



Role Of After-School Support Programs In Academic And Social Growth

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Abstract:

After-school support programs (ASSPs)—including remedial tutoring, supervised study, mentoring, sports and arts clubs, and structured life-skills initiatives—are increasingly positioned as equity-oriented strategies to improve adolescent learning and holistic development. In India, where learning gaps and transition risks intensify during secondary schooling, ASSPs may offer additional instructional time, targeted remediation, psychosocial support, and safe spaces that strengthen academic outcomes and social development. This article synthesizes evidence from (i) global meta-analyses of after-school and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and (ii) India-relevant secondary sources, and proposes a practical evaluation framework suited to Indian secondary schools. Evidence indicates that well-designed programs can improve grades and achievement while also strengthening social behaviours, school bonding, and related competencies when implementation quality is high and activities are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) [1][2]. India-based evidence from large-scale remedial and after-school life-skills initiatives suggests potential gains in learning and socio-emotional competencies, but highlights the need for stronger secondary-stage evaluations using transparent designs and comparable outcome measures [3][4]. The article provides tabular secondary evidence, outcome indicators aligned to Indian policy priorities, and guidance for school-level program evaluation in line with NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic development [5].

Keywords: After-school programs; secondary education; remedial tutoring; life skills; social-emotional learning; academic achievement; India; program evaluation.

1.Introduction:

Secondary schooling in India is a decisive phase for academic progression, skill formation, identity development, peer relations, and readiness for higher education or work. Yet, learning gaps accumulated in earlier grades often persist into adolescence, affecting performance, motivation, and retention—especially for students from socio-economically disadvantaged contexts [6]. In this setting, after-school support programs (ASSPs) are widely used by governments, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to provide academic scaffolding and structured development opportunities beyond classroom time.

In this article, ASSPs are defined as organized, non-compulsory learning and development activities provided outside regular school hours (before/after school, weekends, or vacation periods) that target academic support and/or social development through tutoring, mentoring, structured clubs, sports and arts, and life-skills or SEL components [1][2]. Despite wide implementation, evidence on secondary-stage impacts in India remains fragmented, with stronger empirical attention historically focused on foundational and primary grades [3]. This article therefore synthesizes secondary evidence and proposes an evaluation structure suitable for Indian secondary schools.

2. Policy Relevance and Educational Rationale in India

The National Education Policy (NEP) of India (2020) promotes a holistic approach to education, competency-based curricula, flexible offerings for students, and community involvement in students' education [5]. These goals align with those of a high-quality Academic Support System Program (ASSP), which provides personalized academic support alongside regular classroom instruction and creates structured learning experiences within a defined schedule.

Secondary School Systems are limited in their ability to provide individualized support due to several factors, including the number of students in classrooms, varying levels of readiness of students, and limited time to provide individualized guidance. ASSPs are designed to help mitigate these limitations through:

1. Taking remedial instruction to assist those students who are below grade-level proficient and who need additional support to get on track with their peers [3]
2. Creating an environment in which peers can work collaboratively to support motivation and persistence [1]
3. Providing opportunities for the development of life skills, such as communication skills, self-regulation skills, and problem-solving skills [4]

All in all, ASSPs should not just be viewed as supplemental academic programming, but instead, as a critical component of creating an inclusive and supportive educational community.

3. Conceptual Framework (Text-Based):

The conceptual foundation of ASSPs rests on three complementary pathways:

3.1 Academic Support Pathway

Learning within an extended time frame, along with structured instruction that targets the student's core skills, allows students to practice these core skills and receive constructive criticism from others to improve their conceptual knowledge and understanding. When students are able to access small-group tutoring and/or supervised study opportunities, they can achieve a greater understanding of the curriculum's content areas and thus will perform better on their assignments and exams [3].

3.2 Social and Emotional Development Pathway

Structured after-school environments facilitate social interaction, mentoring relationships, and explicit instruction in emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. Meta-analytic evidence indicates improvements in prosocial behaviour, school bonding, and reductions in problem behaviours when SEL components are intentionally embedded [1][7].

3.3 Motivation and Engagement Pathway

Participation in clubs, sports, arts, and mentoring builds students' sense of belonging and competence. Positive adult relationships and peer support increase engagement with school and persistence through academic challenges, indirectly supporting achievement [1].

These pathways operate synergistically: improved social skills and motivation strengthen academic engagement, while academic success reinforces self-efficacy and school attachment.

4. Methodology: Secondary-Data Synthesis:

This study adopts a narrative synthesis approach supported by structured data extraction from existing reviews and evaluations. Sources include:

- Global meta-analyses on after-school and school-based SEL programs [1][7];
- Reviews of after-school programs promoting personal and social skills [2];
- India-based experimental and program evaluation studies on remedial and after-school life-skills interventions [3][4];
- Policy and system-level educational reports relevant to India [5][6].

