

## After-School Programs in the United States and Its Implications to Korea

### - Benefits for Children with Special Needs -

Park, Young-Kyoon\*

*After-school programs in the United States began early in the 1870s. The programs are now focusing on the healthy development of all children including low-income and special needs children. The 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program, which is operated by the U.S. Department of Education, is one of the nation's models in after-school programs.*

*However, interests in after-school activities in Korea were elaborated in the second report of education reform in 1995. After-school activity was included in the category of specialty and aptitude education at the time. It was expected that after-school program could promote students' good character and improve their creativity.*

*Today, after-school programs are known as the ones that result positive outcomes to all children. Moreover, the program benefits many disadvantaged children: the children with disabilities and low-income children. These children also perform best when they are provided with quality curricula, effective instruction with proper materials, safe and supportive learning environments.*

\* Research Fellow, Korea Institute for Youth Development, Seoul, Korea  
International Fellow, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Modern education in Korea seems to be a series of trial and error strategies since its introduction. Liberal arts education in high schools has been nearly neglected due to the desires of students, parents, and even teachers, for achieving students' high scores in the national College Scholastic Ability Test. Therefore, contemporary education needs revolutionary changes in many ways to secure the fundamentals in education.

Today, young students are facing unbearable burdens in education throughout their entire school life. These stress and burdens have become harsher especially for the last two decades. They have to have more time staying in school for education. What is even worse is that they still need to secure additional time after school for further complementary studies at private institutions.

One significant problem is that most parents in Korea are over involved in their child's education. The reason why they want their child to have additional education is simple that the parent next door does. Although the citizens' highly motivated enthusiasm in education has been one of the major driving forces in developing the nation for the past half century, the over involved enthusiasm in education is now much more like an epidemic all over Korea.

There are diverse consequences of current education. The young students are now becoming no more than just skilled test takers. They are losing faith and dreams from their hearts. They do not have any ambitions or enthusiasm

except for the thought of getting into high-ranked higher education institutions.

It is almost impossible to keep the future of our society bright if the current education persists. In this sense, a kind of effort to reform contemporary education is definitely needed in Korea. One possible alternative is establishing after-school programs in school, which comprise diverse activities to meet the different needs of each young child.

## I. After-school Programs in the United States

In the United States, there exist federal plans to support new after-school programs, new foundation grant programs, and citywide initiatives. Also, there are uninterrupted efforts by scores of community groups and relative organizations to create more after-school programs in their communities.

The perception of increased risky behavior, particularly among youth from low-income families, was given sharper focus in the United States when a Carnegie Foundation report (1992) pointed out that a high proportion of crime committed by youth occurred between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the afternoon. This finding naturally led to the proposition that filling these hours with after-school programs would reduce the opportunity for youth to engage in those risky behaviors.

As Hollister (2003) reported, after-school programs evolved in response to a set of broader social and economic developments since 1980. During that decade, many

proponents of new programs for youth focused specifically on the risky behaviors of youth such as increased sexual activity at young ages, drug and alcohol abuse, school dropout, and weak educational performance.

In the meantime, after-school programs have continually intended to provide high quality activities for children, which insure adequate structure for children to improve their socialization skills while encouraging all children to develop their potential. Comprehensive programs that are integrated into the regular school program and draw on resources within the community can yield positive outcomes for students and their families. Moreover, the process of integrating various programs into school programs can actually compound the positive results of after-school programs.

## 1. The History and Development

after-school programs and other similar activities began very early in the United States. Halpern (2000) summarized a brief history of organized out-of-school activities, which was designed especially for low-income children. He dated the initiation of these activities as far back as in the 1870s. According to MacLeod (1983), a decentralized boys' day club movement also emerged in some U.S. cities with staffs largely by volunteer workers in the churches or vacant places within buildings in the 19th century.

Turning to the 20th century, settlements ran similar clubs such as carpentry, printing, cobbling as well, and invited girls to join. Early clubs were mostly drop-in centers, adding classes and organized activities over time. Early settlements were more likely to add classes like art, music, dance, pottery, and photography to their basic clubs (Halpern, 2000).

