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Current-Generation Youth Programs: *What Works, What Doesn't Work, and at What Cost?*

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Confluence of Factors Show Potential of Youth Programs for Society/Families

- **Long-term rise in single-parent households, leaving more kids home after school**
- **Spike in crime for youth between 3 and 6 PM on school days and 8 and 10 PM on weekends**
- **Lack of key “developmental assets” that lead to better long-term social/economic factors among youth**
- **Growth of gap in achievement during time spent out of school**
- **Growth in proportion of time youth spend out of school**

Whether Youth Programs Can Help Address These Factors Is Unclear

- **If effective, such programs can be powerful policy lever to address short- and long-term family needs**
- **Policymakers now lack enough information on which type of intervention is best**
- **But enough information to assess potential benefits, pitfalls, and costs of current generation of youth programs**

How Does the Study Define Youth Programs?

- **Offered outside of the regular school day**
 - **Before or after school**
 - **Evenings**
 - **Weekends**
 - **Summers**
- **May be school-based or delivered by a community-based organizations**
- **Excludes lessons and competitive sport teams**

Today's Briefing Focuses on Answering Four Questions

- **What are the major types of youth programs?**
- **How much do they cost?**
- **What are the impacts on participants?**
- **What are the costs relative to the benefits?**

Such Youth Programs Can Be Categorized into Five Types

Before- After- School Care

- **21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC)**
- **LA's BEST**
- **Extended Services School Initiative (ESSI)**

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Summer Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)

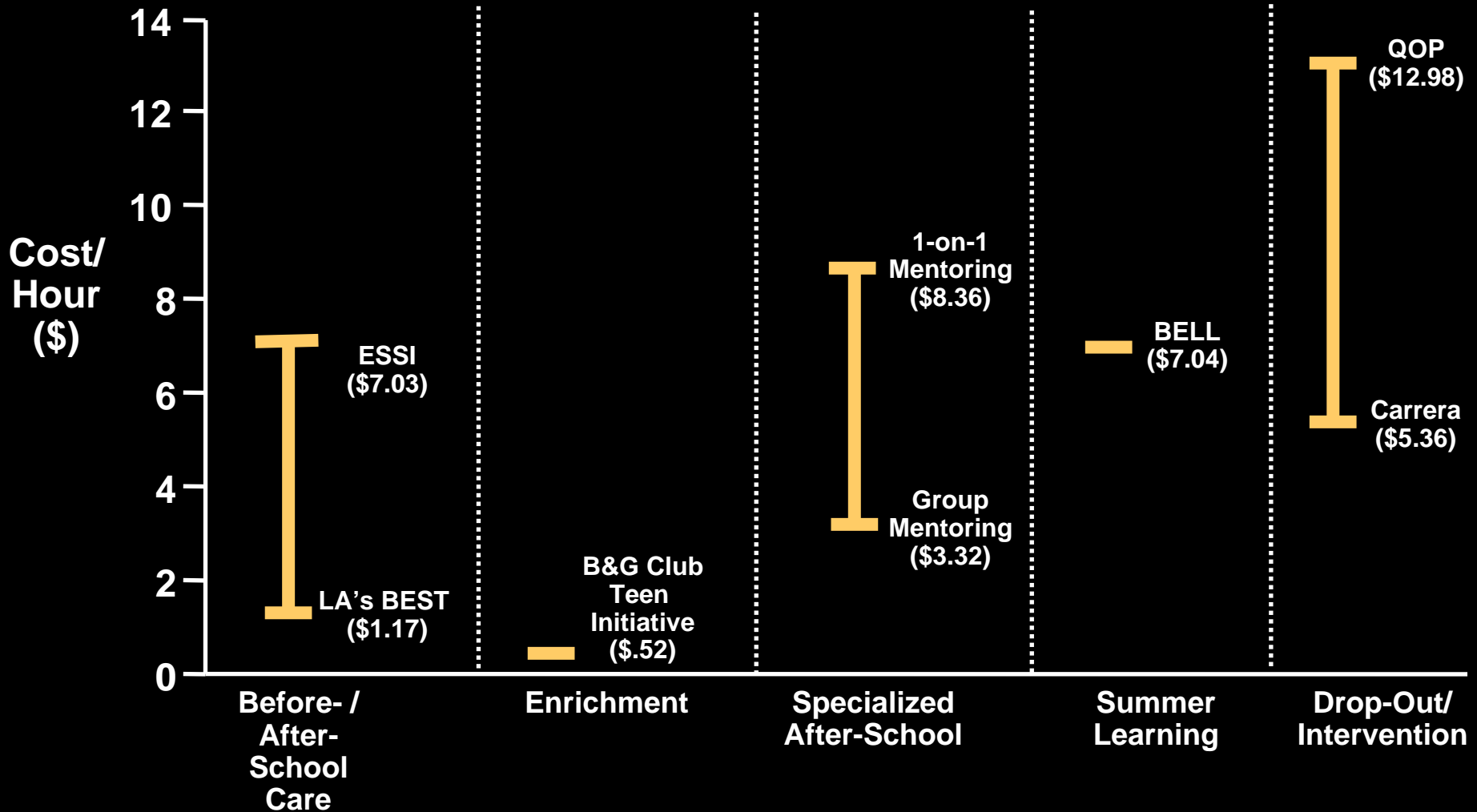
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Summer Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)
Drop-out and Teen Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Aid Society Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program (Carrera) • Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP)

