonstrating success in one's future. Delisa, an 8th grader in the program, recently stated, "I never thought I could go to college, but now I know I can and will go to college." The current study will look at the link between high quality afterschool programming and its relationship to hope and achievement motivation.

Engagement.

School engagement describes students' feelings, behaviors, and thoughts about their school experiences (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Areas that are addressed through engagement include having a best friend at school, feeling safe at school, teachers valuing the work of the student, receiving positive feedback, and feeling as if one can do their best in school (Lopez, 2010). Additional research on student engagement completed

by Gallup (2009) further argues a strong case for the correlation between academic achievement and engagement, including providing educators with predictors and conditions that keep students involved and enthused about school. Findings indicate that engaged students are more than twice as likely to outperform a comparison group of randomly selected students on standardized tests (Gallup, 2009).

More recently school engagement is being seen as a multifaceted phenomenon, pulling from the work of Jimerson, Campos, and Greif, that occurs in the context of three different dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement (as cited in Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). The affective dimension reflects an emotional link to school, similar to school attachment, in reflecting the extent to which students feel close to people at their school. The behavioral dimension includes students' observable actions or performance, including completing homework, attending school, or grade performance. Finally, cognitive dimension includes students' perceptions and beliefs related to oneself, school, teachers, and other students. Jimerson, Campos and Grief argue that cognitive dimensions are closely tied to academic motivation and self-efficacy (as cited in Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Wang and Holcombe (2010) conducted a short-term longitudinal study on engagement and academic achievement amongst middle school students. Findings from the study indicated that the school social environment in seventh grade predicted affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in eighth grade, and engagement in turn was significantly related to eighth grade GPA. A follow up study which looked at the three contexts of engagement amongst fifth grade students in two groups, struggling learners and those with no prior history of academic difficulties, further supported this research. Adolescents without prior history of academic difficulties, who were in a classroom that were rated higher on social emotional climate and instructional quality and

lower on teacher-child conflict, were more likely to report feeling positive toward their school and trying hard in school, as well as demonstrate higher behavioral engagement. In addition, students who demonstrated higher psychological engagement (combination of both affective and cognitive engagement) were more likely to have higher scores on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement. Among the struggling learners in classrooms characterized by high instructional quality, positive social/emotional climate, and less conflict with teachers, were also observed as being more attentive and engaged in learning during class (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011).

Wellbeing and personal power

Wellbeing considers how we think about and experience our lives, how we evaluate our experiences, and how we build on our experience looking forward (Lopez, 2010). In assessing wellbeing, one must consider both their present and future life.

Closely aligned to wellbeing, personal power is defined as a young person feeling that he or she has control over the things that happen to them (Search Institute, 2010b). When young people lack personal power, they can develop learned helplessness, become resistant to authority, or become unable to make decisions for themselves (Bergin, Hudson, Chryst, & Resetar, 1992). A great deal of the research on personal power suggests the importance of modeling as a means of increasing self-efficacy in individuals. The ability of youth to influence their environment is strongly connected to the belief in their ability to bring about change. Albert Bandura (1997), the social psychologist who devised the construct of self-efficacy, states "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively the case" (p. 2). An individual with a high degree of personal power makes judgments about his or her capacity to achieve a certain level of performance. Research on personal

power argues that while positive feedback enhances self-efficacy, it is typically short lived, especially if the individual's efforts turn out poorly (Schunk, 1989). Further studies claim that modeling is a strong indicator for improving self-efficacy in an individual over feedback (Relich, 1986; Schunk & Hanson, 1985; Schunk, 1989). Similar to self-esteem, high personal power is positively associated with motivation, mastery, and task orientation, whereas low personal power is related to negative affect, performance-avoidance goal orientations, and self-handicapping strategies. When young people with a low sense of personal power are pressured to perform competitively (ability goal orientation), it often leads to increased anxiety, depression, stress, and self-handicapping strategies. On the other hand, task goal orientation is associated with positive effect and high self-efficacy (Smith, et al., 2002). The current study will look at the impact of high quality interactions between peers, peers and adults, and the influence of a strong community environment on one's own sense of personal power.

Summary of Chapter II

In summary, the literature argues for the benefits of positive relationships amongst youth and between youth and adults and their impact on achievement-related behaviors. The research also clearly supports the benefits of maintaining strong partnerships between schools and community organizations in carrying out effective after-school models. However, the research on afterschool programs and their impact is still limited and varied in its findings. Over the last 10 years, the afterschool profession has grown significantly in numbers and in diversity of programming. What was once seen as simply a safe place for kids to be while their parents were at work has transitioned into an extension of the school day and an environment for engaged learning. As funding dollars for afterschool programming becomes more competitive and resources

more scarce, it is critical that researchers begin to clearly align critical factors of success to improving achievement-related behaviors and academic achievement amongst afterschool programs. The current study will investigate key critical factors in high quality programs that influence achievement-related behaviors and academic achievement amongst middle school and high school-aged youth.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between quality social

support networks through a high quality afterschool program, and achievement amongst

middle school and high school aged youth.

Research Questions

This study poses the following questions:

1. Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ from youth not exposed

    to Open Doors Academy in relation to achievement-related behaviors

    including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?

    a. Does duration of engagement in Open Doors Academy relate to

       student performance in achievement-related behaviors including

       hope, wellbeing, and engagement?

2. Are hope, wellbeing, and engagement predictive of academic

    performance, (measured by GPA) amongst youth participating in Open

    Doors Academy?

3. Is there a difference in academic performance (measured by GPA) with

    increased exposure to Open Doors Academy?

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4.   Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ in developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community when compared from youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy?

Participants

This study looked closely at the impact of quality relationships in out-of-school programming in three urban school districts in the greater Cleveland Community. The participants in this study attended four middle schools and two high schools. Open Doors Academy shares a partnership with each of these schools.

Cleveland: School A.

School A is located in one of the 35 neighborhoods in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. It is a newly built school, approximately three years old. The school houses kindergarten through 8th grade students, although Open Doors Academy only serves sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The surrounding neighborhood is defined by many sources as a low-income, high crime urban area. According to a brief on the City of Cleveland conducted by Policy Bridge (2008), 31.4% of the families living in the Miles/Union neighborhood were below the poverty line in 2008 and 81.7% of the homes sold in 2008 were sold at Sheriff's Sale.

Ohio Achievement Scores demonstrate limited achievement in math and reading. The reading levels of students at School A are lower than the state requirement of 75% proficiency. The sixth grade reading level proficiency is 67%; the seventh grade students' reading level is 38%; and the 8th grade reading level is 50%. The mathematics proficiency level of students is also lower than the state requirement of 75%. The sixth grade mathematics level proficiency is 33%; the seventh grade students' mathematics

level is 13%; and the eighth grade mathematics level is 8% (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

The school is currently in a state of Academic Emergency, having met 0 of 26 state indicators. The demographic make-up for School A consists of 93.2% African-American students and 5.2% non-Hispanic, white students. Designated as a high-poverty school, 100% of students are identified as economically disadvantaged as determined by free and reduced lunch[1] (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

Finally, the 2010-11 Ohio Department of Education Report Card reports that while 97.4% of teachers held a bachelor's degree and 97.4% of core academic subjects were taught by certified teachers, only 4.9% of those teachers were designated as highly qualified teachers.

Cleveland: Schools B, C, and D

Schools B, C, and D are located in an inner-ring school district comprised of six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one large high school. Open Doors Academy currently serves youth in two middle schools and a high school in the district. According to US Census data (2009), 15.1% of the families living in the community were below the poverty line, with 7.1% living 50% below the poverty line.

School B is located in a small blue-collar residential neighborhood in the middle of the city. School C is positioned on the border of the city of Cleveland. Many families transition from Cleveland to the inner-ring suburbs in an effort to provide their children

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[1] Schools based within the City of Cleveland receive full designation of free lunch, based on the general population served by the schools, and do not need to receive verification from individual families to validate income eligibility.

with better opportunities. Yet with limited resources available, this often times proves

fruitless. Both schools are currently under Academic Watch, meeting one out of eight

state indicators (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). The demographic make-up of the

School District consists of 77% African-American students, 5% multi-racial, and 17%

Caucasian Students. Both schools are currently designated as a medium-high poverty

schools, with an overall 66% of the students in the district identified as economically

disadvantaged, as determined by free and reduced lunch[2] (Ohio Department of Education,

2011). Students at School D, the local high school, reflect similar statistics as both

middle schools. School B is currently under Academic Watch, having met one out of

eight state indicators, School C also met only one out of eight state indicators, and School

D met five out of 12 state indicators (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

Ohio Achievement Scores at both B and C schools demonstrate limited

achievement in math and reading. The reading levels of students at School C are lower

than the state requirement of 75% proficiency. The sixth grade reading level proficiency

at School C is 64%; the seventh grade students' reading level is 66%; and the eighth

grade reading level is 66%. The mathematics proficiency level for students is also lower

than the state requirement of 75%. The sixth grade mathematics level proficiency at

School C is 49%; the seventh grade students' mathematics level is 43%; and the eighth

grade mathematics level is 42% (Ohio Department of Education Report Card, 2011).

School B demonstrates similar scores. The reading levels of students at School B are

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[2] Free-Reduced lunch is determined based on the number of families who fill out income

eligibility forms and return them to the school. The actual percentage may be higher than stated

due to families who chose not to disclose income eligibility information.

reflected as follows: the sixth grade reading level proficiency is 68%; the seventh grade students' reading level is 51%; and the eighth grade reading level is 59%. The mathematics proficiency level of students is also lower than the state requirement of 75%. The sixth grade mathematics level proficiency is 44%; the seventh grade students' mathematics level is 43%; and the eighth grade mathematics level is 47% (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

Finally, the 2010-11 Ohio Department of Education Report Card at School B reports 99% of teachers held a bachelor's degree and 99% of core academic subjects were taught by certified teachers. However, only five percent of those teachers were designated as highly qualified teachers. School C demonstrates slightly higher marks, with 100% of teachers holding at minimum a bachelor's degree and 100% certification of those teaching core subjects (Ohio Department of Education Report Card, 2011).

Cleveland: Schools E, F, and G

Schools E and F are located on the east side of Cleveland, approximately ten minutes outside of the center of Cleveland. The community is seen as one of the original inner-ring suburbs and similar to the community mentioned above, is seen as a transient city, with families from Cleveland often seeking more opportunity for their families in the Heights. According to US Census data (2009), 13.9% of the families living in the community were below the poverty line, with five percent of the population living 50% below the poverty line.

The inner-ring city is often coined "pocket communities," with pockets of poverty and pockets of wealth throughout the greater community. As a result, the community is diverse in both race and social economic status. The school district is made up of six elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school. In

addition, the district is responsible for three specialized program schools. Open Doors Academy currently provides programming in two middle schools in the district, and serves the local high school.

School E is located in a more prosperous area of the Community. The school demonstrates a diverse population with 69% of the students represented identified as African-American, 23% Caucasian, and six percent multi-racial. According to the Ohio Department of Education (2011), 66% of the students are identified as low-income, based on free-reduced lunch, a 20% increase from 49% in 2004. The school is listed as "Continuous Improvement," having met two of eight state indicators (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

School F is located near a busy shopping district in a less prosperous area of the community. The school demonstrates a slightly less diverse population with 88% of its students represented by African-American, eight percent Caucasian, and three percent Multi-Racial students. 70% of the students are identified as low-income, based on free-reduced lunch statistics. The school is listed as "Effective" for the first time in several years, having met three out of eight state indicators (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). A comparison of the schools can be found in Table 3.