Between 1900 and 1910, public schools in the United States began establishing recreation centers and vacation schools, providing nature study, clay modeling, charcoal drawing, carpentry and other kinds of activities, as well as rooftop or playground time. And thus, during the next few decades, schools in many U.S. cities became bases for after-school and evening social activity and recreation within the community (Simkhovich, 1904). In a survey conducted in 1925 in Rochester, New York, 40 of 44 elementary schools were found to operate after-school recreational club activities, games and excursions (North, 1930).

Halpern (2000) contended that interests in after-school programs, especially for low- and moderate-income children, have been growing remarkably throughout the 1990s in the United States. It is an outcome of efforts by many people (i.e., elected officials, school superintendents, police chiefs, and community leaders) who are concerned with healthy child development and called for expanding after-school programs continuously.

On the other hand, Montague and Warger (2002) emphasized that all children should have the opportunity to participate in and progress in after-school programs. Thus, they speak about all children's right to after-school programs. The authors also pointed out that after-school staff and volunteers need more supports to ensure all youngsters can take parts in to their full potential.

In 1994, the U.S. Congress created the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program through the enactment of the Improving America's Schools Act (P.L. 103-382). This program supported the efforts of communities to make greater use of school buildings when schools were over. The 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program, operated by the U.S. Department of Education, later refocused on providing after-school opportunities and made its first grants supporting after-school programs in 1998.

Districts and schools are eligible to receive grants, however, the federal statute strongly encouraged grantees to collaborate with other public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses in their communities (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Decision Information Resources, Inc., 2003).

Interest in after-school programs has grown dramatically in recent years. According to Hollister (2003), a national survey showed that about 7 percent of 6 to 12 year-olds were engaged in some sort of after-school programs in 1997. The program participation was higher for those

children with working mothers. Among 6 to 9 year-olds with working mothers, the participation in after-school programs was the highest at 21 percent and followed by the 10 to 12 year-olds at 10 percent. Program participation also varied by income level. Among 10 to 12 year-olds, 11 percent of high-income children with employed mothers participated in the program, while only 7 percent of low-income children with employed mothers did participate.

The growth in after-school programs and the continuing pressure to expand them is, in many ways, more a social movement rather than a policy innovation (Hollister 2003). Just like other social movements, the impetus comes from a variety of interest groups like educators, child development professionals, community development groups, criminal justice experts, health professionals, and parent associations, etc. Although these diverse groups have different concerns and objectives, they coincide with the needs for some structuring of activity in children's after-school hours.

In America, there seems to be a lot of opportunities for children and youth to participate in a variety of activities provided by diverse organizations including schools, park districts, libraries, non-profit organizations, and other kinds of social service organizations. In particular, park districts and libraries are just the right resources and they are ready to offer affluent programs with staff to youth who want to benefit from the citywide services.

However, it seems that there are still many problems and obstacles in full implementation of after-school

programs to meet the needs of all children. For instance, it needs easy transportation, proper and stable budgets for well implementation, unbiased and equal treatment for all children regardless of their backgrounds and abilities.

## 2. Some Promising Results

Children's learning takes place in various forms in various places. Some children learn while they are doing a specific activity at home, while others learn during play in the sandbox or interacting with peers. This is why after-school environment is so crucial to children's learning. However, most children tend to learn better when they participate in preplanned programs under the guidance of adult staff at institutions that are more formally and properly organized.

After-school programs improve academic outcomes by helping students become more capable in the classroom. The programs improve developmental outcomes by helping children and youths learn social skills, appreciate their own and other cultures, and become more sure of themselves and their own values. Even more, the programs keep children and youths safe during out-of-school time (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Decision Information Resources, Inc., 2003).

Children involved in after-school programs may interact with their peer groups in various phases such as sports, arts and crafts, games, and a variety of group activities.



They also have opportunities to develop their potential abilities and unique personalities, to spend time by themselves reading or doing homework, to talk with an adult worker, or to create their own entertainment with toys and games available to them through after-school programs.

In fact, after-school programs draw many profitable results. After-school programs give children a chance to relax and free themselves out of ordinary school education. Children will learn from what they do during after-school participation. Research has already shown confirmable outcomes of participating children in the United States. They gained more in academic achievement in math, reading, and other academic subjects. They enhanced reading ability and motivation, and greater self-confidence in reading. They actually improved school attendance, reduced drop-out rate, and completed more and better-quality homework (Schwendiman and Fager, 1999).

