





# Using Market Research to Support City-Wide OST Systems



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# Workshop Objectives

To understand:

- How to structure after-school programs to meet the needs of low-income and immigrant youth and their families.
- What messages about after-school programs will have the greatest appeal to low-income and immigrant youth and their families.
- How to use marketing research findings to improve after-school programs.

# NYC's Out of School Time (OST) System

- History of system development
- Planning process
- Current system
  - \$110 Million in FY 2010
  - 70,000 children served
  - 506 programs in all neighborhoods

# Organizing Principles of NYC's OST System

- Collaboration
- Quality
- Accountability

# Collaboration

- Public / Private Partnerships
- Network of non-profit community based organizations
- 353 programs in public schools
- 19 programs in public housing facilities
- 9 programs in parks facilities
- 4 programs in City-funded homeless shelters
- 121 programs in community centers

# High Quality Programs

- Articulated goals
- Program standards
- Consistent youth participation

# Accountability

- Technical Assistance and support
- Data Collection
- Performance Based contracts
- Evaluation and research

# Why Market Research?

- Why did NYC undertake market research?
  - Uncover differences and similarities in perception, interest and awareness of OST programs in various populations across New York City.
  - Identify parent's desired outcomes and perceived and experienced barriers to enrollment and participation.

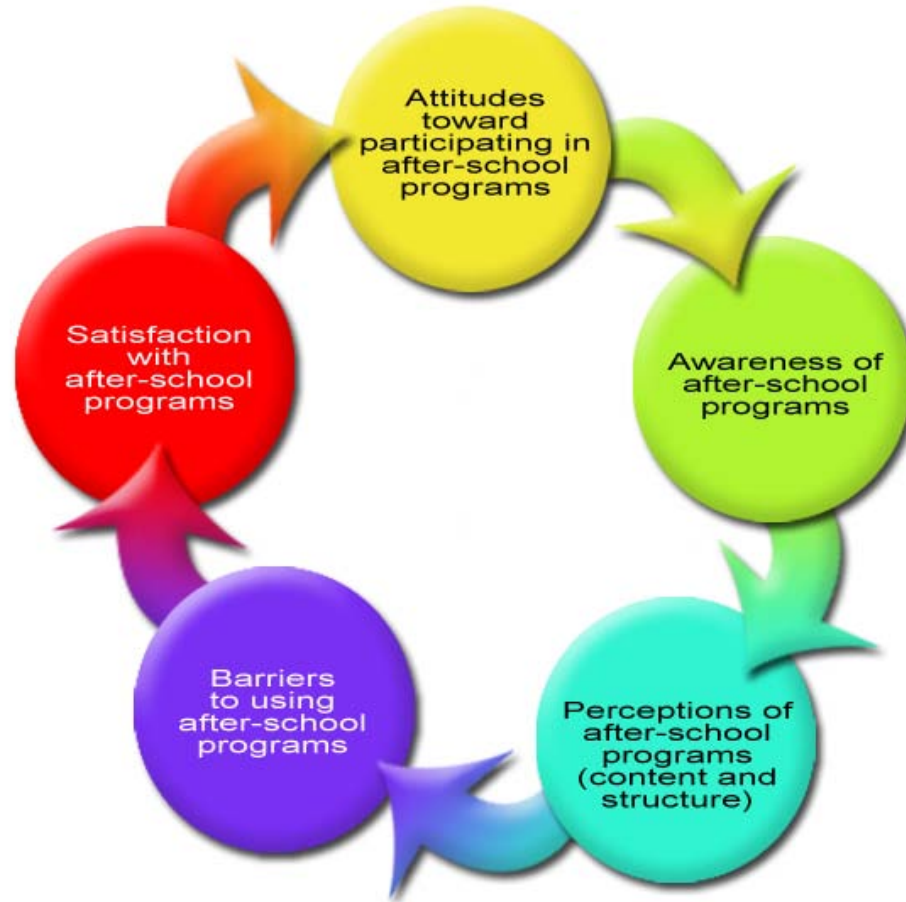
# Research Process

- Market Street Research conducted a two-year, multi-phase study of key constituencies in NYC, including:
  - Parents of children who received Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) childcare subsidies.
  - Parents and youth living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments.
  - Immigrant parents from China, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico.
- A total of 1,967 New York City parents and youth participated in this research.