School report cards indicate that both School E and School F have demonstrated an increase in proficiency scores over the last few years. The 2011 State Report Cards indicate that amongst sixth grade students at School E, 74% demonstrate proficiency in reading, and 59% in math. Amongst School F sixth graders 87% demonstrate proficiency in reading, and 64% demonstrate proficiency in math. Amongst eighth grade students at both schools proficiency in reading was recorded at 84% for School E and 82% for School F (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

The school district, inhabiting schools E, F, and G, currently serves majority of the Open Doors Academy students who have moved through the middle school program and are currently participating in the high school youth program. The high school (school G) recently moved from continuous improvement to effective according to the 2011 state report card (Ohio Department of Education, 2011), with a 93% high school graduation rate. Tenth grade Ohio Graduation Test report that the school met the state requirement of 75% proficiency in all core areas (math, reading, and social studies) outside of science.

In looking at teacher qualification, 99% of teachers at all three schools held bachelor's degrees, while 82% at School E, 84% at School F, and 74% at School G held master degrees (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).   Open Doors Academy has worked closely with this district for the past ten years, and is proud to see this increasing graduation and school report card increase.

Table 3: *School Performance Indicators*

	Academic Status	State Indicators	Performance Indicators (out of 120)	Adequate Yearly Progress
School A	Academic Emergency	0 out of 15	61.5	Not Met
School B	Academic Watch	1 out of 8	76.2	Not Met
School C	Effective	1 out of 8	80.2	Not Met
School D	Continuous Improvement	5 out of 12	86.8	Not Met
School E	Continuous Improvement	2 out of 8	88.6	Not Met
School F	Effective	3 out of 8	88.8	Met
School G	Effective	10 out of 12	91.7	Not Met

Note. Data provided by Ohio Department of Education Report Cards (2010-11)

Open Doors Academy.

Open Doors Academy, a comprehensive learning program that works closely with the schools to provide extensive year-round, out-of-school learning, currently serves three school districts; five middle schools and three high schools in the Greater Cleveland Community.

Open Doors Academy's primary clients are middle school students ages 11-18. Youth can enroll in the program starting in their sixth or seventh grade school year. If they continue through their eighth grade year then they are eligible for the high school program, which is focused on college preparation and post-secondary education. Enrollment in 2010-11 included 200 middle-school youth, 150 high school youth and college youth, and approximately 525 parents & family members. The majority of Open Doors Academy students are considered low-income, high-risk youth. A breakdown of the community and school demographics for the 2011-12 school year are provided below in tables four and five.

Table 4: *Demographics of Five Middle Schools Served (2011-12)*

	School A	School B	School C	School E	School F
Free-Reduced Lunch	100%	72.3%	70.8%	62.8%	70.1%
African – American Students	88.1%	79.0%	83.6%	68.6%	88.5%
Caucasian Students	8.0%	15.1%	11.4%	22.7%	7.8%
6th grade Math Proficiency (passing rate)	19.6%	44.5%	60.0%	57.1%	64.4%
6th grade Reading Proficiency (passing rate)	42.9%	67.9%	74.3%	71.2%	87.5%
Students with Disabilities	28.2%	24.2%	22.4%	17.0%	21.7%

Table 5: *Student Enrollment in Open Doors Academy (2010-11)*

	School A	School B	School E	School F
Number of students enrolled (total)	38	40	40	40
% of students returning for their second year*	88%	79%	71%	80%
% of students returning for their third year	82%	100%	93%	87%
% Minority Students	100%	93%	78%	92%
% Living Below the Poverty Level	100%	98%	78%	81%
Average Daily Attendance (at ODA)	91%	95%	87%	88%

Note. Schools C, D, and G not added to the organization until the 2011-12 program year.

Sample

Sample participants included 216 youth, middle school and high school students living in high-risk environments, between the ages of eleven and eighteen years. Participants included students from the City of Cleveland and three inner-ring Cleveland suburbs. Youth participants were placed in one of two groups: Youth participants selected based on their enrollment in the Open Doors Academy program, and youth participants in the comparison group, not currently enrolled in Open Doors Academy. The first group included those youth who have been participating in Open Doors Academy, were placed into a sub-group based on the number of years in the program (one year, two years, three years, and four or more years). Both groups represented a sample of convenience. Those currently participating in the program were selected using a convenience sample of four of the five middle school sites and the three high school

sites in order to ensure a diverse sample based on time engaged in the organization, as
displayed in table six. Participants for the control group included selected middle school
youth from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade math classes at the select middle schools.
Youth in all math classes at each of the three selected schools were given the opportunity
to participate by returning the parental consent form. Those youth who returned the form
within the given timeframe of five days were selected for the study.

Table 6: *Frequencies: Participant Demographic Variables*

	Frequency	**Valid Percent**
Participant Age (Years)		
11	16	7.4
12	52	24.1
13	60	27.8
14	47	21.8
15	23	10.6
16	5	2.3
17	12	5.6
18	1	.5
Participant Grade Level		
6th	55	25.5
7th	66	30.6
8th	45	20.8
9th	28	13.0
10th	7	3.2
11th	14	6.5
12th	1	.5
Participant Gender		
Male	102	47.2
Female	114	52.8
Participant Ethnicity		
African American	171	79.2
American Indian/ Native American	15	6.9
White	5	2.3
Hispanic/Latino(a)	6	2.8
Multi-Racial	19	8.8
Household Income		
Low	151	70
Moderate	37	17
High	28	13

Instruments and Data Collection

Instruments included two youth surveys and grade point average analysis. Participants in all groups completed the Gallup Student Poll and Developmental Assets Profile. These are described below.

The Gallup student poll.

The Gallup Student Poll is a landmark new measure that captures the youth voice, a critical but too often missing part of the national dialogue surrounding student performance and success (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010). The Gallup Student Poll (GSP) is a 20-item survey that takes approximately 10 minutes to complete (See appendix B for a complete listing of the survey questions). Of the 20 response items, the first two are answered using the following scale: imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. The first question addresses the present time and the second question addresses the future. Questions three through 14 are answered using a Likert-type scale ranging from one to five. One indicating "strongly disagree" and five indicating "strongly agree." Two, three, and four options are available but are intentionally left unlabeled. In addition, an option is available for "don't know/doesn't apply." Questions 15 through 20 are answered with a "yes" or "no" response. The GSP is an individual survey that measures three constructs, including: hope, engagement, and wellbeing. The Gallup student pole places students in three categories for each construct. For hope, students are identified as hopeful, stuck, or discouraged. For engagement students are identified as engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. Finally, for wellbeing students are identified as thriving, struggling, or suffering. Table 7 provides descriptions for each construct.

Table 7: *Description of Hope, Wellbeing, and Engagement Constructs on the Gallup*

Student Poll (Gallup, 2009)

Hope	**Hopeful** – these students have numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. They are skilled at goal-directed thinking and perceive they can navigate pathways to achieve their goals. They are more likely to be engaged at school. **Stuck** – these students have few ideas about the future and lack the requisite motivation to achieve goals. **Discouraged** – these students have few ideas and possess negative conceptualizations of the future. They lack goal orientation and the skills needed to navigate pathways to achieve their goals. They are more likely to be actively disengaged at school.
Engagement	**Engaged** – these students are highly involved in and enthusiastic about school. They contribute to the learning process and likely involve their peers in the learning process as well. They are psychologically committed to school and have most needs met by the learning environment. **Not Engaged** – these students are present in the classroom, but they are not psychologically connected to school or the learning process. These students have some but not all needs met in the learning environment. **Actively Disengaged** – these students are not involved with the learning process and may be undermining that process for themselves and their peers. They are unhappy in school and will share their unhappiness with others.
Wellbeing	**Thriving** – these students have positive perceptions of their lives. They perceive their present lives as good, and are likely to see the future as even better. These students likely have their basic needs met. They tend to have strong social support. They are well positioned for academic success and are more likely to be engaged with school. **Struggling** – these students with lower wellbeing do not have positive thoughts about their present and future lives. They may lack basic needs and have weak social support. **Suffering** – these students have negative perceptions of their lives. They lack adequate personal and social resources and are more likely to be actively disengaged with school.

Internal consistency of the GSP.

The on-line Gallup Student Poll was administered in 2009 to 246,982 students in grades 5 through 12 through a convenience sample (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010). The survey was administered across 905 schools from 93 districts in 33 states and the District of Columbia. Participant rates for schools ranged from 1.3% to 100% of the total student population. Internal consistency, using Cronbach's alpha was reported as relatively high. The Hope Index demonstrated strong internally consistency (Cronbach alpha = .78), with all six items loading on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.89) with the Hope factor accounting for 48% of scale variance. The Engagement Index also demonstrated a strong internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .72) and all five items loaded on a single factor. The Wellbeing Index is measured by two items (Cronbach alpha = .60), with a .43 correlation between the "ladder now" and "ladder future" items.

Predictive validity of the GSP.

Under the 2008 Gallup Student Poll Pilot Study (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010), 198 high school freshman at a Midwestern high school, completed the core 20 items and demographic questions via a secure website and their results were combined with student performance data, including attendance, credits earned, and grade point average. The Hope construct was hypothesized to be the best predictor of student performance. Simple correlation analyses were run at the beginning of the school term and attendance, credits earned, and GPA at the end of the term were assessed, suggested that the hope total score was the best predictor of each variable: attendance (0.29), credits earned over the course of the first semester of freshman year (0.30), and total GPA at winter break (0.36). The single Hope item that was the best predictor of positive student and behavior outcomes was the item focused on confidence in graduating (#2 on survey).

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Engagement (sum of the responses of the five engagement items) was also a significant predictor of those credits earned (0.21) and GPA (0.23). The Engagement item that served as the best predictor for desirable student outcomes was the praise and recognition item (#13 on survey).

Concurrent validity of the GSP.

The concurrent validity scales looked at the association between Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing scales and supplemental scales that were administered to a sub-group of the sample in the 2009 study. The convenience sample included 246,982 students in grades five through 12. The survey was administered across 905 schools from 93 districts in 33 states and the District of Columbia. Participant rates for schools ranged from 1.3% to 100% of the total student population (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010). Supplemental scales measured included an additional engagement scale (Gallup), student satisfaction scales (Huebner, Seligson, Valois, & Suldo, 2006), Strengths Awareness Items (Gallup), The Strengths Self-Efficacy Scale (Tsai, Zhao, Chaichanasakul, Flores, & Lopez, 2009), a gratitude scale (Froh et al., 2007; Gestsdottir et al., 2009), an entrepreneurial potential index (Gallup), and a good worker scale (Gallup), all of which had alphas greater than .70. It was hypothesized that the correlations between the three core scales (hope, wellbeing, and engagement) and the supplemental scales mentioned above would be positive. Table 8 lays out the correlations between hope, engagement and wellbeing against supplemental scales. All correlations between the core scales and the supplemental scales were positive and significant. Hope was most strongly correlated at .60 or higher with the Strengths 2 scale. Engagement was most strongly correlated with the supplemental engagement scale (.71). Other scales correlated between .26 and

.55 with engagement. All correlations between wellbeing and supplemental scales were between .20 and .32 in magnitude.