In addition to direct academic benefits, after-school programs are proven to be advantageous to most students in many other ways. After-school programs can be a time for students to volunteer in their communities, learn leadership skills, and make connections with adult mentors. Additional benefits to children's social and psychological development are such as less time spent watching television, fewer behavioral problems in school, enhanced ability to manage conflicts, better social skills, improved self-confidence through development of caring, growth in

personal sense of community, and reduced participation in gangs (Corporation for National Service and National Institute on Out-of-School-Time, 1997).

We can get some implications from what we learned about after-school programs in the United States. There are many people advocating after-school programs for children and they are trying hard to extend their efforts to provide more programs. At this point, we need to look up what has been examined concerning after-school programs in Korea.

## II. Education Reform and After-school Programs in Korea

In Korea, the idea of after-school program came to the mind of concerned teachers, administrators, and researchers in recent years. Many activities of young children during after school hours are focusing on physical activities rather than academics, however, the higher the students' grades are becoming, the more they concentrate on academic activities. Recent awakening in after-school might be attributed to the recognition of the importance of basic physical activities for growing children.

Concerned professionals in education are now trying to develop something with after-school in desperation. It is, therefore, worth going forward in search of new way of establishing after-school program, based upon the advanced

experiences in the field. It cannot be enough to say about the importance of after-school programs for children who are growing and under academic stress. They need time, space, and other kinds of resources in order to get relief from academic stress.

The idea of after-school programs, along with several other programs such as service learning, was introduced in 1995 as an alternative means for education reform in Korea. However, it was originally stated under the category of specialty and aptitude education in the second report of education reform to the president (Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995). The report states the following:

*The operating committee of each school may run diverse kinds of educational programs (e.g., piano, computer, propriety classes and/or foreign language classes) after school at the minimal costs, and which fit the interests of students and the situation of each school and community. Teachers who are already in service or on the waiting list for recruitment and those others who are possessed with certain skills can be recruited as tutors or instructors in these classes on contract.*

*Parents and staff members of industries in the community can be also utilized as instructors upon request as honorary teacher from each school. The committee may also implement after-school programs in cooperation with the help of colleges, universities, and various social and civic service organizations in the community (Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1995, p. 52).*

The above stated activities in the report were viewed as

extra curricula promoting students' good character and creativity by providing educational opportunities to nurture diversities of individual students (Huh and Hong, 1998). As suggested earlier, this kind of reform was absolutely needed to improve the situation of educational environment.

In the meantime, the purpose of education reform has been explicitly elaborated thereafter, as a means of reducing the burden of parents on budgeting their child's private education, in the fifth report of education reform on June 2, 1997 (Presidential Commission on Education Reform, 1997).

The extracurricular activities, which parallel after-school activities, expanded to include the function of child care service within school for the benefits of full-time working mothers after the school is over. Therefore the programs were implemented with the name of after-school academy for children from early childhood to the lower grades in elementary schools. For this objective, art and physical education academy programs were also introduced at low costs to meet the needs of children (Lee et al., 1999).

All activities that are related to public education in schools fall into two categories: regular education activity and specialty and aptitude education activity. Regular education activity consists of three basic activities: subject matter activities, optional activities, and extracurricular activities.

The other category of school education can be described as specialty and aptitude education, although it is not stated officially in the national curricula that are developed and

implemented by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

Within the second category of specialty and aptitude education, there are at least three subcategories in it: subject-matter activities, out-of-subject-matter activities, and self-regulated study activities. As already stated, after-school activity belongs to the realm of specialty and aptitude education.

The authority of education administration in Korea is undergoing a major shift from central to local governments at the moment. Although specialty and aptitude education activity is not a curricula-based activity included in the national standards of school curricula, it is no doubt a kind of educational activity that is organized and run by education district and schools.

### III. After-school Programs for Children at Disadvantage

All children have the right to learn and achieve to their potential. Just like all other children, children at disadvantages such as poverty and disabilities can do perform well when they are provided with a high quality curriculum, effective instruction with proper materials, safe and supportive learning environments, and opportunity to grow and develop along with their peers. To achieve these

goals, there are legal provisions concerning disabilities promulgated in the United States.