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Costs Vary Significantly Across Five Types of Programs



Cost Estimates Tend to Be Underestimates

- **Budget based on—and almost always reflect—operating costs (which are majority of costs)**
 - **Exclude in-kind donations (volunteers, space)**
 - **BBBSA costs are underestimated by at least 50% because of donated mentor time**
- **Excludes start-up costs, capital costs, and infrastructure or capacity-building cost**

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How Did We Determine Program Effects on Participants?

- **Prior RAND synthesis showed promising results based on limited number of rigorous evaluations**
- **In updating synthesis, we restricted it to evaluations screened as rigorous**
 - **Center for Evidence-Based Research *Social Programs that Work***
 - **RAND's *Promising Practices Network***
- **Doing so restricts the number of programs evaluated and categories: **after school care, specialized after school, and drop-out/prevention****

Of After School Programs, 21st CCLC Shown to Be Ineffective or Adversely Effective

- **29% more likely to have been disciplined (22% vs. 17%)**
- **22% more likely to have had their parents contacted by a teacher about a behavioral problem (28% vs. 23%)**

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On positive side, suggestive evidence of that maternal labor force participation increased

Of Specialized After School Programs, BBBSA Shown to Be Effective

- **46% less likely to have started using drugs**
- **27% less likely to have started using alcohol**
- **32% fewer incidents of hitting someone**

Of Drop-out/Prevention Programs, Three Were Shown to Be Effective (1)

QOP

- 50% more likely to graduate from high school
- Nearly three times more likely to be in post-secondary school

Of Drop-out/Prevention Programs, Three Were Shown to Be Effective (2)

QOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% more likely to graduate from high school• Nearly three times more likely to be in post-secondary school
CASASTART (after 1 year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14% less likely to have used drugs in the past month• 11% less likely to use any drugs in the past year• Significantly less likely to report lifetime sales of drugs in past month or in lifetime• 19% less likely to have committed a violent crime in past year

Of Drop-out/Prevention Programs, Three Were Shown to Be Effective (3)

Carrera (after 4 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Females: 40% less likely to ever have been pregnant• 50% less likely to have given birth• More than twice as likely to use hormonal contraceptive• Males: No effects on causing pregnancy or fathering child
Carrera (after 7 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 30% more likely to have graduated high school or obtained a GED• 37% more likely to be enrolled in college

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Among Effective Programs, There Is Potential for Benefits to Outweigh Costs

Program	Short-Term Outcomes	Measured Benefits per Youth		
		Benefits	Costs	Benefits/\$ of Cost
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Crime, test scores, initiation of alcohol/illicit drugs	\$4,058	\$4,010	\$1.01
CASASTART	Crime, initiation of illicit drugs	\$4,949	\$5,559	\$0.89
Carrera	Sexual initiation, teen births/ pregnancy, contraception	\$2,409	\$11,501	\$0.21
QOP	High school graduation, public assistance	\$10,900	\$25,921	\$0.42

Source: Adapted from Aos et al., 2004.

But Limitations Are Too Great for a Horse Race

- **Evaluations are inconsistent in the outcomes they measure**
 - **Only some measure crime reduction**
 - **Only one measures reduction in teen birth**
- **Evaluations often may not track youth outcomes over long enough period for them to be observed**

Conclusions

- **Youth programs vary in cost: From \$1/hr to \$13/hr**
- **Evidence that more expensive programs can produce range of benefits**
- **Evidence that less-expensive, group-based programs can worsen behaviors of participants from low-income schools**
- **Existing programs can be enriched with little cost, but we don't know anything about effectiveness of enrichment**
- **Program costs and benefits are underestimated**

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Moving forward, important to advance field and learn more about what does/doesn't work in youth programming