Table 8: *Correlations between Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing and Gallup Student Poll Supplemental Scales*

	Eng2	Sati	Strengths 1	Strengths 2	Gratitude	SOC	EPI	WB	GWI
Hope	.48	.51	.48	.61	.58	.63	.46	.50	.61
Engagement	.71	.54	.59	.48	.51	.51	.26	.56	.55
Wellbeing	.25	.30	.25	.30	.32	.32	.23	.29	.25

Note. Table was provided by the Gallup Student Poll Technical Report (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010)

Note. Eng2 = Engagement Supplement; Sati. = Brief Multidimensional Student Satisfaction with Life Scale; Strengths 1 = Strengths Awareness; Strengths 2 = Strengths Self-Efficacy; SOC =Selection Optimization-Compensation Index; EPI = Entrepreneurial Potential Index; WB = Wellbeing Finder Short Form; GWI = Good Worker Index Scale

The Developmental Assets Profile survey.

The Developmental Assets Profile Survey (DAP), developed by the Search Institute (2005) is a 58-item survey that takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. The DAP survey is an individual measure that produces quantitative scores for asset categories portrayed in a profile format. The DAP Survey meets the SERVE assessment principles: simple, short and focused; easy, and quick to administer; reliable with a low measurement error; valid, evident of validity accurate and true; and efficient with a high information yield. Since its development in 2002, it has undergone several stages of design, pilot testing and field trials. The DAP items are based on Search Institute's (2010b) Developmental Asset Framework and is designed to provide a set of items that adequately covers the eight asset categories and the five context categories. Of the 58

items, 26 tap external assets and 32 tap internal assets. On the external asset side, the

DAP scales are support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of

time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

The five context areas (see details in Appendix C) include personal assets, social assets,

family assets, school assets, and community assets. Responses for the 58 item survey are

based on a four point scale, with the following indicative responses from left to right: not

at all or rarely; somewhat or sometimes; very or often; and extremely or almost always.

For the purposes of the current study, we will look closely at the five context areas

(personal, social, family, school, and community) in relationship to student achievement.

The DAP scale uses a simple four-step response scale for all 58 items, and each item is

defined within the context of a three month time frame in order to reduce short-term

temporal variability that could drastically affect adolescent self-reporting. Respondents

are asked to check if the item is true. Responses included: not at all or rarely, somewhat

or sometimes, very often or extremely, or almost always.

Internal consistency of the DAP.

Engaging 1,300 middle and high school youth in a field trial, Cronbach's alpha of

the DAP (Search Institute, 2005) scales was reported as being relatively high and

averaged .81 for the eight asset category scales and .88 for the five context scales.

Internal consistency was .93 for internal assets, .95 for external assets, and .97 for total

assets. Internal consistencies were high uniformly across the board for gender, age,

grade, and race (Search Institute, 2005).

Test-retest reliability of the DAP.

Two-week test-retest reliability for a sample of 225 sixth through twelfth graders

reported reliabilities as moderately high and averaged $r = .79$ for the eight Asset

categories scales. Test-retest for the internal assets score was $r = .86$ and $r = .84$ for External Assets score. Test-retest for the total assets score was $r = .87$ (Search Institute, 2005).

Concurrent validity of the DAP.

In assessing concurrent validity, the Developmental Assets Profile (Search Institute, 2005) was measured against the Attitude and Behaviors (A&B) Survey (Search Institute, 2005), which has been widely used by the Search Institute for over 10 years in research involving millions of youth. The two measures differ in important ways but both assess developmental assets from adolescent self-report. A field trial was conducted with more than 1,300 youth in grades 6 through 12. Findings of the concurrent validity between the DAP Survey and the A&B Survey reported a very strong linear relationship between the two measures ($r = .82, p < .001$). This correlation is consistent across gender, and grade when grouped (6 through 8 versus 9 through 12). When measured a second time with younger youth sample of middle school youth ($n = 1,136$) the measures correlated $r = .76, p < .001$. The external asset score and internal asset score for the first trial also demonstrated strong convergence with the corresponding asset counts derived from the A&B Survey. For external assets, the correlation between the two measures for the entire sample was $r = .76$ ($p < .001$), and for internal assets ($r = .80, p < .001$). The second trial demonstrated similar results with $r = .68$ ($p < .001$) for external assets, and $r = .72$ ($p < .001$) (Search Institute, 2005).

Criterion validity of the DAP.

The criterion validity of the Developmental Assets Profile (Search Institute, 2005), was assessed to test differences between groups of adolescents who are likely to differ in levels of assets in their daily lives. In a field trial, two middle schools judged

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independently from one another in terms of support, positive experiences, and quantity

and quality of resources, as determined by youth workers, school personnel, community

leaders, and parents, were selected to participate. The DAP was completed by 570 youth

in the more asset-rich middle school and by 550 youth in the less asset-rich middle

school. Findings report that youth from the more asset-rich school scored significantly

higher on every DAP scale ($p < .001$) than those from the less asset-rich school. These

differences remain significant at the $p < .001$ level after statistically controlling for

differences in demographic and background variables (Search Institute, 2005).

Student performance measures.

Additional measures that were incorporated to measure academic achievement

and achievement-related behaviors amongst participants included tracking of grade point

average for all participants and across time for youth participating in the Open Doors

Academy program for one year, two years, three years, or four or more years. It is

recognized that grade point average, may represent a biased metric when measured across

different classrooms and multiple schools. However, for the purposes of timing of this

study, this serves as the best indicator of academic performance.

Procedure

Upon approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB), a letter explaining the

purpose of the study, the role of the participants, and the intended use and distribution of

data, was sent out to participants and their parent(s)/guardian(s) at all participating

schools. Non-Open Doors Academy participants were selected based upon a

convenience sample of youth who returned the parental consent form. Forms were

distributed to all math classes across three middle schools. Student participants at Open

Doors Academy were placed in four clusters of participants, based on their duration in

the program (length of duration with the program: one year, two years, three years, or four or more years). Each letter included parent/guardian and student consent and assent forms. See Appendix D for a copy of the consent and assent forms.

Data collection commenced during the last period of school and after-school. Participants completed the surveys during lunch period and after-school. Participants completed the surveys on-line through a secure website. Open Doors Academy Education Directors and the Program Administrator, who have minimal engagement with the youth on a daily basis, proctored the surveys. The researcher reviewed the proper administration of the surveys, utilizing the online surveys, and step-by-step instructions of the procedures for data collection with the Education Directors and Program Administrator. All instructions were clearly defined in writing and reviewed with the staff. After reviewing instructions and answering questions, the staff observed a mock assessment and then practiced administering the surveys under the supervision of the primary researcher before meeting with student participants. Participants were provided with a student ID. All information into the survey system remained anonymous with no identifying information shared.   Participants were given verbal instructions, with a copy of the written instructions in front of them. Upon completion of the survey, the student received a piece of candy or gift card as a 'thank you' for completing the surveys. Student grade cards, school attendance and discipline records were collected from each individual school at the completion of the fourth quarter.

Confidentiality

In an effort to address potential ethical issues that may impact the participant or study, several steps were taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants, proper handling of "off the record" information, personal biases, and consent. Extensive steps

were taken to ensure participant confidentiality throughout the stages of this study. Confidentiality was discussed at each stage of this study with participants. During each stage of the study, participants were informed that information provided throughout the process of the study would remain confidential, unless it involved harming oneself or others, during which time the researcher would be required to report information to a supportive adult. Off the record information that may be deemed as harmful to the relationships with the participants, or may breach confidentiality and anonymity of the participants would not be placed in the study.

All student participants were provided with an identification number that served as their identity throughout the research collection process. The only identifying information provided in the surveys includes demographic information: age, gender, school, and race. Any additional information related to the identity of the participant was kept out of the study. In addition, Education Directors created a spreadsheet that correlated the student's GPA to their ID number in order to maintain anonymity throughout the study. As the only researcher analyzing the data, only student identification numbers were provided as a means to correlating data from both surveys. At no time throughout the study were participants' names present with data collected.

Analysis

Three models were used to analyze the various research questions proposed in this study. The first two research questions that look at hope, engagement, and wellbeing amongst Open Doors Academy Youth and Non-Open Doors Academy Youth utilized a general linear multivariate model. Question one (Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ from youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy in relation to achievement-related behaviors including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?) seeks to

understand what are the main effects of Open Doors Students and Non-Open Doors Students as it relates to their ranking of hope, wellbeing, and engagement, as measured through the Gallup Student Poll (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010). The sub-question of the first research question (Does duration of engagement in Open Doors Academy relate to student performance in achievement-related behaviors including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?) also utilized a single factor general linear multivariate model to look at the main effects and interactions of Open Doors Academy youth across multiple years of engagement with the program; specifically, one year, two years, three years, or four or more years on their performance on the hope, wellbeing, and engagement scales.

Multiple regression was used to analyze the second question (Are hope, wellbeing, and engagement predictive of academic performance, measured by GPA, amongst youth participating in Open Doors Academy?) that looked at the predictive relationship between academic performance (measured by GPA) and hope, wellbeing, and engagement amongst Open Doors students.

A single factor ANOVA was used for the third research question (Is there a difference in academic performance (measured by GPA) with increased exposure to Open Doors Academy) to analyze if a significant difference lies between academic performance (measured by GPA) and exposure to the program (years in the program).

Finally, the fourth research question (Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ in developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community when compared to youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy?) utilized a general multivariate linear model to look at the main effects and interactions between Open Doors Students and Non-Open Doors Students and their relationship amongst the

developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community.

Summary of Chapter III

Chapter three reviewed the methodology used in the study, beginning with the research questions and description of the population being studied. In addition, participants, procedures, instruments used, and data analysis were discussed. The Institutional Review Board procedures were detailed along with procedures for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, aims, analysis and limitations were listed for this study. Chapter four will present findings from the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study looks closely at the quality of a youth's support systems and their
impact on academic achievement and achievement-related behaviors in high quality out-
of-school programs.   Further, this study seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the
following: Do high quality after-school programs influence achievement-related
behaviors amongst youth? Second, do high quality after-school programs influence
academic performance amongst youth? Finally, do high quality after-school programs
influence a youth's developmental assets?

Analysis of Achievement-Related Behaviors

The first research question (Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ
from youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy in relation to achievement-related
behaviors including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?) utilized a general linear
multivariate model comparing Open Doors Academy (ODA) and Non-Open Doors
Academy (Non ODA) participants as the independent variable and achievement-related
behaviors (hope, well-being, and engagement) as the dependent variable to determine the
extent to which there were differences between no exposure to programming and
exposure to programming, amongst the different achievement-related behaviors. Hope,

engagement, and wellbeing were measured utilizing 20 questions on the Gallup Student Poll (Gallup, 2009).   Seven questions were tied to the construct of hope, six to the construct of engagement, and seven to the construct of wellbeing.   The mean of all responses in each construct was formulated and youth participants were categorized into one of three categories under each construct (hope – hopeful, stuck, disengaged; engaged-engaged, disengaged, actively disengaged; wellbeing – thriving, struggling, suffering).   In addition, youth participants responded on a scale of one to five on the constructs of hope and engagement, with five indicating the highest score towards hopeful and/or engaged. Wellbeing was measured on a scale of one to ten, with ten representing the highest score towards thriving.   A general linear multivariate model was preferred over multiple ANOVAS to control for the inflation of Type I error. Statistical significance was set at .05 as the research was exploratory. A non-significant Box's M test ($p = .336$) indicated homogeneity of covariance matrices of the dependent variables across participation.   The results of the general linear multivariate model indicated a trend towards significance between the Open Doors Academy youth participants and Non Open Doors Academy participants and hope, wellbeing and engagement Wilks' λ (3,151) = 2.570, $p = .056$. While the findings are not significant, the trend is that Open Doors Academy youth demonstrate higher mean levels of hope and engagement in comparison with Non Open Doors Academy youth. In addition, in comparison with state and national data, taken from a previous unpublished report completed by Gallup (2011), Open Doors Academy youth also demonstrate a higher mean in comparison to both state and national data on the constructs of hope and engagement as reflected in table 9.

