



National Center for **Research** on
Rural Education (R²Ed)

Using Research to Drive Policy and Practice in Rural Out-of-School Time Programs

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What is R²Ed About?

- ***Children*** growing up in rural America, going to rural schools, and developing skills and competencies in the basic areas of reading, science and math
- ***Rural schools, teachers, and families***, and the kinds of supports that they need to help advance the learning of rural students
- ***Increased availability of and access*** to cutting-edge, research-based educational/ instructional strategies



Why Study OST in Rural Schools?

- Generally speaking, rural schools in America are:
 - susceptible to isolation, staff turnover, limited availability to specialized resources, and diminished access to ongoing support and professional development
 - located in geographic settings with considerable distances between them.
- Disconnects between schools, & between schools and other community partners, often separate individuals from important resources, & from each other.
- Students in rural schools don't always experience the same opportunities to access innovations and experiences that are available in urban and suburban schools.

Immediate Goals of R²Ed

- **To improve** students' academic achievement and skills by identifying research-based methods to help teachers systematically deliver evidence-based instruction in rural settings
- **To identify, develop and validate** strategies for improving the quality of education in rural settings, including challenges faced by rural schools in providing professional development and advanced training and opportunities
- **To provide** leadership to the field of rural education researchers to inform policy

R²Ed Studies: *What Works?*

- Studies conducted through R²Ed use systematic, rigorous research designs; carefully defined samples in rural settings; objective and reliable measures; specification of intervention/program components; and quantitative, experimental methods to answer questions about “what works” in rural settings.
- Planned studies focus on identifying
 - “best (evidence-based) practices” for supporting rural teachers in innovative educational approaches
 - effective family-school partnership practices to address behaviors that interfere with learning

First Steps: *Comprehensive Literature Reviews*



- Rural Teacher Professional Development
- Family-School Partnerships in Rural Settings
- Out-of-School Time/ After-School Programs in Rural Settings

Review of Literature on Rural OST (Sheridan, Semke & Witte)

Purposes:

- Summarize what is known and unknown about “what works” in rural OST programs based on available research literature
- Explore together what can be concluded, and what information is still necessary to inform practice and policy



Identification of Studies

- Search of research databases conducted (e.g., Academic Search Premier; PsychInfo) with the following *keywords*:
 - Rural, After school, Out of school, Extracurricular, Summer school
- Table of contents of select journals reviewed (1990 to present)
- Comprehensive reviews and reports of OST programs summarized
- Reviews of reference lists of primary sources

24 papers were found that described OST programs specific to rural settings.

**** Of these, *12 met the criteria of “study”* that purported to report meaningful outcomes for students, teachers, families, or communities.**

What Did We Look For?

Program Features

- Length of program
- Structural components/ Active ingredients
- Staffing

Study Features

- Location/Definition of “rural”
- Questions addressing uniqueness of OST in rural settings
- Participant (student) information
- Experimental design (experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, descriptive)
- Outcomes/Findings



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Results of Research Review

Where and How are Rural OST Programs Delivered??

Setting Characteristics

- No studies defined “rural” for their study
- No studies tested issues specific to OST in rural schools