Studies were included if they reported measurable outcomes related to academic performance (test scores, grades) or social development (SEL skills, behaviour, school bonding). Emphasis was placed on peer-reviewed or institutionally credible research.

5. Results: Secondary Evidence in Tabular Form:

Table 1. Summary of Evidence on After-School Program Outcomes

Source	Context	Program Type	Academic Outcomes	Social Development Outcomes	Implementation Factors
Durlak et al. [1]	International (children & adolescents)	After-school SEL and skill-building programs	Improved grades and academic achievement	Increased prosocial behaviour, school bonding; reduced problem behaviour	Outcomes stronger with SAFE design principles
Durlak & Weissberg [2]	Multi-study review	After-school personal and social skills programs	Positive associations with school performance	Improved self-perceptions and social behaviour	Structured curriculum and trained staff
Cipriano et al. [7]	Global K-12	Universal SEL programs	Moderate gains in academic achievement	Strong gains in SEL and positive behaviors	Implementation fidelity critical
Banerjee et al. [3]	India (urban schools)	Remedial/supplementary instruction	Significant test-score improvements	Not primary focus; engagement improved	Teaching at child's learning level

Dream a Dream [4]	India (youth programs)	After-school life-skills programs	Indirect links to schooling success	Gains in socio-emotional competencies	Safe spaces, reflective facilitation
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Table 2. Types of After-School Support Programs in Indian Secondary Schools

Program Model	Activities	Expected Outcomes	Data Sources	Equity Considerations
Remedial tutoring	Small-group subject instruction	Test score and grade improvement	Pre/post-tests, term exams	Risk of labelling weaker students
Homework clubs	Supervised study, doubt-clearing	Improved study habits	Logs, teacher feedback	May lack pedagogy if poorly guided
Mentoring	Goal-setting, academic guidance	Attendance, aspirations	Surveys, attendance records	Requires safeguarding mechanisms
Sports/arts clubs	Team-based extracurriculars	Belonging, teamwork	Participation records, behaviour logs	Gender and access disparities
Life-skills programs	SEL modules, group activities	Emotional regulation, peer relations	SEL scales, observations	Requires trained facilitators

Table 3. Indicators for Evaluating ASSP Outcomes

Domain	Indicator	Tool	Source	Frequency
Academic	Subject scores	Standardized/teacher tests	School records	Baseline & endline
Academic	Grades	Term report cards	School records	Termly
Engagement	Attendance	Attendance percentage	Registers	Monthly
Study habits	Homework completion	Logs, surveys	Program records	Monthly
Social skills	SEL competency	Validated SEL scale	Student survey	Baseline & endline
School bonding	Connectedness scale	Student survey	Program evaluation	Termly
Behaviour	Discipline incidents	Incident logs	School records	Monthly

6. Discussion

6.1 Academic Outcomes

Structured after-school activities have been proven through multiple studies to positively impact students' ability to achieve better grades. The most effective structured after-school programs are those that provide learning experiences based on what students already know [1][3]. For secondary students to achieve high levels of academic achievement, the after-school program must be designed to meet both the demands of the curriculum and of standardized tests, and to support student development of understanding and problem-solving skills.

6.2 Social Development Outcomes

Social and emotional competencies are strong predictors of classroom behaviour, peer relationships, and school engagement. Meta-analytic studies show that after-school SEL programs significantly enhance these competencies [1][7]. Indian program research also emphasizes the role of safe environments and reflective facilitation in adolescent development [4].

6.3 Implementation Quality

Program success depends less on duration alone and more on design quality, facilitator capacity, student attendance, and school integration. SAFE design principles—sequenced, active, focused, and explicit learning—are particularly associated with positive outcomes [1].

7. Educational and Policy Implications

1. Integrate Remedial Instruction and SEL (social and emotional learning) Programs
2. Group students based on diagnostic assessments to create the most appropriate instructional focus for their learning needs, as determined by the assessments.
3. Monitor and assess a child's academic growth and their social/emotional growth through an ongoing process of assessment.
4. Address access to and participation in inclusive programs using various methods to eliminate barriers based on gender, caste, and income level.
5. Collaborate with trained Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to enhance the capacity of facilitators and the quality of curriculum.

8. Limitations:

This article is based upon research and other sources that were not conducted by the authors or their research teams. Furthermore, there are very few experimental studies that have been conducted using Indian secondary adult sexual and reproductive health practitioners (ASSP) as subjects, therefore, context-specific evaluations using standardized outcome measures are necessary.

9. Conclusion:

After-school support programs represent a promising strategy for improving both academic achievement and social development among secondary school students in India. When grounded in structured pedagogy, supported by trained facilitators, and evaluated using transparent indicators, ASSPs can advance NEP 2020's vision of holistic and inclusive education. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and school-linked evaluations to strengthen the national evidence base.

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