



SRI's Afterschool Science Networks (ASN) project is a 5-year study (2009–14) supported through an Informal Science Education research grant from the National Science Foundation. The project explores the following:

- The types and quality of science offerings within afterschool programs, including the science curricula and materials used in these programs.
- The connections between afterschool programs and support organizations like science museums and technical assistance providers.
- The types of connections, or networks, that may support the delivery of high-quality afterschool programming and the dissemination of high-quality informal science curricula and materials.

The study will focus on grantees of California's Afterschool Education and Safety (ASES) program. We will survey a random sample of 600 ASES programs about their science programming, the connections they have to other afterschool providers, and their connections to organizations that provide science resources or support. We will also survey nominated support organizations to understand what resources and services they provide, and the connections they have to afterschool programs and one another. To determine the quality of afterschool science offerings, researchers will analyze the science curricula and materials that programs indicate they use. To more deeply understand these programs, researchers will develop intensive case studies of 10 selected ASES programs.

An important innovation of this study will be to use social network analyses to explore whether quality science instruction is linked to the number, type, or strength of ties a program has to outside organizations. Other more established statistical analyses will be used to explore how factors identified in the afterschool and science research literature might be linked to quality science learning opportunities.

Dr. Barbara Means is the Principal Investigator, and Carlin Llorente, Ann House, and Raymond McGhee will act as the Co-Principal Investigators. SRI's partners include the California Afterschool Network, Jason Freeman, Joseph Ames, and Steve Fowler. Inverness Research will evaluate the project to ensure its quality.

From the beginning, our research will produce knowledge that is useful to practitioners, intermediaries, policymakers, funders, and others who have an interest in improving the quality of afterschool and informal science learning. The project will share findings through conference presentations and scholarly journals, but will also make information available through public events, websites, and meetings that are popular with the broad range of people who care about afterschool and informal science.

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