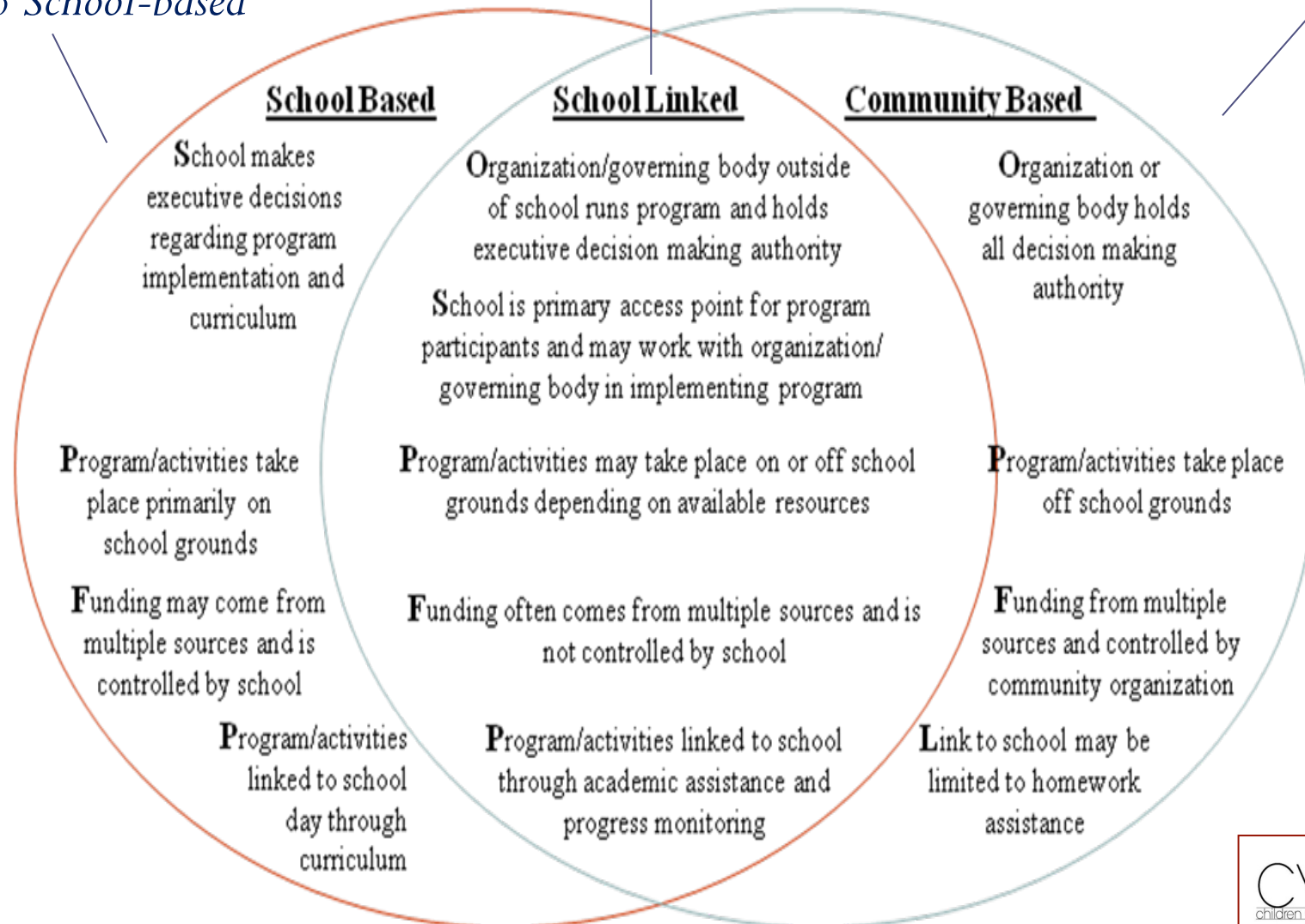
Program Context

- Community-based
- School-linked programs
- School-based programs

33% School-linked

*42% Community
based*

25% School-based



What is Included in Rural OST Programs??

Active Ingredients / Components

- 75% instructional components
- 66% health awareness
- 58% community partnership
- 58% mentoring/tutoring
- 33% parent involvement

What about Other Program Features??



Length

- Length varies tremendously (6 wks – 2 years)
- Some “drop in” programs with no start/end; others have clearly defined length
- No systematic way of investigating how length affects outcomes

Staffing

- Only 25% reported on staff
- 67% used trained staff; 22% trained & untrained staff
- Vast differences in education and credentialing of staff; paid and voluntary roles

Who Participates??

- Samples range from fewer than 20 to more than 200

8% Kindergarten age

33% Elementary age

8% Mix K/Elementary

17% Middle School

17% Mix Middle/High

92% “At risk” sample

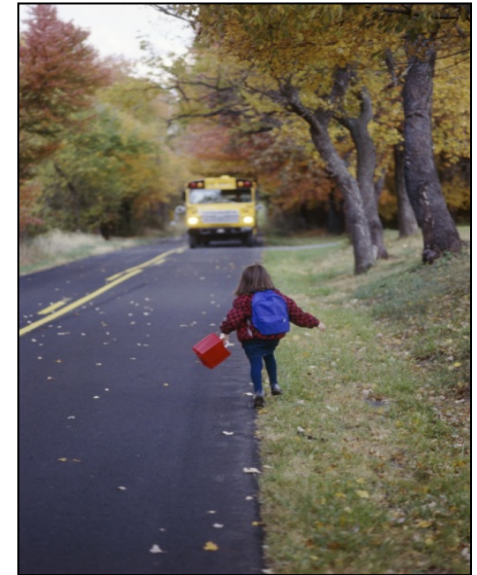
- 42% Low income
- 50% Ethnically diverse
- 42% Behavior problems
- 25% Academic problems

What is the Purpose?

- 92% studies focus on child outcomes
 - ✓ 75% academic
 - ✓ 67% social-emotional
 - ✓ 25% job training
 - ✓ 17% behavior
 - ✓ 17% cultural
 - ✓ 17% health
 - ✓ 8% spirituality
- 17% studies focus on family outcomes
- 8% studies focus on relationships

Effects of Rural OST: How Will We Know??

- 67% peer reviewed
- One study met criteria as “experimental design”
- 58% pre-post design
- 17% quasi-experimental
- 17% correlational
- 17% qualitative
- 17% descriptive



Given so few designs testing effects of OST programs meeting criteria for rigorous experimental design, little can be concluded about “what works”

What Did We Find??

- 100% studies report child findings
 - ✓ 75% academic
 - ✓ 67% social-emotional
 - ✓ 33% behavior
 - ✓ 8% cultural
 - ✓ 8% health
 - ✓ 8% job training
- 33% report staff findings
- 25% report relationship findings (school, family, community)
- 17% report family findings




What's Difficult?

- Some studies reported barriers to implementation of OST programs in rural settings
 - ✓ Lack of consistent availability of staff members
 - ✓ Mentors have challenges with boundaries and cultural differences
 - ✓ Resource constraints

What Now?

What do these findings suggest to you?

What are some topics most important for
your work in supporting rural OST
programs?



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