Table 9: *Descriptive Statistics for Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing Between Open Doors Academy Youth, Non Open Doors Academy Youth, and State and National Comparison Data.*

Construct		Mean	*SD*	*n*
Hope	Non-ODA	4.18	.88	32
	ODA	4.48	.63	159
	State[1]	4.42	NA[2]	13893
	National[1]	4.40	NA[2]	309654
Engagement	Non-ODA	3.93	.83	32
	ODA	4.18	.75	152
	State[1]	4.15	NA[2]	13936
	National[1]	4.10	NA[2]	310255
Wellbeing	Non-ODA	7.95	1.52	32
	ODA	8.12	1.60	159
	State[1]	8.55	NA[2]	14486
	National[1]	8.55	NA[2]	326426

[1] State and National data reflect and aggregate of the convenience sample of school and districts across the country and are thereby not representative of the state or U.S. student populations (Gallup, 2011).

[2] NA – Not Available, National and State data was pulled from a previous report that did not provide standard deviations for populations (Gallup, 2011)

In looking more closely at the constructs of hope, amongst Open Doors Academy youth, participants were asked a total of six questions that correlated to a measure of

hope. Each response was ranked on a scale of one to five, with five indicating strong agreement with the statement, and one indicating strong disagreement with the statement. Among Open Doors Academy youth 67% of participants were identified as hopeful, 25% stuck, and 8% discouraged. In comparison, amongst non-Open Doors Academy youth, 44% of participants were identified as hopeful, 37% stuck, and 19% discouraged. On the construct of engagement, 65% of participants were identified as engaged, 21% not engaged, and 14% actively disengaged. Amongst non-Open Doors Academy youth, 47% were identified as engaged. Based on the constraints of the measure, not engaged and actively disengaged percentages are not given when n < 100. Finally on the construct of wellbeing, 65% of Open Doors Academy youth participants were identified as thriving, 33% struggling, and 2% suffering. Amongst Non-Open Doors Academy youth 73% were identified as thriving, 27% struggling, and 0% suffering. In comparison to a national study, completed by Gallup (n = 309,654) found 66% of youth to be hopeful, 59% engaged, and 65% thriving (Gallup, 2011). Table 10 lays out the percentage of youth who were identified in each sub-category for hope, engagement and wellbeing, amongst Open Doors Academy Participants, Non Open Doors Academy Participants, and comparative National Data conducted by Gallup (2011).

Table 10: *Cell Sizes and Percentages of Hope, Wellbeing, and Engagement between*

Open Doors Academy and Non-Open Doors Academy Youth

	Open Doors Academy	Non-Open Doors Academy	National Data (Gallup, 2011)
Hope			
Hopeful	106 (67%)	14 (44%)	204372 (66%)
Stuck	40 (25%)	12 (37%)	80510 (26%)
Discouraged	13 (8.0%)	6 (19%)	24722 (8.0%)
Engagement			
Engaged	99 (65%)	15 (47%)	183050 (59%)
Disengaged	32 (21%)	NA[1] (NA[1])	80666 (26%)
Actively Disengaged	21 (14%)	NA[1] (NA[1])	46538 (15%)
Wellbeing			
Thriving	104 (65%)	23 (73%)	212177 (65%)
Struggling	52 (33%)	9 (27%)	110985 (34%)
Suffering	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3264 (1%)

[1] NA – not applicable. Data was not provided under these constructs, because there were fewer than 10 youth in each category.

Looking at specific items on the Gallup measure, when asked to rank on a scale of one to five, one indicating "strongly disagree" and five indicating "strongly agree," on the hope construct question, "I know I will graduate high school" (Gallup, 2009), 92% of Open Doors Academy participants ranked hopeful, in comparison to 82% of non-Open Doors Academy participants. On the item, "I energetically pursue my goals, 55% of Open

Doors Academy participants responded hopeful, in comparison to 34% non-Open Doors Academy participants. On the item, "I can think of many ways to get good grades", 64% of Open Doors Academy Participants responded hopeful, in comparison to 52% of non-Open Doors Academy participants. Finally, on the item, "I know I will find a good job after I graduate", 75% of Open Doors Academy participants responded hopeful, in comparison to 53% non-Open Doors Academy participants. A chi–square test for independence conducted on the above mentioned questions indicated a statistically significant difference between participants and non-participants who indicated confidence that they would find a good job after graduation, χ^2 (1, 185) = 6.67, p = .010. In addition, a trend towards significance was found amongst participants who indicated that they energetically pursue their goals, χ^2 (1, 190) = 3.59, p = .058. Table 11, provides information related to these findings.

Table 11: *Chi-Square Test for Independence on Graduation, New Ideas, Goal Setting, and Job Placement Confidence*

	M	Pearson Chi-Square	*p*	*n*
I know I will graduate high school				
Open Doors Academy	4.58	3.17	.075	188
Non Open Doors Academy	4.06			
I energetically pursue my goals				
Open Doors Academy	2.70	3.59[1]	.058	190
Non Open Doors Academy	1.77			
I can think of many ways to get good grades				
Open Doors Academy	3.21	1.38	.249	191
Non Open Doors Academy	2.66			
I know I will find a good job after I graduate				
Open Doors Academy	3.86	6.67[2]	.010	185
Non Open Doors Academy	2.74			

[1] *Trend towards significance between Open Doors Academy Youth and Non Open Doors Academy Youth who were identified themselves as energetically pursuing their goals.*
[2] *Significant difference between Open Doors Academy Youth and Non Open Doors Academy Youth who were indicated confidence that they would find a good job after graduation.*

The sub-question of the first research question (Does duration of engagement in Open Doors Academy relate to student performance in achievement-related behaviors including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?) also utilized a general linear multivariate model to look at the main effects and interactions of Open Doors Academy youth across multiple years of engagement with the program; specifically, one, two, three, or for or more years on their performance on the hope, wellbeing, and engagement scales.

Statistical significance was set at .05. Due to a significant Box's M test (p = .00, where p >.05) it is recommended by Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) that Pillai's criterion is utilized for a more conservative approach to the general multivariate model. The results of the general linear multivariate model indicated statistically significant main effects between duration of engagement amongst Open Doors Academy Youth and hope, engagement, and wellbeing Pillai's criterion (12,510) = 1.83, p = .042. A post hoc Tukey test further investigated the statistically significant finding, indicating a statistically significant difference on the measure of hope between years 0 (M = 2.27, n = 30) and 2 (M = 2.77, n = 35), indicating that hope increased significantly between students who had never participated and youth who had participated for two years (p = .02). In addition, a trend towards a statistically significant difference was found on the measure of wellbeing (p = .06), indicating a trending increase in wellbeing for youth who participated in the program for four or more years ($\bar{x}$ = 2.92, n = 13), when compared with youth who participated for one year ($\bar{x}$ = 2.52, n = 69). Figure 3 demonstrates the changes in hope, wellbeing, and engagement amongst participants from years 0 through year four.
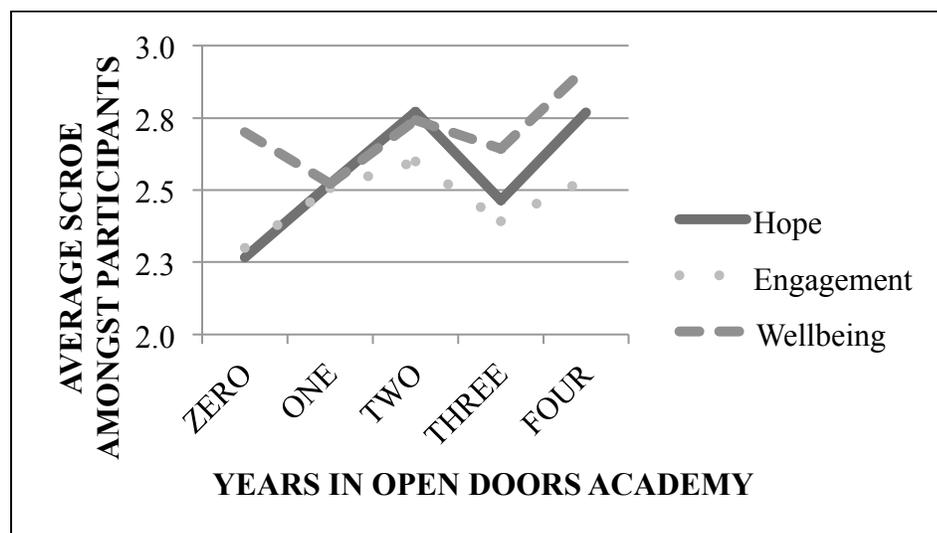
Figure 3. Youth Identified as Increasingly Hopeful, Engaged, and Thriving Amongst Youth Participating in Open Doors Academy for One to Four Years

