



## Talking Points

*For use by school leaders in presentations  
about important issues related to public education*

### At the End of the Day

by Shari Prest, Ark Associates

**Key Message:** Children are our greatest resource. Parents, communities and schools are responsible for working together to ensure that all children realize their full potential, have the opportunity for fulfilling lives, and become contributing members of society. This awesome responsibility extends beyond the traditional school day.

**At the end of the day...** Every day, at least eight million kids are left alone and unsupervised once the school bell rings.<sup>1</sup> “That time can represent either an opportunity to learn and grow through quality after-school programs, or a time of risk to youth’s health and safety.”<sup>2</sup> Parents, especially low-income and minority, worry about how their children use time when they are on their own.<sup>3</sup> In fact, kids who don’t participate in after-school programs that are safe and structured are “at greater risk of being victims of crime, or participating in anti-social behaviors.”<sup>2</sup> They are 49% more likely to use drugs and 37% more likely to become teen parents than are those students who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.<sup>2</sup>

After-school activities play an important role in the development of today’s youth. A 2004 Public Agenda survey indicated that 79% of America’s middle and high school students regularly participate in activities after school and on weekends, and 57% had some kind of nonschool activity nearly every day. Unfortunately, low-income and minority parents have much more difficulty finding high-quality, convenient and affordable programs for their children.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Need for After-School Programs

- ◆ More than 28 million school-age children have parents who work outside the home.
- ◆ As many as 15 million “latch-key children” return to an empty home after school.
- ◆ Almost 100% of people polled in a recent survey agreed that it is important for children to have an after-school program that helps them develop academic and social skills in a safe and caring environment.
- ◆ One study found that twice as many elementary and middle school parents wanted after-school programs than were currently available.

## Helping Children to Succeed

- ◆ After-school programs keep children of all ages safe and out of trouble.
- ◆ The after-school hours are the time when juvenile crime hits its peak.
- ◆ After-school programs can help to improve the academic performance of participating children. For many children, their reading and math scores have improved.
- ◆ After-school programs contribute to raising children's self-confidence and academic performance.
- ◆ Teachers and parents report that children who participate in after-school programs develop better social skills and learn to handle conflicts in more socially acceptable ways.
- ◆ Families able to enroll their children in good programs indicate that their children are safer and more successful in school.
- ◆ After-school programs provide a structured, safe, supervised place to be after school for learning, fun, and friendship with adults and peers alike.

Support our kids and our future by supporting comprehensive educational programs from early childhood through after-school activities.

Materials included bulleted portions above taken from:

1. U.S. Department of Education, September 2000
2. *After School Programs Fact Sheet*, National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, [safeyouth.org](http://safeyouth.org)
3. *Out-Of-School Activities Play Crucial, Positive Role*, Public Agenda, 2004
4. *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*, U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice.