

Game After Class: informed choice, voluntary play and a safe return

The strongest rationale is practical access to enjoyable, bounded play. Research reviewed here does not establish that this hub will improve intelligence, school performance or mental health.

Research by Education Angel Group. Last substantive review: September 19, 2026.

Education Angel Group is developing Game After Class and has an interest in the proposed product. This review does not establish its effectiveness.

Prepared by Education Angel Group (EAG), with AI-assisted research and drafting. Research date:

September 19, 2026. EAG is developing Game After Class and has an interest in its success. This report examines its proposed value and limitations. It is not an independent evaluation, an endorsement of a particular game, or evidence of a working EAG service.

1. Proposition, audience and present status

Game After Class is a proposed hub for quick games, friendly competition, and more ways to play. Its immediate job is to help a student find something suitable, understand what playing involves, enter an available game, and return after finishing or deciding to leave. A parent, teacher or other responsible adult also needs enough information to permit, adapt or decline that choice. The catalog and the actual game have different responsibilities: a correct description does not demonstrate a playable module.

Overview. The strongest rationale is practical access to enjoyable, bounded play. Research reviewed here does not establish that this hub will improve intelligence, school performance or mental health. Existing free puzzle collections and youth game services already offer meaningful alternatives. Game After Class would need to demonstrate that its selection, access information and return experience solve a real problem better than an ordinary approved link. Its value cannot be assumed from a larger catalog, more time spent or a higher score.

The proposed first journey is deliberately small: choose one verified available game, understand its controls and time expectations, play or intentionally exit, and return to the previous hub context. An untimed spatial-pattern puzzle is a candidate for later assessment, not a selected game. Rules, age range, difficulty, rights and equivalent access remain unresolved. No game engine, multiplayer system, leaderboard or reward arrangement is established by this report.

The intended audience includes first-time student visitors, returning players and adults assessing a particular game. Their needs can conflict. A returning player may want one familiar link; an adult may want detailed safety and access information; a new player may not yet understand the rules. The report therefore

distinguishes a brief initial explanation from optional detail. It does not infer a market size or assume that every student wants digital recreation after class.

The service also sits within the After Class family. Snacks After Class can orient visitors, while The Commons provides broader discovery. Game After Class owns its catalog and launch information; each approved module owns its actual rules and play state. Where an account is required, Runstr is the identity authority. Anonymous discovery and offline play need not create an account. Shared identity does not automatically share scores, permissions, progress or accomplishments.

2. Questions and standards of evidence

The central question is: can a small catalog support informed, accessible choice and safe return without making longer play the goal? Six supporting questions make that proposition testable.

1. What information lets a student judge whether a game fits the available time, device, input method and desired experience?
2. What do existing collections and youth services already solve, and what additional work would EAG save?
3. What do studies of gaming actually measure, and where would a claim about cognitive or wellbeing benefits exceed their findings?
4. Can someone start, understand, play and exit through an accessible path, including after an interruption?
5. Can play remain voluntary when school approval, friendly competition or family connections are present?
6. What observations would justify continuing, narrowing or abandoning the proposed hub?

Three evidence categories are kept separate throughout. Research findings describe participants, interventions or associations studied by others. First-party documentation describes a provider's stated capabilities or developer guidance. EAG hypotheses describe what a proposed product might accomplish. A guideline can identify a useful test without showing that any candidate passes it; an empirical paper can establish a boundary without recommending a particular game.

Confidence is highest in the narrow statement that existing alternatives exist and that access involves more than pressing a launch button. Confidence is lower in the proposed hub's added value, because this review contains no Game After Class user observations, comparative trial or verified module inventory. The report does not turn those missing observations into assumed demand. A decision to test one game would be a decision to learn about a concrete experience, not acceptance of a broad educational theory.

A practical evaluation should also distinguish errors from preferences. A player may leave because a link is broken, because instructions are confusing, because the activity is inaccessible, or because they simply do not want to play. Those are different outcomes. Combining them into a single abandonment rate would obscure both avoidable failures and legitimate choice.

3. Need and context: fitting play to the moment

The relevant need is a decision problem rather than a demonstrated shortage of games. A student with a brief free interval may need to know whether a game requires sound, rapid movement, a long tutorial, another player or a persistent connection. An adult may need to know where the game leads and whether the destination has changed. These are plausible use situations derived from the proposed purpose; their frequency in the intended population has not been measured.

The word "quick" is particularly easy to misuse. It could mean fast to launch, easy to understand, short to complete, or easy to stop. A game can satisfy one and fail another. A puzzle may load promptly yet require a long first explanation. A familiar player may finish quickly while a newcomer needs more time. A game without a fixed ending may still support a brief voluntary visit if leaving is clear and progress consequences are understood.

Consequently, an EAG time description should identify what was measured. First-time instruction time, active play, loading and returning belong to different parts of the experience. An observed range from a future usability session would be more honest than an unexplained single number. Until such evidence exists, "untimed" can describe a rule only if verified; it cannot establish a typical duration or an ideal break length.

Device fit is similarly concrete. A touch-friendly catalog does not establish that the game works without dragging. Keyboard navigation into a module does not establish keyboard play inside it. Reading speed, unfamiliar vocabulary and the ability to distinguish game information without color alone may all affect practical access. These examples identify assessment questions, not findings about how many students encounter each barrier.

There is also an opportunity cost. Time used discovering a digital game might otherwise support a paper puzzle, conversation, movement, rest or an already familiar activity. The proposed service should not treat those choices as failures to engage. A useful no-fit response could simply make it easy to leave. The business rationale has to tolerate that possibility if voluntary enjoyment is the actual proposition.

No direct study of children's short sessions in this proposed hub was appraised. That absence leaves local questions about preferences, school-device restrictions, interruption patterns and adult approval unanswered. Before catalog expansion, a small set of contextual observations should establish which of these frictions actually matters. Broad gaming prevalence would not answer that narrower question.

4. Existing alternatives and the gap EAG would have to earn

Figure 1

Existing choices and the questions left for EAG

Portable Puzzle Collection | S4

Existing solo puzzle option

Provider describes short-break intent. Candidate youth and device fit still needs testing.

PBS KIDS | S5

Existing youth game destination

Browser and app access documented. Individual-game suitability remains a separate question.

Game After Class | A0

Proposed added value

Accurate fit information and recognizable return must justify an additional chooser. No comparative advantage established.

Provider descriptions and a product hypothesis, not a tested ranking.

Existing choices and the questions left for EAG

Provider descriptions and a product hypothesis, not a tested ranking.

- S4
 - S5
 - A0. EAG product definition
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These equivalents accompany the reader figures. Source IDs refer to the report references. A0 identifies EAG's product definition reviewed for the original report, not an external study or proof of availability. Other source IDs resolve to this report's reference and access record.

Figure 1. Existing choices and the questions left for EAG

Provider descriptions and a product hypothesis, not a tested ranking.

Portable Puzzle Collection | S4: Existing solo puzzle option. Provider describes short-break intent. Candidate youth and device fit still needs testing.

PBS KIDS | S5: Existing youth game destination. Browser and app access documented. Individual-game suitability remains a separate question.

Game After Class | A0: Proposed added value. Accurate fit information and recognizable return must justify an additional chooser. No comparative advantage established.

Sources: S4, S5, A0.

Figure 1. Qualitative comparison of provider-documented alternatives and EAG's proposed value. It is not a ranking, usability test or claim that an existing service is unsafe. Text and data alternative.

Simon Tatham's Portable Puzzle Collection is a substantial counterexample to the idea that short solo puzzles need a new platform. The official page describes puzzles intended for short breaks, browser versions and native downloads. It documents MIT licensing and notes that the web version lacks save-game functionality. These are provider descriptions, not measured youth usability or a guarantee that every puzzle fits every device. No game was played for this report. Simon Tatham, S4

PBS's current parent guide points families to browser games and a free games app for phones and tablets. It is an existing youth-oriented option with an established destination. The guide does not establish age fit for every intended Game After Class visitor, comparative effectiveness or the behavior of each game under school restrictions. Historical launch material is not used to promise contemporary offline access. PBS, S5

A manually maintained school-approved list is another serious alternative. Its proposed advantage is simplicity: a trusted adult can select a few links without creating another account system or catalog. Its weakness could be maintenance effort or inconsistent descriptions, but neither was measured here. EAG should compare against a good, concise list rather than a deliberately poor collection of broken links.

An available paper puzzle offers a different tradeoff. It can avoid browser loading and digital account requirements, while printing, visual access and physical manipulation can create other barriers. It should not be called universally accessible. An already familiar game can also win by eliminating discovery work entirely. Choosing no game is a valid comparator when the student would prefer another activity.

The credible gap is therefore conditional: EAG might add value by keeping a small set of descriptions accurate, showing actual input and stopping requirements, and maintaining a dependable return path. It would have to outperform the extra step it introduces. If students already reach suitable games through approved bookmarks, another chooser may be unnecessary.

Linking, adapting and building also carry different obligations. A source license may permit some reuse without resolving content suitability, accessibility, integration or school approval. A first-party page is not permission to copy branding or imply endorsement. This report recommends evaluating the need for a chooser before deciding whether EAG should host or author a module. Research does not select a provider or authorize adoption.

5. Research findings, counterevidence and transfer limits

Figure 2

Different evidence answers different questions

Adult play and wellbeing | S1

Association, not a youth intervention

Two-game observational study cannot establish a benefit from brief child puzzle sessions.