Analysis of Achievement-related Behaviors Predictive of Academic Performance

Three standard multiple regressions were employed to determine if hope, wellbeing, and engagement statistically significant predicted academic performance, measured by GPA, amongst youth participating in Open Doors Academy. Figure 4 demonstrates that the data set is normally distributed in such a way that the multiple points form a relatively straight line.
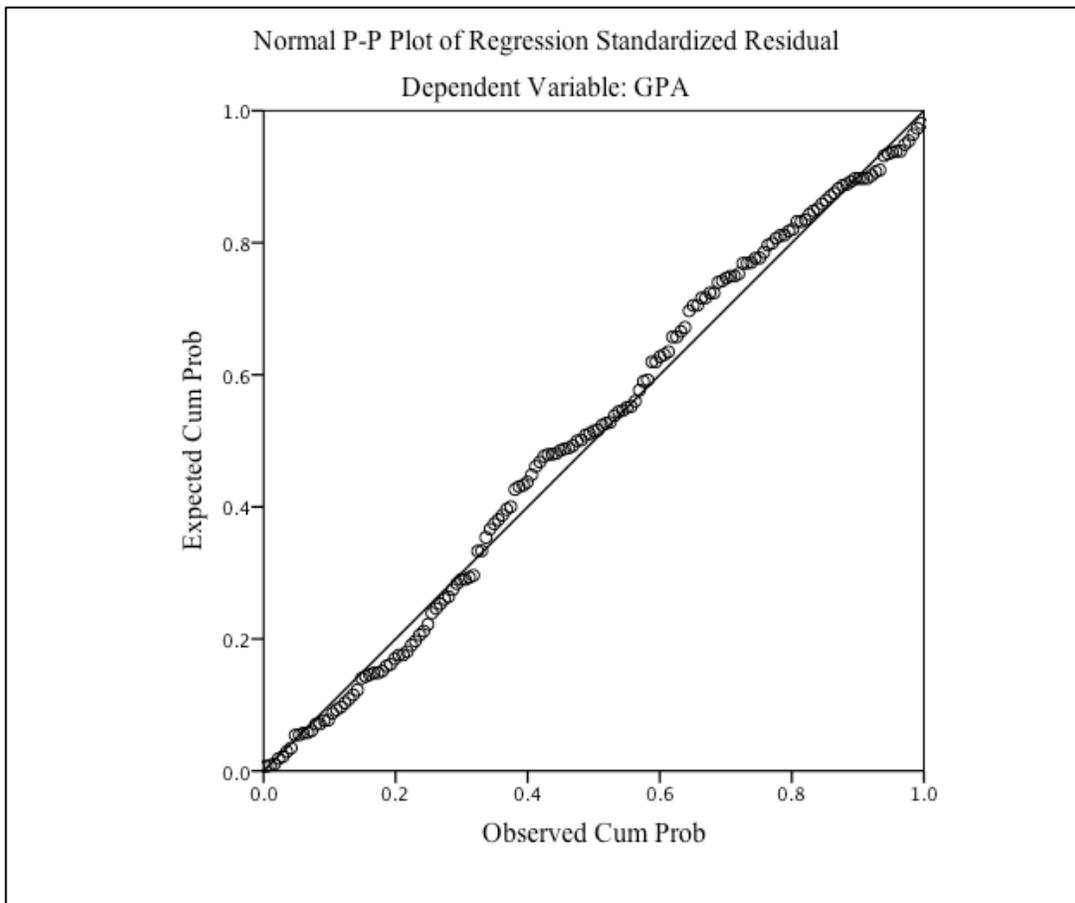
Figure 4. Normal Probability Plot of Regression Standardized Residual on hope, wellbeing, and engagement as predictors of GPA

Table 13 shows the correlations between variables, the unstandardized regression coefficients *(B),* the intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β), the semi-partial correlations, R, R^2, and the adjusted R^2. On the constructs of hope, wellbeing, and engagement as predictors of grade point average, R for regression was statistically

significantly different from zero, $F(3,151) = 4.241$, $p = .007$, with R^2 at .071 (.060 adjusted). This indicates that approximately 6% of the variability in grade point average is predicted by hope, engagement, and wellbeing.   Tolerance (tolerance = .56 hope; .56 engagement; .93 wellbeing) and variance inflation factor (VIF = 1.76 hope; 1.78 Engagement; 1.08 Wellbeing), both were demonstrated within appropriate limits of Tolerance being less than 1.0 and variance inflation factor being under 10, as laid out in table 12. Standardized Beta (β) coefficients and significant-scores indicate that hope provides the strongest unique contribution to GPA.   Analyses of the squared semi-partial coefficients (sr^2)indicate that hope has the strongest contribution to GPA.

Table 12: *Standard Multiple Regression of Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing as Predictors of GPA*

	t	p	B	β	sr^2	Tolerance	VIF
Hope	2.11	.04	.269	.222	.03	0.56	1.76
Engagement	0.06	.95	.007	.007	.00	0.56	1.78
Wellbeing	1.46	.15	.057	.120	.01	0.93	1.08

Analysis of Duration of Engagement and Academic Performance

A single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference between the duration of engagement in Open Doors Academy and academic performance as reflected in student GPA.   The single factor ANOVA compared years of participation (zero, one, two, three, and four or more) as the IV and academic performance (GPA) as the DV to determine the extent to which there were differences between no exposure to programming, one year of programming, two years of programming, three years of programming, and four or more years of

programming amongst grade point average.   Findings from the study indicate a

statistically significant   difference according to years of engagement [(F (4, 211) = 2.47,

p = .046)] in relationship to grade point average. Figure 5 demonstrates the increase in

grade point average over four years of engagement in Open Doors Academy

Programming.
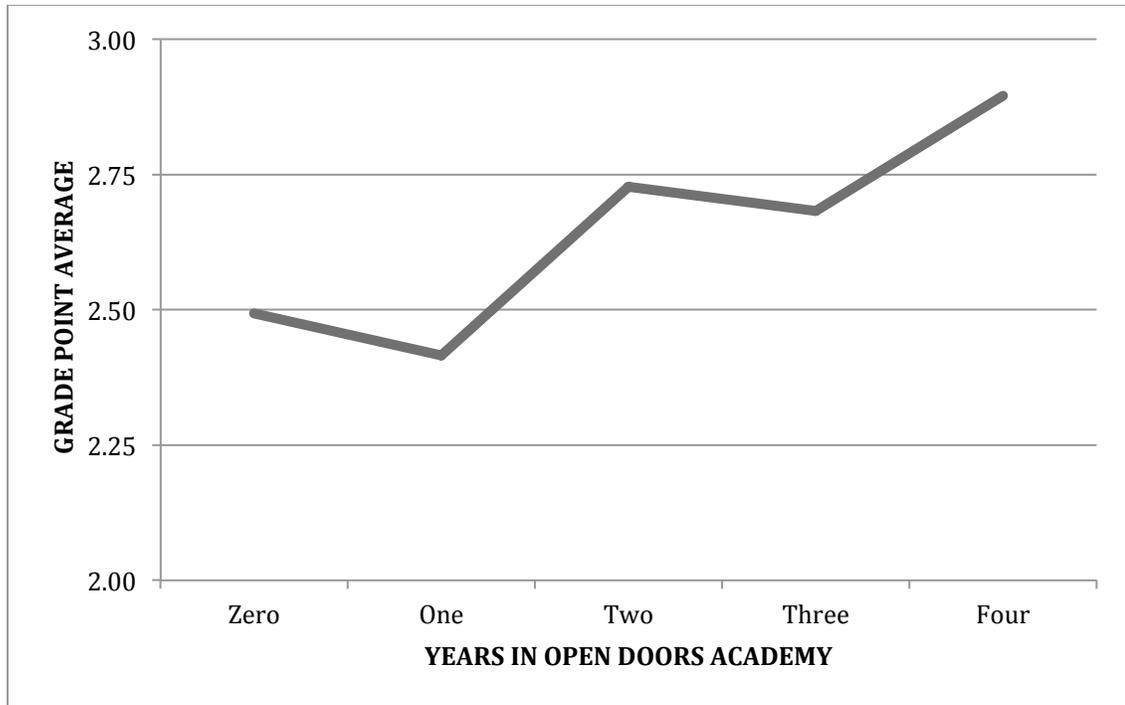
Figure 5: Relationship between GPA and Years of Programming

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for

1 year of programming (M = 2.42, SD = .79) trended towards significance when

compared to youth who have participated in four years or more of programming (M =

2.90, SD = 0.75), demonstrating that duration of programming over multiple years trends

toward increased grade point average. Means for each year can be found in table 13.

There were no significant differences between years two and three.

Table 13: *Means and Standard Deviations between GPA and Years of Programming*

	N	M	Std. Deviation
0	40	2.49	0.91
1	81	2.42	0.79
2	43	2.73	0.69
3	29	2.68	0.73
4	23	2.90	0.75
Total	216	2.58	0.79

Analysis of Youth Participation and Developmental Asset Contexts

The fourth research question (Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ in developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community when compared to youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy?) utilized a general linear multivariate model comparing ODA and Non-ODA participants as the IV and developmental asset contexts (personal, social, family, school, and community) as the DV to determine the extent to which there were differences between no exposure to programming amongst the different context areas of personal, social, family, community, and school.   The general linear multivariate model was preferred over multiple ANOVAS to control for the inflation of Type I error. Statistical significance was set at .05. A non-significant Box's M test ($p = .322$) indicates homogeneity of covariance matrices of the dependent variables across the ODA years of participation. The results of the general linear multivariate model indicated no statistically significant main effects between the two groups and the five developmental asset contexts Wilks' λ (5,210) = 1.323, $p = .256$. While no statistically significant differences were found

between the two groups, the average measure of total assets fall in the range indicative

of moderately high levels of reported assets overall, as well as context scores fall into

an overall category of good (score range of 21 to 25 out of 30) on a scale of low, fair,

good, and excellent, with family falling into the category of excellent. The mean scores

for each of the DAP Context Scales can be found in table 14.

Table 14: *Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) of Developmental Assets*

Profile Context Scales and Total Assets

	Personal	Social	Family	School	Community	Total Assets
ODA	23.33	23.46	25.26	22.84	21.91	46.83
(N=176)	(4.35)	(4.75)	(4.92)	(5.09)	(5.10)	(8.36)
NonODA	23.28	23.70	25.97	22.95	20.87	46.85
(N=40)	(4.59)	(4.78)	(4.19)	(5.76)	(5.73)	(8.89)

Summary of Chapter IV

Chapter four addresses the aims of the current study and lays out the results of

each of the four research questions. Findings from the study indicate a statistically

significant difference amongst non-Open Doors Academy participants and Open Doors

Academy participants in the context of hope, finding youth who participate in

programming are more hopeful in comparison to their peers not engaged in

programming. In addition, findings from the current study indicate that youth who

engage in programming over a number of years are identified as more hopeful and

thriving in comparison to those who participate for zero to one year. Finally, findings

from the current study indicate that youth who participate in programming for four or

more years, demonstrate higher academic performance as measured by grade point

average in comparison to youth who participate for one year. Chapter five speaks to

these findings and implications for future practices and research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between strong social support networks, through high quality afterschool program, and achievement amongst middle school and high school aged youth. This study looked closely at the impact of quality relationships in out-of-school programming in three urban school districts in the greater Cleveland Community. One of the unique factors of the current study is its' focus on the quality of and comprehensive nature of the programming model. While prior studies have looked at single factors, such as tutoring or academic support, few studies have really looked at the impact of high quality models and their relationship to both academic progress and social and emotional growth of participants. In addition, most prior studies on after-school programs have been focused on elementary school aged youth. The current study provides insight into a quality after-school model for middle school and high school youth.

Three models were used to analyze the various research questions proposed in this study. The first two research questions that look at hope, engagement, and wellbeing amongst Open Doors Academy Youth and Non-Open Doors Academy Youth utilized a

general linear multivariate model, multiple regression was used to analyze the second question, a single factor ANOVA was used for the third research question, and finally the fourth question utilized a general linear multivariate model to look at the main effects and interactions between Open Doors Students and Non-Open Doors Students and their relationship amongst the developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community. Overall, the findings from this study indicate that youth who participate in programming that supports strong parent engagement, meaningful youth – adult relationships, collaborative school-community partnerships, and a continuation of programming over multiple years, demonstrate stronger academic achievement, as well as, increased hope, wellbeing, and engagement. The findings are discussed in detail below.

Research Question 1

Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ from youth not exposed

to Open Doors Academy in relation to achievement-related behaviors

including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?

In looking at the constructs of hope, engagement and wellbeing amongst participants and non-participants, the findings from this study indicate that youth who participate in high quality afterschool programs, such as Open Doors Academy, are more hopeful and engaged in school than non-youth participants. The findings of the general linear multivariate model, indicated a trending statistical significance ($p = .056$) towards Open Doors Academy youth demonstrating increasing hope, engagement, and wellbeing amongst its participants. Amongst the sample population utilized in this study, 67% of ODA youth participants were identified as hopeful in comparison to 47% of students not engaged in ODA programming. In addition, 65% of youth participating in ODA

programming were identified as engaged, compared to 47% of youth not participating in ODA programming. These findings support the work of Open Doors Academy model, which focuses heavily on social and emotional development, most specifically character development, self-expression through the arts, health and wellness, and connecting oneself to the larger world.