## 1. The Law and the Special Needs Children

In the United States, there are at least three important statutes that protect the rights of disabled people in getting nondiscriminatory equal opportunities in education, activities, and rehabilitation: The Americans with Disabilities Act, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and The Rehabilitation Act (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulates child care providers to offer equal opportunity to children and parents with disabilities to participate in the programs and services. The program providers cannot exclude children with disabilities unless their presence would cause direct threat to the health or safety of others, or would require a fundamental alteration of the program. The child care programs should make modifications to accommodate every child or parent with disabilities, provide appropriate aides and services, and make their facilities accessible.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; formerly known as P.L. 94-142 or the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. IDEA

requires public school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each child. The special education and related services outlined in each child's IEP reflect the individualized needs of the child.

IDEA also mandates that particular procedures be followed in the development of the IEP. Each student's IEP must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons and must be at least reviewed annually. The team includes the child's teacher; parents, subject to certain limited exceptions; the child, if determined appropriate; an agency representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education; and other individuals at the parents or agency's discretion.

And lastly, the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by the Federal agencies and in programs receiving Federal financial assistance. In particular, no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or any activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any executive agency under the protection of Section 504 of the Act. Thus, all those children who have disabilities in the United States have the rights and protected, by laws and provisions, to access to activities they want to participate in.

## 2. Benefits for Children with Special Needs

Although recent expansion of after-school programs for children and youth in the United States has been a social demand, fewer academic research has been conducted in this field. Furthermore, there is very little research about after-school programs specifically targeting the population of special needs children. However, after-school programs for these children who have special needs are still very important and crucial to their early development. Despite the lack of research on after-school for these children, there are a variety of after-school and community programs for the special needs children.

Montague and Warger (2002) contend that after-school programs have been shown to address critical concerns such as: (1) poor academic outcomes for students with and at risk for disabilities, (2) violence and its precursors, i.e., behavioral and emotional problems that increase over time because there has been no research-based intervention, and (3) lack of supervision for latchkey children in the afternoon and early evening hours, which may result in increased risk-taking behaviors such as substance abuse and delinquency.

They also suggested that after-school programs that provide academically and therapeutically oriented learning opportunities could play a crucial role in addressing these problems. However, to make the programs successful, these programs must address the needs and abilities of all



students including those with various disabilities and children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They also emphasized that, to ensure success, the programs should be designed to be inclusive from the beginning. Further, after-school program staff members should have sufficient knowledge and skills to conduct after-school practices (Montague and Warger, 2002).

After-school programs give benefits to all children, including those who have difficulties in learning, health, social and psychological development (Schwendiman and Fager, 1999). after-school programs are extremely important to the development of motor control and spatial recognition of children who have limited physical abilities. Children in after-school programs get better grades and behavior, increased self-esteem and more positive attitudes about school. For children with special needs, after-school programs provide a level of individualized attention that they might not receive during the school day.

In fact, special needs children get lots of extra help from after-school programs. They can develop various technical skills through after-school programs (After-school Alliance, 2001). For instance, in the High School/High Tech program in Prince George County and Montgomery county, Maryland, junior and senior students in high school who have physical disabilities learn computer skills, tour high-tech facilities and have an opportunity to work at high-tech jobs during the summer. Work experience in this program really helps the children with disabilities develop

their potential.

Social skills are also very important for special needs children's survival and success in school and community. In order to adjust in both school and life, children need to acquire basic skills such as listening, following directions, asking relevant questions, sharing materials, waiting ones turn and problem solving. After-school programs can offer the opportunity to learn and practice the social skills that will guide the children throughout their lives.

For some special needs children, the opportunity to build social skills after school has had remarkable results. Children with social, emotional, or behavioral disabilities in Charlestown, Massachusetts, for example, are able to participate in after-school programs through the YouthCare after-school program. These special needs children benefit from a safe, structured environment and enjoy activities such as computer education, field trips, gym and playground time and swim time (YouthCare, 2001).

The number of special needs children and youth, who are participating in after-school programs, are increasing every year throughout the United States (Montague and Warger, 2002). Just as success in school often requires special education, related services, and general education that addresses the special needs children's unique needs, learning styles, and abilities, the same is true in after-school programs.

And, these are totally prepared and continually supported by legal provisions for the development of special needs

children and youth. After all, almost every after-school program in the United States does not seem to segregate special needs population at all. Most after-school programs are very inclusive and there are not many programs that are not inclusive.

## IV. Implications to the Program Development in Korea

### 1. A Good Example: The Miracle League

Think about a child who is confined to his wheel chair plays baseball games with other non-disabled children. It is not a fiction or fantasy in your mind. This is a true story happening in a specially designed baseball park in the Miracle League (<http://www.miracleleague.com/title.htm>), which started its first program in 1998 in Georgia.

There were no programs for the Miracle League to copy at the beginning; however, the league started with 35 players on four teams. It was decided that: (1) Every player bats once each inning, (2) All base runners are safe, (3) Every player scores a run before the inning is over (last one up gets a home run), (4) Community children and volunteers serve as 'buddies' to assist the players, and (5) Each team and each player wins every game.

With the help of community volunteers and companies, the design and construction of the first Miracle League complex was underway. The complex included a custom-designed field with a cushioned synthetic turf to help prevent injuries, wheelchair accessible dugouts, and a completely flat surface to eliminate any barriers to wheelchair bound or visually impaired players.

The design also included three grass fields, which could be converted to the synthetic turf as the league grew. In addition, accessible restroom, a concession stand, and a picnic pavilion were included in the design (<http://www.miracleleague.com/title.htm>). Emotionally or behaviorally disordered children might also get lots of help (e.g., learning social skills) from such programs as Miracle League.

## 2. Suggestions for After-school Programs in Korea

All adults in child education and welfare should serve every child to the maximum potential of their development. All children deserve the rights and privileges to develop their potential regardless of sex, race, or abilities in modern society. At the same time, all children should be exempted from any burden and duty that hinder them from achieving their goal in nurturing their potential.

As mentioned earlier, most of the parents in Korea are so much involved in their child's education that it did produce profound side effects such as suicide, bullying and school violence of youth. Above all, one of the most

significant problems is probably that most children do not have time to play or participate in various activities to further their special interests; which may lead them to a more nourishing life when they are grown up.

In today's modernized society, a specific fortitude in a certain field is needed for everyone to survive and succeed. Every child cannot achieve the highest academic outcomes in their school. Every child cannot get into the range of top five percentile in academic standards. At times, this is a good reason why they need different goals, different skills and different programs to awaken their talents asleep in themselves.

In this sense, special needs children also undoubtedly require diversified programs to strengthen their remaining skills and nourish their innate abilities. Children with mental, physical, sensory, emotional and behavioral disorders need various quality activities that assure them to acquire how to nurture themselves, while those with physical restrictions particularly require certain activities to promote mobility and rehabilitate their bodies. These are other things that after-school programs for the special needs children should provide after school.

### 1) Increasing Awareness

Before establishing an after-school policy, it is inevitable that the government should have information and knowledge about the importance of after-school activities. Therefore, it

is recommended that the appropriate officials visit some exemplary programs being implemented in the United States. They need to closely look at the programs and facilities within schools and communities, and their staff management how they work in cooperation. They should examine the outcomes of these programs, both negative and positive.

One single factor that leads to the success in establishing after-school programs in Korea is public education, which integrates communications and marketing with research, to let the public (i.e., children, parents, teachers, and government officials) know that after school programs (especially the programs with a holistic/comprehensive approach) are critical for healthy development and academic success.

## 2) Funding

Funding is a very important factor to consider. Quality after-school programs consume a lot of money. Even in the United States, the field practitioners, program operators, school district administrators, and city government officials are continuously trying to find funds they need to run the programs. Most funds are coming from the fees, city and state governments, federal government, and charity foundations in the United States. On the other hand, the necessary funds should be provided by the central and local governments in Korea. Still, however, additional funds also

need to be sought from various foundations and major industrial enterprises.

### 3) Management and Collaboration

It is particularly important to learn how after-school programs are run along with the administrative cooperation of park districts and public libraries in the United States. Although there are not enough park and library facilities in Korea, it is still worth to look at how to use the existing resources. There should be some implications to draw on using public facilities in the United States and the Korean counter parts may adapt the implications to the use of current existing facilities effectively. And, hundreds of youth centers and welfare facilities currently existing are very helpful resource that we can make use of.