# Methodology

- 31 focus groups with parents with ACS childcare subsidies.
- Telephone survey of 450 parents with ACS subsidies.
- 22 focus groups with parents and youth living in (New York City Housing Authority) NYCHA developments.
- Self-administered survey of 923 students in grades 6 to 12 who live in NYCHA developments.
- Self-administered survey of 156 parents of students in grades K to 12 who live in NYCHA developments.
- 8 focus groups with immigrant parents of elementary school-aged children, including 2 groups each of parents from China, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico.

# Model of After-School Decision-Making




# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Interest in OST Programs (cont.)



- The research shows interest is high among both parents and kids.
  - Interest is highest for K-3, is moderate for grades 4-10, and drops for grades 11-12.
  - Parents are looking for homework help, academic enrichment, and a safe place for their kids.
  - Kids are interested in fun things to do.


# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Interest in OST Programs (cont.)



Attitudes  
toward  
participating in  
OST programs

- *“It’s kind of cool to put your child in an after-school program instead of . . . [putting] your child in front of a TV. Your child needs to go out and socialize. Your child needs to have something to do while you’re at work. Not sitting in somebody else’s house on the couch bored, waiting for you to come home. That’s just a waste of time for that child. . . . I’d rather have my kid in a structured place where they’re doing things.”*
- *“I think it’s great, because it will prevent the kid from wandering the community doing nothing, and getting into trouble, or peer pressure leading to other things.”*

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Interest in OST Programs (cont.)



Attitudes  
toward  
participating in  
OST programs

- Parents whose young kids are not in OST prefer having childcare from people they know and trust.
  - *“They’re with my mother, so I know nothing bad is going to happen to them.”*

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Awareness of OST Programs



- Awareness of OST programs varies.
- Parents and kids generally don't think they have many options to choose from.
- Lack of awareness is a major reason for not participating in OST programs.
- Parents generally find out about available programs through:
  - Word of mouth from other parents.
  - Their children.
  - Their child's teacher.
  - Posters displayed at their child's school.

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Awareness of OST Programs (cont.)



- The most effective ways to communicate with parents about OST programs are:
  - Direct mail, with information about after-school programs sent from the child's schools to their homes.
  - Information sent home with children from the school (e.g., in their backpacks).
  - Word of mouth from other parents.
- The most effective spokesperson about OST programs is their children's teacher, whom parents trust more than any other source.

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Preferred OST Content



- What kind of content do parents and kids want?
  - Parents and kids are interested in a wide range of content
  - Parents are generally interested in:
    - Homework time and help: *“The homework is what I love the best, because there are things I cannot help her with, and they help her solve.”*
    - Socialization opportunities: *“They interact with each other, and that gives them a sense of being able to function with other children instead of fighting.”*

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Preferred OST Content (cont.)



Perceptions of  
OST programs  
(content and  
structure)

- Academically enriching activities: *“The debate team, for my son—it helps him be assertive.”*
- Kids are interested in having fun, and that is important to parents as well, so their kids stay engaged.
  - *“One of the best things I like [is that] when I go to pick them up, they don’t want to leave. So, that’s always a good sign that they’re being treated well.”*

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents Preferred OST Structure



- What kind of structure do parents and kids want?
  - Parents and kids generally prefer programs located in their child's school
  - Parents and kids want safe locations and active, involved leaders

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents' Barriers to Using OST Programs



- The major barriers include:
  - Concerns about safety in the programs and traveling to and from programs
    - *“Who’s going to be watching them? Is they going to be all right when I get back? Is they going to be touching or feeling them?”*
  - Transportation
    - *“Am I going to have to take three buses to get there?”*
  - Cost
  - Competing responsibilities

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents' Satisfaction with OST Programs



- Parents and kids are satisfied when programs are perceived as:
  - Safe: *“The peace of mind, knowing that you’re at work and the child is being taken care of.”*
  - Fun: *“I like the photography, because that’s something [my daughter] loves.”*
  - Educational.
  - Well-managed.

