Afterschool Science Network Study Findings

Science Learning Opportunities
- A large majority of sites offered science (87%), but popular activities like arts, sports, or tutoring were provided more often
- About half of sites (48%) offered science weekly or more, while about another half offered science less than weekly
- Opportunities for youth to explore their worlds and answer their own questions using science inquiry were uncommon

Science and Site Characteristics
- Four site characteristics were associated with more frequent science, more inquiry practices, connecting to youth's interests, and opportunities for youth choice and leadership:
  - Having a partner who supported science programs
  - Having a staff member responsible for science
  - Having staff members with knowledge of science
  - Having staff members with knowledge of the nature of afterschool activities

Partnerships
- Most sites (63%) had a partner who supported science programming – most often community-based organizations or school districts
- Partners most often provided training, resources, or directly led science programming
- Most sites with partners (95%) had one partner supporting their science offerings (5% had more than one partner)
- Across the state, sites reported that most partners were local (within 50 miles)

Network
- Networks of support were not centralized or extensive
- The network was generally made up of 1:1 connections, with some signs of nascent network components

Instructional Materials
- Sites selected materials that were fun, easy to use, and had support features to help staff lead activities, such as discussion questions
- Sites mostly used materials from the Internet and activity books, though curriculum materials had more support features for staff members
- Sites planned one session at a time – even when they used curriculum
- Sites are constrained by time and staff’s lack of science background
Afterschool Science Network

Study Background

The project explored

• The nature of elementary afterschool science offerings
• The resources and sources of support for science programming and staff development
• Ties between offerings and external supports

Study Context - California’s Public Afterschool Program

California’s After School Education and Safety (ASES) program is the largest state-funded afterschool program in the country ($550M each year):

• More than 4,100 afterschool sites across the state (all with at least 50% FRPL population)
• ASES funds locally-driven programs at schools and other community settings
• Each grant represents a CBO-school partnership

5 Study Components

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Component</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Survey</td>
<td>Gathered information regarding science offerings, science materials, and partnership. Sampled to represent ASES programs (n=415). (2010-11)</td>
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<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>Observed science &amp; interviewed staff, site coordinator, and partners. Sampled for programs with rich and frequent science (n=9). (2011-12)</td>
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<td>Support Partner Survey</td>
<td>Interviewed or surveyed all available organizations named by sites as science partners regarding the supports they provide (n=61). (2012)</td>
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<td>Instructional Materials Analysis</td>
<td>Examined the materials sites use for science, focusing on the support features included in different types of materials. (2013-14)</td>
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<td>Social Network Analysis</td>
<td>Used SNA to examine connections among sites, their partners, and the partners of partners. (2013-14)</td>
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The Afterschool Science Networks Study is a project of SRI Education at SRI International, an independent, nonprofit research institute conducting client-sponsored research and development. The study is the most comprehensive study, to date, of a statewide afterschool program. This five-year examination of informal science is supported by the National Science Foundation (under Grant No. 0917536).

SRI’s partners in this work include: the California AfterSchool Network, Joseph Ames of Ames & Associates, and Steve Fowler of FowlerHoffman, LLC. Inverness Research is evaluating the project.

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