



LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program

List of activities and actions that demonstrate the agency is a leader in its field of services to children.

Testimonials

- William S. White of the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, a leader in funding after school programs, congratulated LA's BEST in a recent letter stating the program *"has one of the most consistent records of accomplishment of any after school program in the country."*
- In August 2006, Advancement Project Co-Director and influential civil rights attorney and civic leader Connie Rice wrote, *"In my view, LA's BEST offers one of the most effective public-private models for delivering programs that keep kids safe and learning after the schools close their doors."*

The Los Angeles City Council contracted The Advancement Project, Los Angeles to develop a citywide Gang Reduction Strategy. The January 2007 findings recognized LA's BEST as one of the few programs in Los Angeles with model practices in gang activity reduction efforts.

- The August 2005 report The After School Project, issued by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, called LA's BEST, *"the grandparent of modern urban after-school intermediaries"* and *"the trend-setter for every out-of-school-time intermediary in the country."* The report further stated, *"In Los Angeles, the connections with city government are more formal—the chief executive is part of the Mayor's Office and the chief operating officer is employed by the School District—yet its hybrid organizational structure and very strong chief executive gives LA's BEST more of the operating versatility of an independent agency."*

Program Actions & Accomplishments

Since its inception, LA's BEST has provided more than 212,000 students with out-of-school time learning opportunities that have proven to build the necessary social and academic skills which propel children through the education pipeline. Independent research plays a vital role in LA's BEST credibility and validates that the after school hours in LA's BEST are making a difference. UCLA's National Center on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (UCLA/CRESST) has conducted an annual evaluation project on LA's BEST as a whole since 1999. These are large-scale evaluations, based on the principles of education research and other social sciences. Recent CRESST evaluations demonstrate the following program results:

- Student participants at LA's BEST attended the program at a higher frequency rate (more program days) than students who attended other after school program; students who attended LA's BEST received a greater amount of assistance with homework, joined more clubs, and participated in dance activities at a higher rate than did the comparison students (October 2008).

- LA's BEST has contributed to improving standardized test scores in math especially effective with those students who attend more than 100 days. Although not statistically significant, findings in relation to English language arts demonstrated a positive trend of students attending more than 100 days, outperforming students who attended less regularly (January 2008).
- Quality after school programs such as LA's BEST teach students the academic and social skills they need to avoid the anti-school behaviors and attitudes that contribute to juvenile delinquency (Goldschmidt & Huang, 2007).

Two of our most significant results include:

- The U.S. Department of Justice commissioned UCLA/CRESST to evaluate the effectiveness of LA's BEST in lowering rates of juvenile crime. Results show that **LA's BEST participants are 30% less likely than non-participants to commit a juvenile crime** (June 2007).
- **LA's BEST participants are 20% less likely than non-participants to drop out of school.** This was strongest for students who attended LA's BEST at least 3 years and especially significant for low income students (Black; Hispanics; LEP students) (2005).

Advocacy Efforts

LA's BEST was responsible for creating the following systemic support systems for the after school field in Los Angeles:

- **Beyond the Bell** – a central division within LAUSD responsible for all programs (elementary, middle and high) doing business with LAUSD outside of the regular school day, resulting in consolidated vision, planning, grant preparation and evaluation for all LAUSD after school programs for the first time in the district's history.
- **State of California After School Advisory Committee** – a member appointed body charged with advising and assisting the California Department of Education (CDE) in developing and implementing after school policies resulting in influencing the CDE's positions regarding funding terms and conditions of state grants. LA's BEST President & CEO, Carla Sanger, was appointed to this committee by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. (Prior to this, Sanger worked closely with the Governor to draft the language for Proposition 49—raising the state funding allocation for after school by \$500 million.)
- **State of California League of After School Providers (LCAP)** – an association independently funded from the California Department of Education (CDE) of the 50 largest grantee administrators in the state whose purpose is to coordinate and clarify the feedback stream from the after school field to CDE, resulting in a Web site for grant administrators where they can identify where they most need support and/or clarification. LCAP creates seminars, conferences and advocacy campaigns on behalf of its membership. LA's BEST is the fiscal agent for LCAP.

In addition, LA's BEST has engaged the services of a lobbyist, Rand Martin from Rose & Kindel to represent its interests in the State legislature and a pro bono federal lobbyist, Paul Carliner, to represent its interests in Washington, D.C. Both lobbyists are thoroughly familiar with LA's BEST program, results and funding needs.

Organization Summary

LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) is a nationally recognized after school education, enrichment and recreation program serving more than 28,000 children with the greatest needs and fewest resources throughout the City of Los Angeles. LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program provides a safe haven for children, ages 5 to 12, at 180 elementary school sites each day during the critical hours after school — **at no cost to parents**. Established in 1988, LA's BEST is a partnership including the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District and the private sector.

After School Program Activities

The LA's BEST model uses a multi-pronged approach to foster a love of learning and inquiry among at-risk youth in Los Angeles to maximize not only their academic achievement, but also their social, emotional, and physical development. The core activities at LA's BEST have been divided into three and a half beats: help with homework, a learning activity that boosts core academic skills such as reading or math, something that's new and just plain fun, and a nutritious snack. These components provide structure for a program that is otherwise highly customized based on students' needs and the site staff's interests and experience. Program components include but are not limited to:

- **After School Arts Program (ASAP)** – ten-week residencies in visual art, music dance and theatre lead by engaging highly qualified artists/educators. In 2008, 295 ASAP residencies at 168 LA's BEST sites served more than 11,000 students.
- **BEST Fit** – improves students' awareness of healthy habits leading to better nutrition and increased physical activity through the use of 15 research-based nutrition and fitness curriculum packages. Staff at each of the 180 sites have been trained to execute at least 1 of the 15 curricula.
- **Celebrate Science Program** – provides students with an innovative approach to science instruction year-round at 180 sites through active involvement in science activities. Celebrate Science prepares science clubs in grades 3-5 to compete in a tournament structure of science fairs at the local, regional and citywide levels, which awards the winning team and their parents a free trip to the U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, AL. In 2008, 528 teams from 176 sites entered a science fair project.
- **KidzLit and KidzMath** – cornerstones of the academic enrichment program at LA's BEST these research-based curricula are aligned with California content standards. *KidzLit* provides a range of high-quality literature and engaging techniques to encourage the development of literacy and language skills while promoting enjoyment of reading and building social skills. The *KidzMath* program utilizes informal learning activities to help children grasp basic math concepts and makes learning math fun. Both *KidzLit* and *KidzMath* are offered at all 180 sites.

- **Sports** –More than 255 boys' and girls' teams (totaling more than 13,500 students from 172 sites) participate in basketball, flag football, softball and track and field, and learn major lessons about competition, sportsmanship and teamwork. Coaches build self-esteem and social skills in students without an emphasis on win-at-all-costs.
- **Field Trips and Citywide events** – more than 2,205 buses annually provide field trips for children from all 180 sites to educational, recreational and cultural sites or activities, which reach far beyond their local neighborhoods to broaden perspectives, cross cultural bridges, and provide hours of learning, fun, information-gathering, and camaraderie.
- **Staff Development** – LA's BEST believes an investment in staff is an investment in children. In 2008, approximately 969 staff development training opportunities and meetings were provided to help more than 2,100 field staff better assess goals, provide on-going training for new strategies and ideas, and learn tasks for after school implementation.