Looking more closely at this model, three core areas demonstrate a clear support for the findings of this research question. Open Doors Academy's summer programming provides youth with hands-on experiential learning opportunities, including horseback riding, robotics, performing arts, culinary arts, and racquet club to name a few. Each summer camp is designed to engage youth in a learning process that promotes mastery and an overall enjoyment for learning. Each program runs for the duration of one week, and at the end of each camp, youth present a product or presentation that demonstrates their new skills and increased understanding of the project and materials covered. Summer programming promotes active engagement in learning, and teaches new skills which further adds to a youth's toolbox, motivating them to continue to move forward and continue to grow and learn.   The Open Doors Academy school year middle school enrichment program focuses on engaging youth in learning self-regulation and mindfulness.   Throughout the year, each child spends an hour each day focusing on projects that increase an understanding of him/herself, how he or she reacts to different situations, and how he/she can move oneself forward in life. Through a process of engaging in high-energy exercises, team building games, and hands on learning projects, students begin to connect the projects with personal growth and increased focus on achievement of personal goals. The enrichment program is designed to increase self-efficacy, self-regulation and motivation, and increasing engagement in the learning

process. Finally, the high school college prep program focuses on providing youth with opportunities to see beyond the walls of their neighborhoods into the larger world. Throughout the year, youth participate in state and national college tours, advocate on Capital Hill, engage in service projects in their local neighborhoods, nationally, and in their final high school year, internationally. These opportunities instill hope for the future, as well as, engage youth in life's learning process and are grounded in research like Posner and Vandell (1994), who found that afterschool programming with extensive homework and academic support, improved academic achievement amongst low income children and Springer and Diffily (September, 2012) who found that increased attendance and participation in afterschool programs lead to decreased school absences, and an increase in student grade point average. Together the core program components of Open Doors Academy help establish a strong foundation for a learning environment that focuses on the whole child, developing not only the academics, but also the social and emotional intelligence of the individual. Marrying together academic learning with social and emotional growth, youth demonstrate increased hope for their future and active engagement in their present existence.

Research Question 1a

Does duration of engagement in Open Doors Academy relate to student

performance in achievement-related behaviors including hope, wellbeing,

and engagement?

Looking more closely at the importance of duration of programming and the need for a continuum of support throughout adolescence, findings from this study indicate that youth who participate in the program are markedly more hopeful, engaged, and thriving. Utilizing a general linear multivariate model, I looked closely at youth participants who

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had been engaged for one, two, three, and four or more years. Findings from the analysis were statistically significant on the construct of hope between students who have never been exposed to the program model and youth who had participated for two years, and trended towards significance on the construct of wellbeing between youth who had participated in the program for four or more years. Overall, all youth demonstrated an increase in hope and wellbeing between the first and fourth year of programming. In a recent student feedback survey completed at the end of the school year, 83% of Open Doors Academy middle school respondents indicated that they were excited about becoming a high school alumni (label given to youth who graduate out of the middle school program and enter the high school college-prep program). Open Doors Academy continually argues that its core success is built on the foundation of strong relationships between youth and adults and these relationships continue to build increased engagement and opportunities to strengthen a youth's hopefulness towards their future. Staff are trained throughout the year on understanding relationship-building with youth and relationships are monitored by the Education Directors, who provide support and guidance to helping staff connect with youth, and further develop relationships with each youth they mentor. Students provide feedback annually around their relationships with staff through a survey, indicating whom they relate most to, their level of trust with staff, and comfort in turning to the staff regarding their problems or concerns. Feedback is used to further coach and build upon relationships between youth and staff.

Engagement remained relatively steady throughout all four years. Again, as mentioned above this is reflective of the quality programming, strong relationships, and consistency of support over a number of years. Steady engagement between years one and year four, indicate that youth remain highly engaged in programming throughout

each year, arguing further for the quality of the program and its ability to retain youth over multiple years.

Research Question 2

Are hope, wellbeing, and engagement predictive of academic

performance, (measured by GPA) amongst youth participating in Open

Doors Academy?

Findings from the study indicate that hope, engagement and wellbeing were predictive of grade point average amongst Open Doors Academy participants, with the strongest unique contributor to grade point average being hope. These findings are promising in further advocating for the importance of social and emotional development as a key to success in adulthood. As operationalized by the Gallup measure, hope correlates positively, not only with academic achievement, but also with predicting academic success in college. Hope also serves as a stronger measure of college success than either high school GPA and ACT/SAT tests (Gallup, 2012). While past research has found that engagement declines between grades five and twelve, the findings from this study indicated that engagement remained steady throughout four years of programming, (with grand mean out of five: first year: 4.15, second year: 4.22, third year: 4.04, four or more years: 4.20). Engagement in school is directly tied to academic achievement as demonstrated in this study, and consistency of student engagement over the four years further argues for the benefits of high quality after-school programming for youth through middle school and high school.

The findings of this research question also support prior research conducted by Marques, Pais-Ribero, & Lopez (2009) and Snyder, et.al. (1997) who found that middle school students identified as hopeful have better grades in core subjects and

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scores on achievement tests. This is also supported by the work of Gallup, who argue that hope is a very powerful tool in predicting achievement in youth and is most closely linked to attendance and credits earned (Gallup, 2009), and the work of Wang and Holcombe (2010) who found the school social environment in seventh grade was predictive of affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in eighth grade, and engagement in turn was significantly related to eighth grade GPA. Finally wellbeing, while not independently a unique statistically significant contributor of GPA in this study, reveals how we think about and experience our lives. In alignment with findings from previous Gallup studies (2012), 65% of Open Doors Academy participants were identified as thriving. Even more telling, amongst youth who participated for four or more years, 88% were identified as thriving, in comparison with 55% of youth who had completed only their first year in the program. While not statistically significant, the data still demonstrates a movement towards growth amongst the wellbeing of youth as they continue to engage in programming over multiple years.

Most interesting in the findings of this study are the correlations between the three variables (hope, engagement, and wellbeing) as they work together. 80% of participants who were identified as hopeful were also identified as engaged, 87% of participants who strongly agree their school is committed to building their strengths were identified as engaged, and 73% of students identified as thriving on the wellbeing scale, were also identified as engaged. The interplay of these factors further supports the findings of the research question arguing a relationship between participants who are hopeful, engaged, and increased academic performance. As defined by Gallup (2009), youth who are hopeful, have numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. They are skilled at goal-directed thinking and perceive they can navigate pathways to achieve their goals.

They are more likely to be engaged at school. Open Doors Academy plays a key role in teaching goal setting and engaging youth in the process of learning how to develop goal-directed thinking towards their future plans. Starting in the sixth grade, youth begin to learn how to establish short-term goals using SMART guidelines (specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound). They meet monthly with their mentor who helps them evaluate progress, discuss growth, and revise or add new goals. In addition to goal setting, middle school programming focuses on establishing study skills and organizational skills. Youth are required to bring all of their assignments written in a planner daily, signed off by their teacher, and are expected to work for a minimum of one hour on their homework each day. As youth move from middle school to high school, youth further expand on these goals with their individual mentor developing both short-term and long-term goals that focus on achieving both academic success and further developing social and emotional development throughout their high school career and into their post-secondary education. Overall, as hope, engagement, and wellbeing increase amongst participants, academic performance also increases. Goal setting and individual mentoring contribute to this correlation as it seeks to strengthen engagement and foster hope for ones' future.

Research Question 3

Is there a difference in academic performance (measured by GPA) with

increased exposure to Open Doors Academy?

Heavily supported by previous research, hope, engagement and wellbeing were predictive of grade point average amongst Open Doors Academy participants, with the strongest unique contributor to grade point average being hope. The findings of this study, support the research conducted by Marques, Pais-Ribero, & Lopez (2009) and

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Snyder, et.al. (1997) who found that middle school students identified as hopeful have better grades in core subjects and scores on achievement tests. This is also supported by the work of Gallup, who argue that hope is a very powerful tool in predicting achievement in youth and is most closely linked to attendance and credits earned (Gallup, 2009). The findings from this study also support the work of Wang and Holcombe (2010) who found the school social environment in seventh grade predictive of affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in eighth grade, and engagement in turn was significantly related to eighth grade GPA.

In addition, to demonstrating a relationship between participation in programming and achievement-related behaviors, this study also found a statistically significant relationship between duration of participation and academic performance amongst youth in Open Doors Academy. Participants, who engaged in programming for four or more years, demonstrated a higher grade point average than those who had participated for only one year. There was also a steady increase between years one and four (first year mean: 2.42, second year mean: 2.73, third year mean: 2.68, four or more: 2.90). These findings not only support the importance of continuation of involvement, but also the importance of consistent efforts to keep youth focused and engaged over a period of time. As mentioned earlier in the study, 80% of youth participants who complete one year with Open Doors Academy, continue through the seven years of programming. This strong retention of students is reflective in the organization's 100% graduation rate and 92% college promotion rate. The Open Doors Academy model, which heavily influences small growth in the short term, and long developmental growth over longer periods of time, demonstrate success in its high retention of students, and demonstration of growth

over time, including increased academic performance over the duration of four or more years.

Developmentally, during early adolescence, most notably puberty, youth struggle with identity and development of their possible selves, as well as, self-esteem, self-efficacy, socialization, and a myriad of other factors that affect the stability of academic performance (Feldman, 2008). Often middle school is referred to as a roller coaster, with grades rising and plummeting within each year and often within each quarter. The findings of this study further argue for consistency in an adolescent's life, as well as, the importance of addressing social and emotional development in youth as a means to stabilizing and increasing academic performance.

These findings also support the work of Darling (2005) who found that students who remained in programming for two or three years demonstrated greater academic aspirations than those who only participated one year or did not participate at all. Results also revealed a positive relationship between middle and high school students who engaged in programming for three years and multiple young adult outcomes.

Further, this study's findings are also supportive of the work of Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn (2009) who found that more intensive participation in organized activities was associated with greater educational, civic, and occupational success in young adulthood. In looking closely at the Open Doors Academy model, programming is offered both during the week (during the school day and after-school), occasionally on the weekends, and most importantly throughout the entire school year (summer programming is full day). In addition, programming does not operate on a drop in basis, but rather attendance is an expectation of the program. Youth who fail to attend a minimum of 90% each month are removed from the program. 80% of youth who

participate for one year, continue throughout the 7 year curriculum. This intensive participation further supports positive outcomes across multiple sectors and into young adulthood.

Research Question 4

> *Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ in developmental assets in the context areas of school, family, social, personal, and community when compared from youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy?*

The findings from this study were not statistically significant for assets amongst youth in the different contexts of family, social, community, personal, and school between Open Doors Academy youth participants and non-participants. The similarity in scores between to the two groups was relatively close, which may be reflective of various factors, including the timing of the study and the procedures carried out with each participant. Data was collected the last four days of school, which may have led to increased inflation in responses across the board. Also, the Developmental Assets Profile was the second survey completed by participants, which may have led to fatigue or desire to finish quickly, given that the second survey had 58 questions. Given the two factors together, students may have responded higher across the board due to the inflated feeling of school ending and a desire to move through the questions quickly.