### 4) Staffing

Staffing seems to be not a matter of serious consideration at the moment in Korea. School teachers can primarily play a key role in implementing after-school programs. Volunteers from various fields may also contribute in teaching and leading after-school programs for children with disabilities.

Graduates from colleges and universities who are not yet employed are very useful resources for after-school programs. They also can get valuable experience in return

through the after-school involvement. These are all probable resource personnel, but they still need to receive additional education and training to be powerful after-school staff.

### 5) Governing Organization

At the same time, a comprehensive central body of planning, administration and research for quality service of after-school programs at local school and community levels needs to be established. It might be more in need than thought, along with regular school education, to exist in order to control and intervene between the potential colliding benefits and conflicts among the related parties. Particularly, the organization should be staffed, at least, with personnel from finance, personnel management, education and training, and social research backgrounds.

The suggestions here are not enough at all and it should be understood that these suggestions need to be elaborated more in detail through further studies. Nevertheless, after-school programs should be started soon in order to initiate reform in school education.

## V. Conclusion

Thinking about education in Korea, there are some tasks to be completed to have children and youth receive the right and appropriate education. Young students must be



released from the tightly planned examination-centered school education. College entrance examination, i.e., the national College Scholastic Ability Test, needs to be reconsidered for complete revision in order to make the students get out of college current entrance examination oriented education. Under this circumstance, education will not change and return to a more fundamental state but would be more fortified for the preparation of college entrance examination.

Needless to say, the job of child education and youth development is the utmost task of the accomplished generation. To have the future bright and promised, the next generation needs to be modestly educated and grown up to be noble citizen. Children should be well balanced in getting knowledge, developing social, emotional, behavioral and physical abilities. These assumptions apply to all children including those with special needs; however, at times the disadvantaged and disabled children tend to get less profit than their non-disabled peers do.

Taking all the positive outcomes of after-school programs reported in the United States into consideration, it is time for us to introduce formal after-school programs in education now. All children would benefit a lot more than can be expected, which they might not get under the current education practices. It is time to reexamine the contemporary education in Korea for the betterment of appropriate education for all children.

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## 미국의 방과후 활동 프로그램이 한국에 주는 시사점

- 불이익 아동에 대한 이점 -

박 영 균\*

미국에서는 그 동안 교육과 아동복지 차원에서 다양한 방과후 활동을 전개해 왔다. 연방정부의 재정적 지원과 관리하에 지난 10여 년 동안 수많은 방과후 활동 프로그램이 시행되어 왔으며 방과후 프로그램은 이제 연방 및 주 정부가 지원해야 할 가장 큰 아동 및 청소년 교육사업의 하나가 되었다.

미국의 방과후 활동 프로그램의 목적은 정규 학교교육 프로그램과 함께 모든 아동의 성장 가능성을 실현하도록 고무하는 동시에 아동의 사회화 기능을 개선할 수 있도록 질 높은 활동 프로그램을 제공하는 데 있다. 따라서, 학교교육에 통합된 지역사회의 포괄적 활동 프로그램은 아동은 물론 그 가족에게도 긍정적 결과를 도출해 내고 있다.

미국의 방과후 활동 프로그램은 1870년대에 시작되었는데 초기에는 주로 소년 소녀들의 클럽활동에서 비롯되었다. 근래에 와서 아동의 안전과 발달을 위해 방과후 프로그램이 더욱 활발히 진행되고 있으며, 특히 지난 10여 년 동안에 걸쳐 도시 저소득층 아동과 장애아동의 건강한 발달에 프로그램의 주된 초점이 모아지게 되었다.

1994년 미국 국회는 미국 학교 개선 법안(Improving America's

\* 한국청소년개발원 연구위원, 시카고대학교 채핀홀 아동연구소 객원연구원

Schools Act, P.L. 103-382)을 제정함으로써 21세기 지역사회 학습센터 프로그램(21st-Century Community Learning Centers program)의 기반을 창조하였다. 21세기 프로그램은 학교 수업이 없는 시간대에 학교시설을 활용하려는 지역사회의 노력을 지원하는 것이다. 미국 교육성에 의해 시행되는 이 프로그램은 후에 방과후 활동 프로그램을 지원하고자 하는 데 초점을 다시 두게 되었으며, 1998년에 첫 예산이 방과후 활동 프로그램 운영에 공식적으로 할당되었다.

