



CAMELOT LEARNING

Camelot Learning Enrichment Program: Grounded in Research

Research on Afterschool Education

Research supports the design of the Camelot Learning Curriculum for afterschool academic enrichment. *Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field* was published by Harvard Education Press in 2003 to report on the existing knowledge and practice in afterschool settings in order to help practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in the field. Upon examining the potential for extended learning in afterschool programs, the authors make the following recommendation: "Rather than simply helping children to perform homework assignments, afterschool staff should be empowered to develop enriched curricular activities that meet the same learning goals as homework. (p 52)

The authors also report that in their research with practitioners in Boston's afterschool program, afterschool learning was most commonly described in this way: "Learning in afterschool programs should be connected to but distinct from the regular school day." (p. 56)

The need for quality afterschool programming is also documented by research (Noam, 2003 and Miller, 2001) which documents the association of attendance at afterschool programs with better grades, peer relations, emotional adjustment, and conflict resolution skills. Camelot Learning was developed for use in afterschool programs and has been implemented since 1997 in more than 40 afterschool programs operated by Open Door in Baltimore, Anne Arundel, and Harford Counties, including several private schools. In those settings, Camelot Learning is an optional activity, and its value has been assessed by student selection patterns and parent feedback. Open Door was named Maryland's Best Afterschool Program for 2002 by Maryland Family Magazine, based on a survey of its statewide readership. Camelot Enrichment is built on a foundation in afterschool best practices: activities characterized by hands-on, discovery, and group collaboration. Camelot Learning's training and follow-up site visits emphasize the importance of relationship- building as a key to success in academic afterschool programs (Grossman, et.al, 2002).

Research on Cultural Literacy

Most significantly, each Camelot lesson is based on a skill related to a nationally recognized content standard. By learning skills using strategies proven to be effective in afterschool settings, students with alternative learning styles get another viable chance to understand important content. The knowledge of important content provides children with what E.D. Hirsch calls intellectual capital. In his book, *The Power of Cultural Literacy*, he explains the importance of intellectual capital for learning. Content knowledge provides "the mental scaffolding and Velcro to catch hold of what is going on," creating that knowledge into "still more mental Velcro to gain more knowledge." (Hirsch, 1996, p. 20) Camelot Learning provides content-rich lessons in topics that are both engaging and important. When used as a supplemental educational program, Camelot Learning helps students build their intellectual capital and close the gap that separates so many impoverished children from their more fortunate classmates.

Research on Closing the Achievement Gap

Camelot Enrichment has been designed to use research-proven strategies to close the achievement gap which

frequently characterizes the performance of African-American students. Grant and Sleeter, in their book *Turning on Learning: Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching Plans for Race, Class, Gender, and Disability* (1999) refer to the research of Howard Gardner and point out that many African-American students are stronger in spatial, interpersonal, and bodily kinesthetic intelligences than they are in the linguistic and logical mathematical intelligences that are the common focus in most schools. Camelot Enrichment lessons are designed to address the needs of students with different learning styles.

Experimental Research Design

The Camelot Enrichment Program has been revised for the 2003-04 year so that seven 4-lesson topical units comprise unifying themes. Assessments have been developed for each theme which can be used in a pre to post-test format in order to measure student progress in understanding skills, content, and vocabulary taught in the units.

For schools that wish to implement an experimental research design to assess the effectiveness of the program with their school populations, a control group can be identified to that the effect of the intervention can be analyzed. The progress of the experimental and control groups can be compared to ascertain the value of investing in supplemental programming for the target population of any school.

References

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