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents' Satisfaction with OST Programs (cont.)



- Parents and kids are dissatisfied when there is:
  - Not enough time for homework or inappropriate assistance: *“It’s hard when I get home at 7:00 in the evening and my youngest one tells me, ‘Mommy, I didn’t finish my homework.’ There are things I don’t understand, and it’s necessary that [OST programs] help them more with the homework.”*
  - Too much unstructured recreation: *“There aren’t really a lot of activities: there’s no arts-type things, like music, instruments and music, no chorus or drama or art. There was really [only] going to the playground.”*

# Low-income and Immigrant Parents' Satisfaction with OST Programs (cont.)



- Parents and kids are dissatisfied when:
  - Activities are boring, or lack variety or structure.
  - Programs feel unsafe, or inadequately supervised: *“Sometimes they go in there and [the children] are going crazy, bouncing off the walls, and you’re scared to go in.”*
  - Students have negative peer experiences. *“[I’m worried about my child] picking up other children’s bad habits, like cursing, drugs, and sex.”*
  - Staff aren’t qualified: *“I don’t think high school kids are competent enough.”*

# Communication About OST PROGRAMS



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# Communication with Low-income and Immigrant Parents About OST Programming

- Parents expressed concerns about programs being “free”:
  - Negative peer influences in a free program.
    - *“If I was to find one [OST program] in my area that would take [my son] without every single project kid getting into it, then fine. I would try it out. But there’s none of that, because I live in Harlem, with people looking for where to stick their kids at.”*
  - Free programs will be overcrowded.
    - *“I went to one of those community-based programs that’s free —so many kids are there. Over-crowdedness.”*
  - Safety and security concerns.
    - *“I know there are a lot of children, and maybe there aren’t enough people available who can be with all of the children—that would worry me a lot.”*

# Communication with Low-income and Immigrant Parents About OST Programming (cont.)

- Qualifications and abilities of staff.
  - *“I’ve seen the workers. You have young kids. In the one [my daughter] was in, it was young people, like sixteen [years old], who didn’t have the patience. They didn’t quite know what to do.”*
- Trusting the staff.
  - *“You want the people that are going to be taking care of your kids—you don’t want them on drugs or anything.”*
- Free programs will have limited resources, resulting in poor-quality or inadequate activities.
  - *“The thing is, those activities [like music, dance and karate] cost a lot of money, so [they cannot be provided at the] same level if it’s for free.”*

# Key Differences Among Constituencies

- **Asian parents** are more likely to prefer separate activities for boys and girls and want more time for homework.
- **Spanish-speaking parents** place more importance on programs that will help their children do better in life. They are less aware of specific OST programs.
- **Latino parents** had the strongest orientation toward using family members for childcare, with some expressing concern for their children's safety and a fear of outsiders.
- **Ecuadorian parents** were less oriented toward OST programs and more likely to use informal childcare. They were less likely to see a need for OST programs.

## Key Differences Among Constituencies (cont.)

- **White parents** had more positive attitudes toward OST programs and more trust in providers. They had a weaker preference for academic enrichment activities and a stronger preference for arts activities, fun games, and physical activities.

# How Has NYC Used Market Research?

- Improve outreach and recruitment of children in targeted neighborhoods.
- Craft more effective communications strategies.
- Develop a new service model that is anchored in public housing facilities.

# OST Marketing Research Manual

<http://www.marketstreetresearch.com/ostmanual.html>

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