



Examining Alignment Afterschool and the Impact on Academic Achievement

A recent research study conducted through the THINK Together / UCI Doctoral Fellowship assessed the impact of school-day and afterschool program alignment on student achievement (from 2010-2011). Alignment practices were measured through multiple survey scales and were reported by both principals and afterschool staff. Findings indicate that sites that were designated as highly aligned on the scale of Academic Resources had a statistically significant **positive** effect on English Language Arts scaled scores on the California Standards Test (CST). Sites that were highly aligned on all *three* of the following scales had a statistically significant **positive** effect on Math scaled scores on the CST. Correspondingly, sites that were misaligned on all three scales had a statistically significant **negative** effect on CST scaled scores for Math. The following provides the items used for each of the survey scales, and the conceptual framework of alignment.

Academic Resources

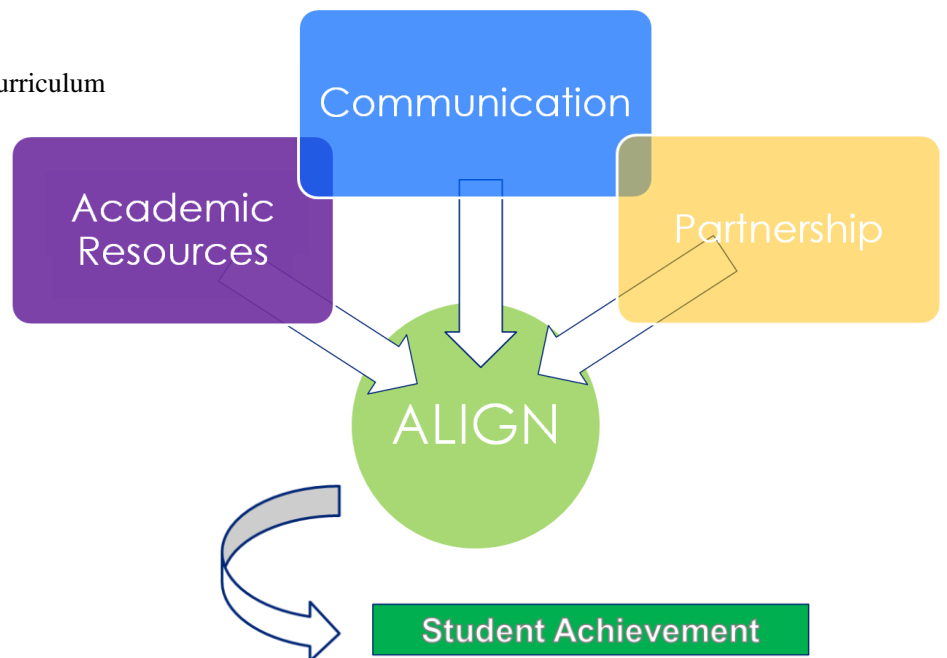
Site based curriculum materials for ELA
Site based curriculum materials for MATH
Computer labs for use of technology-based curriculum
Curriculum pacing guides
District benchmark scores

Communication

Curriculum concepts being taught in school
Homework assignments
The needs or progress of individual students
Issues related to classroom/shared space
Planning program content
Enrollment / Registration levels and policies
Student discipline issues / policies
Staffing of program

Partnership

There is a strong partnership between the afterschool program and the school
The Site Coordinator keeps administration informed of important decisions and issues related to program policy
Teachers are willing to collaborate with the afterschool program staff
Afterschool program staff are responsive to ideas and suggestions from school staff
Afterschool staff reach out to teachers to identify the needs of students
Afterschool staff transmit important information about children and parents to appropriate school staff in a timely fashion
Curriculum and instruction in the afterschool program reinforce concepts taught during the school day
The program is well coordinated with other afterschool activities at the school





Discussion and Implications

Alignment between school and afterschool programs is conceptualized as collaborative practices between school administrators and afterschool program staff in attempt to promote the academic achievement of students. Under this conceptualization, there are varying degrees of alignment practices that can occur between the two entities. Although there are many prior recommendations of alignment practices that are believed to contribute to academic learning afterschool, very little research had been done to assess the impact of such efforts. The development of a measurable conceptual framework of alignment that incorporates academic resources, communication, and partnership is an important first step in assessing the potential impact of afterschool programs on student achievement; especially at schools in which the efforts are intentional.

The studies conducted through this fellowship are among the first to examine the relationship of alignment efforts and academic achievement. As can be seen, schools that are highly aligned can have a positive impact on student achievement. Furthermore, those sites that are highly misaligned can actually negatively impact student achievement. So while it seems logical (in theory and practice) that schools that align effectively with their afterschool programs have the potential to boost student achievement, it is not as obvious to assume that a school that is misaligned with their afterschool program can actually negatively impact student achievement. As the field builds knowledge around the impact of alignment efforts, it can have substantial policy implications. Given the negative associations of misalignment, alignment practices could transform from recommendations into requirements for funding.