미국에서는 방과후 활동 프로그램을 아동에게 많은 이점이 있는 프로그램으로 인식하고 있다. 방과후 프로그램을 통해 아동은 학업성적을 향상시켰을 뿐만 아니라 아동의 사회화 기술, 다양한 문화에 대한 이해와 존중, 자기 자신에 대한 확신 및 자신의 가치에 대한 인식, 약물이나 폭력으로부터의 안전이 방과후 활동 프로그램의 긍정적 결과로 지적되고 있기 때문이다.

더욱이 방과후 활동 프로그램은 장애를 가지고 있는 아동이나 저소득 계층 아동과 같이 불이익에 처한 아동들에게 이점이 있는 것으로 알려져 있다. 방과후 프로그램을 실시하게 된 목적과 역사에도 명시하였듯이 장애아동을 포함한 모든 아동은 다른 아동과 마찬가지로 자신의 잠재능력을 개발하기 위해 학습할 권리가 있다. 질 높은 커리큘럼과 적절한 자료가 준비된 적절하고 효과적인 지도와 안전하고 지지적인 학습 환경, 그리고 성장할 수 있는 기회 등이 주어진다면 장애아동들도 최대한 가장 잘 수행할 수 있게 된다.

미국에서 장애를 가지고 있는 아동의 교육과 활동, 그리고 재활에 관련된 주요 법률은 크게 세 가지인데, 미국 장애인 법(The Americans with Disabilities Act), 장애인 교육법(The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), 그리고 재활법(The Rehabilitation Act)이 그것이다. 이러한 법률적 장치 아

래 미국의 장애아동은 교육은 물론 모든 사회적 활동과 재활 서비스에 있어 비장애 아동과 차별 없는 서비스를 받고 있으며 방과후 활동도 이와 마찬가지로 제한 없는 참여가 가능한 것이다.

아동교육과 청소년개발이란 두 가지 명제는 더 이상 언급할 필요 없이 기성 세대가 책임져야 할 가장 막중한 과업이다. 밝은 미래를 기약하기 위해서는 다음 세대가 균형감 있게 적절히 교육되어야 하며, 아동의 지적, 사회적, 정서적, 그리고 신체적 발달을 균등하게 도모하여 그들이 성장한 후 고귀한 시민이 되도록 하여야 한다. 이와 같은 가정은 장애를 가진 아동과 저소득 계층 아동을 포함하여 모든 아동에게 적용되어야 할 것이다.

한국의 교육상황을 생각해 보면서 모든 아동이 적절한 교육을 받을 수 있는 권리를 향유할 수 있게 하기 위해 시급히 개선하여야 할 과제가 주어졌다. 어린 아동으로 하여금 대학입시 준비를 위해 꼭 짜여진 입시중심의 학교교육으로부터 벗어나 자신의 무한한 성장 잠재력을 개발할 수 있도록 다양한 활동 프로그램을 제공하는 교육으로 속히 전환하는 것이 필요하다.

연구를 마무리하면서 한국의 장애아동을 위한 방과후 활동 프로그램 도입에 관한 몇 가지 제안을 하고자 한다. 첫째, 정부의 방과후 교육활동에 대한 확고한 의지가 가장 중요하며 방과후 활동 프로그램에 대한 교육과 홍보활동이 이 프로그램의 성공에 중요한 요인임을 인식하여야 한다. 둘째, 프로그램을 실시할 수 있을 만큼 충분한 예산 확보가 이루어져야 한다. 셋째, 프로그램의 시행을 효율적으로 도울 수 있는 협력 행정 이 이루어 져야 한다. 넷째, 방과후 프로그램 실행에 필요한 인적 자원이 확보되어야 한다. 마지막으로, 이러한 프로그램을 기획하고, 시행하며, 연구할 수 있는 조직을 설립·운영할 필

요가 있다.

미국에서 성취한 방과후 활동 프로그램의 긍정적 결과를 고려해 볼 때 한국에도 이제 보다 정형의 방과후 활동 프로그램을 제도적으로 도입해야 할 시기가 되었을 뿐 아니라, 나아가 한국의 현행 교육체제를 보다 획기적으로 개혁하여야 할 시기가 도래하였다.