



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Maintaining a Dialogue Between Schools and Out-of-School Providers

Steven M. Ross, Ph.D. • September 2009

Topic: Increased Learning Time: Beyond the Regular School Day
Practice: Align Instruction

Highlights

- Instructional effectiveness of after-school programs can benefit from regular updates about what students are learning during the regular school day.
- Regular updates to after-school teachers can vary on a continuum from brief reports on every student in the regular day classroom to more detailed reports about a selected sub-set of students.
- Individualizing instruction is critical, especially for struggling students. The ideal form of individualized instruction is tutoring. Alternatively, small group activities and computer-assisted instruction may also effectively promote student outcomes.
- Engaging instructional activities do not have to involve fancy gadgets. To engage students, teachers can use games, group competitions, projects, and cooperative learning.

Steven M. Ross, Ph.D.

About the Interviewee

Steven M. Ross is currently a professor at the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University. From 1985 to 2008, he was a professor of educational psychology at the University of Memphis. Dr. Ross is the author of six textbooks and more than 120 journal articles in the areas of educational technology and instructional design, at-risk learners, educational reform, computer-based instruction, and research and evaluation. He is the editor of the research section of the *Educational Technology Research and Development* journal and a member of the editorial board for two other professional journals. In 1993, he was the first faculty recipient of the University of Memphis Eminent Faculty Award for Teaching, Research, and Service and recently held the Lillian and Morrie Moss Chair of Excellence in Urban Education and a Faudree Professorship at the University of Memphis. Dr. Ross is a technical advisor and researcher on current state and national initiatives regarding the evaluation of school leadership, technology usage, supplemental educational services, charter schools, Reading First, and Comprehensive School Reform. He received his doctorate in educational psychology from the Pennsylvania State University.

Full Transcript

I am Steven Ross. I am a senior research scientist and professor at Johns Hopkins University.

The first recommendation of the practice guide is to align out-of-school time (OST) with classroom instruction. If my job is to tutor a student, and I have done that many times, I feel I can be most beneficial by knowing as much about that student as possible. I could do more with that student if I know how they are doing in class, if I know what their grades are, their attendance, and some of that student's history.

Communication is the key. With regard to communication channels, we can talk about a whole continuum. At one extreme would be where many, many children—as in supplemental educational services at some schools—are attending afterschool programs and there is only so much time teachers have. So at one extreme, communication can be maybe notes or information, very brief, sent to the regular school teacher from the tutor and very brief information about lesson plans and the curriculum that are sent to the afterschool tutor. Even if that takes 30 seconds per child, at least it's making a connection between the two entities and making each entity—the out-of-school-time entity and the regular day entity—feel like they are on the same page, feel like they are communicating.

At the other extreme, and this would more likely be the case, where there are maybe smaller numbers of students who are receiving tutoring or some other form of out-of-school-time programming and there is time for the regular day teacher to talk more extensively with the tutor, maybe have biweekly meetings. I picture this as more similar to an IEP-type situation where the student might have a program, a lesson plan, prescriptions that are provided by the regular teacher, and the out-of-school-time teacher is actually trying

to implement them.

In between those two extremes, the quicker communication that says, “Here is what we are doing during the day. Here is what we are doing out of school. And here is some progress that the students are making,” and the very intensive, more formal meetings are a whole gamut of communications that could be set up.

For instance, the guide makes a recommendation that students could have a log book of sorts. The log book would simply record what kind of activities they are doing during the day. And based on how much time the regular teacher has, he or she could spend considerable time looking at that or just scan it in terms of seeing what’s going on.

A question often arises regarding alignment. Is it better for regular teachers to be the out-of-school teachers? There are advantages to having a regular school teacher being the after-school teacher, but we want to make sure that that individual has the qualifications, is doing well with these particular children, and is interested and motivated to do it. Research does show that regular teachers do better with one-on-one tutoring than volunteers would, but research also shows that volunteers do fine provided they are trained.

There are confidentiality issues that may occur from district to district, from state to state, that may create barriers on what is ethical or even legal to provide in the way of data. But as a general rule, if we trust out-of-school-time providers and tutors to work with our children, we should probably trust them to see data that would help them to do a better job. So my strong suggestion is for the out-of-school-time providers and school and district people to get together and determine what can be provided, what types of data can be provided.

And similarly, it would help out-of-school-time providers to have information about the school. It’s very useful to know about the student, but there are events and activities going on in the school and the district that we also should know about if we are out-of-school-time providers. When does testing occur? What is the curriculum like? What is the nature of the core structure? What types of students are in the school? What are viewed as challenges, successes? All of this kind of information can help a provider (a) feel part of the mix but (b) do a better job in terms of adapting instruction to what the child is exposed to.

The effectiveness of the experience will largely depend on whether there is a connection, whether the regular day is connected somewhat with the out-of-school-time program.