Despite these findings Open Doors Academy youth still report a high number of assets in the different context areas. Youth participants demonstrated moderate to abundant assets under the different context of personal (80%), social (77%), family (86%), school (76%), and community (67%). Moderate assets were defined by the developmental asset profile as most assets being experienced often, but there is still room for improvement and abundant assets were defined as most assets are experienced

strongly and/or frequently. These findings provide further evidence of the impact of quality programming, experiences and strong systems of support that help navigate the pathway for youth, even though there were no significant differences between the two populations.

In addition, ODA youth participants reported a high level of assets in the areas of support. 81% of ODA participant respondents indicated moderate (30%) to abundant (51%) assets in the area of support on the Developmental Assets Profile.   In addition, on the DAP item, "I have support from adults other than my parents", 91% of ODA participants indicated very or often, or extremely or almost always. This point of data demonstrates one of the key distinctive features of the Open Doors Academy Model, which focuses on key relationships between youth and adults.   Caring adult relationships and creating a "family" culture serve as a foundation of the Open Doors Academy model.

These findings also align with past research from Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004), who found a statistically significant association between the quality of the relationship between the student and teacher and improved school engagement. While this after-school model does not directly hire teachers, the time staff spend in the classroom during the school day, and supporting youth during the school day, likely correlates to a positive relationship between those mentors and school, further enhancing school engagement.

Applications for Future Practice

Currently at the state and federal level, the Department of Education is weighing in on the impact of afterschool programming as a needed resource in our schools, as well as engaging in discussions surrounding the proper framework for quality after-school programming. As the battle continues to determine best practices, questions continue to

arise around the cost of quality programming, the number of youth that can be properly served in a program, the proper balance of academics and social development, and the core competencies of those who run afterschool programming. Over the past ten years, afterschool programming has evolved from a safe place for youth to an integral part of a child's learning environment. As the cost of keeping our schools open continues to rise and graduation rates continue to decline, there is a need to find alternative resources and partnerships to support the efforts on the education forefront. On the community nonprofit end, as we move away from large numbers of youth served by few adults, recreation and arts and crafts, and low fee models, it is critical that attention be paid to those practices which best serve the long term outcomes that drive us towards independence and success. What has become most evident is that while there is a continued need for a safe place for youth to be after-school, there is an even greater need for this time to be meaningful, engaging, and impactful. As we continue to struggle to determine the right pathway for preparing our youth for the future, the findings from this study further support the argument for high quality after-school education that supports the current school structure and provides increased opportunities for success amongst its participants.

Structuring school and after-school experiences in a way that foster community and build key relationships may be helpful in achieving school completion (Marcus & Sanders, 2001). Today's current educational system is limited in its capacity to reach beyond the scope of academic assessment. As a country we have failed to evolve our educational system in alignment with the societal changes in both the workforce and in the general society as a whole. We continue to educate our youth in a factory-style setting, focused on the teacher being the source of all knowledge and the youth being

expected to learning in sync with those who surround them. Further beyond this, we have failed to maintain the most critical elements of the classroom, including character development, socialization, and civility. These characteristics that are interconnected in almost any work environment have been pushed out, in order to further allow time for drilling of math facts, vocabulary, and preparation for standardized testing.

Open Doors Academy has begun to reshape the way we look at education in a way that brings back the social and emotional development component, while providing increased support to the school, and provides a network of support for each youth and their family. Unlike the charter school model, the Open Doors Academy model argues for partnerships between community and school and increased spending directly on the student, rather than bricks and mortar. While the current model of education is limited in its scope, it still offers functionality that when properly supported by programs like the Open Doors Academy Model, can help us prepare and educate our youth for the 21st Century.

Neglecting the social and emotional development of a child can have vast and frightening consequences. Increasing school violence is often met by the response of increasing school security, rather than investing in teaching socialization and civility. Compounding negative behaviors and "acting out" is met by increased discipline, rather than teaching self-regulation and self-awareness. These increasing negative consequences continue to hit close to home, as schools now invest significant dollars into installing metal detectors, hire school security, and train staff to respond to youth with guns. Like a stressed marriage with limited resources, the schools are struggling to survive and are cycling in a manner that continues to compound the issues around both mastery of knowledge and social and emotional intelligence, and continue to build a large

pile of negative consequences, many of which are life altering. There is a need for increased support of our public schools, an opportunity for local community partners to create a system of support that increases resources, and helps establish a village for each child to thrive.   This support can be found through community partnerships that can complement and support the work of the schools, including the Open Doors Academy model, in an effort to begin to shift the culture of the school, and begin to reshape unhealthy behaviors into healthier ones.

Building multi-year programs.

Over the last ten years, increased attention has been given to creating networks of support around youth that focus on creating a continuum of support from pre-school through college; however, most of these systems continue to remain fragmented with too many holes in which youth often fall through. There is a grave need for us to develop more concentrated, intentional, and comprehensive programs, most specifically in after-school education that support youth from kindergarten through high school. If one organization cannot create that linkage, then it is important that they create a strong partnership with a like-minded organization to create a bridge for the child from start to finish. Open Doors Academy has begun this process with other like-minded organizations, linking programming for youth in K-5, with ODA, serving 6 through 12th grade. In alignment with the youth resiliency model, youth crave and seek out consistency and boundaries, meaningful opportunities for engagement, and caring adult relationships throughout their childhood and adolescence (Henderson, Bernard, & Sharp-Light, 2007). Continuous breaks in the system can fragment these experiences for youth and lead to increased high-risk behaviors.   There is a need for strong programming that builds a level of commitment and engagement from its participants over time.

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The findings of this study support the need for high quality programming that ensures a self-commitment for continuation through the process over multiple years. Open Doors Academy models this in its seven-year curriculum, which engages youth in a system of support and development from the sixth grade through high school and beyond. During middle school youth participate in daily programming, Monday through Friday, throughout the entire school year and summer. Upon starting high school, youth meet three times a week, engaging in independent decision making to reach their goals, i.e. completing required 75 volunteer hours, or participating in bi-weekly tutoring. What remains consistent throughout the seven years is each youth has both an individual mentor and a larger network of four to six additional mentors throughout middle school and high school. Demonstrating a high student retention rate, 80% of youth remain in the program for the full seven years. Open Doors Academy attributes this high retention to the strength of the relationships between adults and youth, and between peers, as well as, to the quality of programming offered. In a recent student survey completed by students at Open Doors Academy, 84% of respondents indicated that they viewed Open Doors Academy staff as their mentors and role models. As the conversation continues around funding after-school education, it is recommended that funding priority be given to schools and community-based organizations that can demonstrate continued success with youth overtime, along with retention of youth over multiple years. In addition, funding priority should be given for program models that focus on creating smaller sustainable systems that allow for continued oversight and development of quality programming, evaluation, and the ability to make adjustments that best serve the youth over time.

Building strong school-community partnerships.

As discussed earlier in the study, strong partnerships can closely align the work of the school day to the interactive nature of after-school, providing a rich environment for learning. Successful afterschool programs recognize the importance of strong community connections and actively pursue them. The benefits of these collaborations include: greater relevance of curriculum for students; increased student responsibility for learning; improved connections between school and community; stronger problem-solving skills, teambuilding, higher order thinking, time management, and other critical skills that benefit students' school achievement; expanded learning environments; greater motivation of reluctant learners; enhanced problem solving and conflict management skills; and reduced behavior problems (Decker, 2000). The findings from this study support these benefits, indicating that youth participants who demonstrate goal-directed thinking and future planning (as measured by hope), are highly involved in school, and contribute to the learning process (as measured by engagement). While it is clear that having a strong school-community partnership is critical to supporting the achievement of our youth, successful collaborations are difficult, take a great deal of time and energy, and involve collaboration and compromise on both sides. Too often this marriage ends before it has even begun. There is a critical need for funders, community stakeholders, and government to begin looking more closely at best practices for developing meaningful partnerships between community and school and further focus on investing in initiatives that support best practices in creating meaningful engagement and support on both the part of the school and the community partner.

Study Delimitations

The findings of this study are generalized to low-income, African-American adolescent populations in urban and inner-ring city communities.

Study Limitations

While a great deal of time has gone into ensuring that this is a comprehensive study, there are a few limitations to the findings of this study. While this study seeks to cover a diverse population of participants, it is a one-sided self-report study, only seeking the perspectives of the youth participants. Feedback from program staff, parents, and teachers is not included in this study. Finally, both survey tools are self-report measures. Extensive research was conducted to select the best measures for the current research study. While both measures are self-report, other tools have been brought into the study to assess overall performance, including student grade point average, and attendance at Open Doors Academy. This method was chosen due to time and cost limitations.

Second, this study is utilizing a sample of convenience, from a single population, of students who are participants in the Open Doors Academy Program across seven schools. Additional afterschool programs were not included as a part of this study. This was due in part to the relationship of the researcher to Open Doors Academy. As the lead researcher, I currently serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Open Doors Academy. While I maintain a close relationship to the organization, my interactions with the students and daily programming are limited, allowing for a separation between the researcher and the subjects. Additional measures were taken to remove bias, including engaging data collectors to conduct the data collection process. In addition to the observed group being a sample of convenience, the comparison group was also a sample of convenience. Due to timing limitations between the administered time frame of the

Gallup Student Poll, the end of the school year, and response from the Institutional Review Board, time limitations led to utilizing a sample of convenience amongst participants from three different schools. Students in all average math classes, across the three schools, were invited to participate. Students had up to 4 days to return the parental consent form. 41 consent forms were returned and 40 students were selected for the control group. One student was removed, due to missing data. The limitations of this group may include a bias in the student participation. Students who are more engaged and/or parents who are more engaged, may have been more likely to turn in their parental consent form in the short time frame. In addition, the timing of the survey administration, may lend itself a limitation to the study. Data collection was administered the last week of school. This may lead to inflated responses (among non-open doors students), given participants' feelings (positive or negative) about the end of the school year.

In spite of these limitations, I have confidence in the strength of this study, because of the strength and validity of the measures utilized with a strong track record, the use of two different measures grounded in research, as well as seeking raw academic scores to support the findings of the surveys. In addition, this study demonstrates a diverse population across seven schools in three different communities, and across a wide span of ages and grades.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on the limitations of the current study, it is recommended that a follow up study be considered utilizing a larger and more diversified random sample for the comparison group. Due to limitations in both timing and accessibility to participants, this study utilized a relatively small sample size. Typically, the Gallup is used to survey full

schools and districts, engaging sample sizes ranging from 400 to 400,000, thus, the statistical significance of the current findings were small. Therefore, future studies that might incorporate a larger sample size would benefit from better demonstrating the strength of the relationships between the variables.

In addition, the current study utilized a sample of convenience for both the exposure and comparison group. This again was attributed to the limited timing available to utilize the measures before the end of the school year and accessibility to students. Future studies may consider utilizing a random sample for the control group, and a stratified random sample for the exposure group. The current study also was also limited to quantitative data. A more robust story may be told by utilizing a mixed methods approach in the data collection in order to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of programming. Additional measures may incorporate parent surveys/interviews, teacher surveys, and student focus groups.

Finally, future research may consider a longitudinal individual growth study that follows a few students over multiple years, measuring their growth trajectory across multiple dimensions, including academic, social, and emotional growth.

Summary of Chapter V

In summary, the current study sought to look more closely at the relationship between high quality after-school program models and achievement-related behaviors and academic achievement. Overall, the findings from this study support previous research indicating that programs that support quality youth - adult relationships, a strong connection between the school and community, parent engagement, and intentional developmentally appropriate programming over multiple years, can have a significant impact on a child's social and emotional development, as well as academic performance.

Parent engagement creates a connection between home, school, and community. Caring adult relationships help support and strengthen the self-esteem and self-efficacy of an individual, and strong community-school partnerships can be a support to not only the child, but also to the school and its staff. Open Doors Academy demonstrates clear success in building a caring and supportive network of adults that remain engaged in a youth's life from the transition into middle school through young adulthood. This network of committed and caring adults has led to increased hope, engagement and wellbeing amongst its participants. The Open Doors Academy model serves as a strong example of quality afterschool education, the opportunity to bridge community based nonprofit organizations with schools, and the need to continue to fund programs that focus on deeper learning, long term impact, and demonstrate success on multiple levels.

Creating communities of learners that engage youth in a world that supports and stimulates a culture of engaged experiential learning and promotes a learning environment complementary to today's workforce, is critical in a system that has faltered on many different levels and continues to fail our youth. It is our responsibility as educators to set our youth up for success. Continued failure to do so on our part results in continued system breakdown.

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APPENDICES

40 Developmental Assets[TM]

Search Institute[SM] has identified the following building blocks of healthy
development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Support (External)
1. Family Support- Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. Positive Family Communication- Young person and her or his parent(s)
   communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel
   from parents.
3. Other Adult Relationships- Young person receives support from three or more
   nonparent adults.
4. Caring Neighborhood-Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring School Climate- School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent Involvement in Schooling- Parent(s) are actively involved in helping
   young person succeed in school.

Empowerment (External)
1. Community Values Youth-Young person perceives that adults in the community
   value youth.
2. Youth as Resources-Young people are given useful roles in the community.
3. Service to Others-Young person serves in the community one hour or more per
   week.
4. Safety-Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations (External)
1. Family Boundaries-Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the
   young person's whereabouts.
2. School Boundaries-School provides clear rules and consequences.
3. Neighborhood Boundaries-Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young
   people's behavior.
4. Adult Role Models-Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible
   behavior.
5. Positive Peer Influence-Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
6. High Expectations-Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do
   well.

Constructive Use of Time (External)
1. Creative Activities-Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons
   or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
2. Youth Programs-Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports,
   clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
3. Religious Community-Young person spends one or more hours per week in
   activities in a religious institution.

4. Time at Home-Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Commitment to Learning (Internal)
1. Achievement Motivation-Young person is motivated to do well in school.
2. School Engagement-Young person is actively engaged in learning.
3. Homework-Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
4. Bonding to School-Young person cares about her or his school.
5. Reading for Pleasure-Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values (Internal)
1. Caring-Young person places high value on helping other people.
2. Equality and Social Justice-Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
3. Integrity-Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
4. Honesty-Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
5. Responsibility-Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
6. Restraint-Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies (Internal)
1. Planning and Decision Making-Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
2. Interpersonal Competence-Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
3. Cultural Competence-Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
4. Resistance Skills-Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
5. Peaceful Conflict Resolution-Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Personal Identity (Internal)
1. Personal Power-Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
2. Self-Esteem-Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
3. Sense of Purpose-Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
4. Positive View of Personal Future-Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Appendix B

Gallup Student Poll

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

1. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (wellbeing)
   a. On which step to do you think you will stand about five years from now? (Wellbeing)
2. I know I will graduate from high school (Hope)
3. There is an adult in my life who cares about my future. (Hope)
4. I can think of many ways to get good grades. (Hope)
5. I energetically pursue my goals. (Hope)
6. I can find lots of ways around any problem. (Hope)
7. I know I will find a good job after I graduate. (Hope)
8. I have a best friend at school. (Engagement)
9. I feel safe in this school. (Engagement)
10. My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important. (Engagement)
11. At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day. (Engagement)
12. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork. (Engagement)
13. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student. (Engagement)
14. In the last month, I volunteered my time to help others. (Engagement)
15. Were you treated with respect all day yesterday? (Wellbeing)
16. Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday? (Wellbeing)
17. Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday? (Wellbeing)
18. Did you have enough energy to get things done yesterday? (Wellbeing)
19. Do you have health problems that keep you from doing things other people your age can do? (Wellbeing)
20. If you are in trouble, do you have family or friends you can count on whenever you need them? (Wellbeing)

Appendix C

Developmental Assets Profile Items Aligned to the Five Context Areas

Personal
  a. I stand up for what I believe in
  b. I feel in control of my life and future
  c. I feel good about myself
  d. I avoid things that are dangerous or unhealthy
  e. I enjoy reading or being read to
  f. I stay away from tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs
  g. I feel good about my future.
  h. I deal with frustration in positive ways
  i. I plan ahead and make good choices
  j. I take responsibility for what I do
  k. I tell the truth even when it is not easy
  l. I am developing a sense of purpose in my life
  m. I am developing good health habits

Social
  a. I build friendships with other people
  b. I express my feelings in proper ways
  c. I overcome challenges in positive ways
  d. I think it is important to help other people
  e. I resist bad influences
  f. I resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt
  g. I feel valued and appreciated by others
  h. I am encouraged to try things that my be good for me
  i. I am encouraged to help others
  j. I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others
  k. I have friends who set good examples for me
  l. I have adults who are good role models for me
  m. I have support from adults other than my parents

Family
  a. I seek advice from my parents
  b. I feel safe and secure at home
  c. I am included in family tasks and decisions
  d. I am spending quality time at home with my parent(s)
  e. I have parent(s) who try to help me succeed
  f. I have a family that provides me with clear rules
  g. I have parent(s) who urge me to do well in school
  h. I have a family that gives me love and support
  i. I have parent(s) who are good at talking with me about things
  j. I have a family that knows where I am and what I am doing

School
a. I care about school
b. I do my homework
c. I enjoy learning
d. I feel safe at school
e. I am actively engaged in learning new things
f. I am eager to do well in school and other activities
g. I have a school that gives students clear rules
h. I have a school that cares about kids and encourages them
i. I have teachers who urge me to develop and achieve
j. I have a school that enforces rules fairly

Community
a. I accept people who are different from me
b. I am helping to make my community a better place
c. I am involved in a religious group or activity
d. I am involved in a sport, club, or other group
e. I am trying to help solve social problems
f. I am given useful roles and responsibilities
g. I am developing respect for other people.
h. I am involved in creative things such as music, theater, or art
i. I am serving others in my community
j. I have a safe neighborhood
k. I have good neighbors who care about me
l. I have neighbors who help watch out for me.

Study of High Impact Afterschool Programs

Parental Consent Statement

I am writing to you to share with you an opportunity for your child to participate in a research study. I, Annemarie Grassi, will be serving as the primary investigator, and I am currently completing my PhD in Urban Education at Cleveland State University. I will be working closely with Dr. Brian Harper, Ph.D., who will serve as my research advisor throughout this process.

As part of my program, I am required to complete a research dissertation. I have chosen to look more closely at the impact of Open Doors Academy on our youth, specifically looking at how our youth's relationships impact their achievement in school. I am specifically looking at their hope for the future, their engagement in school and the community, and their overall wellbeing. The study includes two short student surveys: the Developmental Assets Profile Survey and the Gallup Student Poll. I will also look at students' grades to determine growth over time. All student identities will be protected and all information collected will remain confidential. The findings of this study will be distributed in a final report to all families that participate.

For questions about the study, please contact Annemarie Grassi, Executive Director of Open Doors Academy. You may reach her at (216) 229-1900, ext. 106, or by email at: agrassi@opendoorsacademy.org. You may also contact the Advisor, Dr. Brian Harper at (216) 875-9770 or at b.harper1@csuohio.edu.

Your child has been invited to take part in a research project as described below. This consent form explains the research study. Please read it carefully. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you do not have questions now, you may ask them if they occur to you later.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a subject in a research project, you should contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to understand the relationship between quality social networks, through high quality afterschool program, and academic achievement amongst middle school and high school aged youth.

PROCEDURES: If your child participates in this study, he/she will complete two short surveys (one online and one on paper) that should take approximately 20 minutes. In addition, your child's quarterly report card will be analyzed for academic performance. No identifying information will be recorded and all responses are confidential.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those experienced during the course of everyday life. Possible risks, while highly

unlikely, might include psychological discomfort from answering questions related to connections with how one views themselves in different context, including family, social, personal, school, and community. While the risk is minimal, should any psychological dissonance be experienced, students will be immediately directed to the school counselor. There are not real direct benefits to participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This will be a confidential study. All identifying information will remain confidential.   Upon completing the student assent form, students will receive an ID number to enter into the system for both surveys. The survey site uses SSL encryption to protect the privacy of any information submitted for the survey. Upon receipt of your students' grades, information will be entered into an excel sheet with their corresponding student ID and will later be paired with the results of their surveys. All data collected will remain locked in a secure file for a period of 3 years, after which it will be properly destroyed.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary. Both your and his/her permission are required for him/her to participate. If you or (s)he chooses not to participate there will be no negative consequences involved. In addition, (s)he can refuse to answer questions and can discontinue the survey at any time.

SUBJECT STATEMENT: I have read the explanation provided to me. I understand that if I have any questions about my child's rights as a research subject I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

___ I Agree/ Allow my child to participate
___ I Do Not Agree/ Do not want my child to participate

Parent/Guardian Signature:
_____

Parent/Guardian Name Printed: _____

Date: _____

Study of High Impact Afterschool Programs
Participant Assent Statement

My name is Ms. Annemarie and I am working on completing my PhD in Education at Cleveland State University. One of the requirements for my program is writing a paper, called a dissertation, on a topic that I am interested in studying. Part of the project involves me collecting information from youth like you. Therefore, I want to invite you to participate in a research study. If you are under 18, assent from you and consent from a parent/guardian will be required for your participation.

With this research study we would like to learn more about your interests in school, your grades, hopes for the future, and your relationships with adults and your friends.

If you want to be in this study, I will ask you to take two short surveys; one survey online and the other one on paper. Each survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will not be asked to give your name in these surveys, and your answers will remain confidential. In addition, the survey site uses SSL encryption, which will keep your answers private when you submit them online. We will also be collecting your 4th quarter grades. We will input these into the system with your ID number and later correlate it to your survey responses.

Answering the questions should not be uncomfortable for you. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering any questions you can always choose not to answer or you can stop taking the survey. Risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those experienced during the course of everyday life. There are also no personal benefits to participating in this study.

This study will be confidential - your name will not be recorded at all. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, and you can change your mind at any time. You can contact me at (216) 229-1900, ext. 106 or you can email me at agrassi@opendoorsacademy.org if you have any questions. You may also contact the Advisor, Dr. Brian Harper at (216) 875-9770 or at b.harper1@csuohio.edu.

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

If you want to be in the study, please click "I Agree" below.
__I Agree/ Want to complete the survey and participate in the study
__ I Disagree/ Do not want to complete the survey and/or do not want to participate in the study

Participant Signature: _____

Participant Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____