Cognitive training | S2

Transfer claims need caution

Small pooled training result and model-dependent adjustment do not predict this product.

Later wellbeing study | S3

Limited-access counterpoint

Abstract-level finding only. Full-text appraisal remains unavailable.

Different populations, outcomes and access levels; no common effect scale.

Different evidence answers different questions

Different populations, outcomes and access levels; no common effect scale.

- S1
- S2
- S3

Figure 2. Different evidence answers different questions

Different populations, outcomes and access levels; no common effect scale.

Adult play and wellbeing | S1: Association, not a youth intervention. Two-game observational study cannot establish a benefit from brief child puzzle sessions.

Cognitive training | S2: Transfer claims need caution. Small pooled training result and model-dependent adjustment do not predict this product.

Later wellbeing study | S3: Limited-access counterpoint. Abstract-level finding only. Full-text appraisal remains unavailable.

Sources: S1, S2, S3.

Figure 2. Studies of wellbeing and cognitive training do not evaluate Game After Class. Source access and study design limit the conclusions. No common effect scale or product forecast is implied. Text and data alternative.

Johannes, Vuorre and Przybylski studied adult players of two commercial games using surveys linked to publisher play records. They reported a small positive association between play and affective wellbeing. Their observational design, low response, limited titles and pandemic setting constrain interpretation. Player experiences were independently associated with wellbeing; the study did not establish that more play causes better health or that the relationship transfers to children's brief puzzle sessions. Johannes et al., S1

A later study by Vuorre and colleagues reports little or no average relationship between time played and wellbeing across a larger longitudinal sample. Its Oxford abstract was available during the source search, but full-text retrieval failed and the record failed to reopen during report preparation. It is retained as a limited-access counterpoint, not a fully appraised causal estimate or a numerical figure. Vuorre et al., S3

For cognitive claims, Sala, Tatlidil and Gobet's meta-analysis found a small overall training estimate: Hedges $g = 0.07$, with a 95% confidence interval of 0.02 to 0.12, across 359 effect sizes. A trim-and-fill adjustment estimated -0.01 , with an interval of -0.06 to 0.05 . Effect sizes are not independent study counts, and the adjusted estimate is model-dependent. The synthesis warrants caution about broad cognitive transfer; it does not prove that every game has no benefit. Sala et al., S2

These findings make three distinctions necessary. Enjoying a game is different from reporting improved wellbeing. Getting better at a particular puzzle is different from improving general reasoning. Finishing a game is different from transferring anything to schoolwork. A future player might report enjoyment and show game-specific improvement without either of the broader outcomes occurring.

The appropriate EAG inference is modest: ask whether the actual experience was wanted and usable, and do not use time spent as a substitute for that answer. This is a proposed measurement choice, not a causal conclusion from the papers. Likewise, the lack of demonstrated far transfer does not remove enjoyment as a

legitimate reason to play. The hub does not need a brain-training claim to justify a good voluntary game.

Counterevidence also includes competing explanations for favorable product results. Easier selection could reflect familiarity with a known title. High completion could reflect a puzzle that is too easy for the sample. Enthusiastic feedback could reflect politeness toward an adult observer. Repeated use could reflect limited alternatives at school. These are hypotheses to investigate, not allegations about actual users. A fair evaluation should make room for them before choosing success criteria.

6. Proposed mechanism: choose, play or leave, return

Figure 3

Proposed choice and return paths

Conceptual only. Every link is proposed.

Choose and play

1. Read verified game requirements
↓ proposed link
2. Choose to enter an available module
↓ proposed link
3. Play with accessible controls
↓ proposed link
4. Complete or intentionally leave
↓ proposed link
5. Return to the previous chooser

Unknown: whether this improves choice over a direct link.

No fit or interruption

1. Decline an unsuitable game or stop
↓ proposed link
2. Understand restart or resume behavior
↓ proposed link
3. Return without a forced next game

Leaving is legitimate. No automatic score sharing or reward.

EAG conceptual mechanism; every link requires later evidence.

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- A0. EAG product definition

Figure 3. Proposed choice and return paths

EAG conceptual mechanism; every link requires later evidence.

Choose and play. Read verified game requirements → Choose to enter an available module → Play with accessible controls → Complete or intentionally leave → Return to the previous chooser. Unknown: whether this improves choice over a direct link.

No fit or interruption. Decline an unsuitable game or stop → Understand restart or resume behavior → Return without a forced next game. Leaving is legitimate. No automatic score sharing or reward.

Sources: A0.

Figure 3. EAG conceptual mechanism. Every link requires later observation. Finishing and intentionally leaving are both legitimate paths; neither automatically publishes progress or produces a reward.

Text and data alternative.

The proposed mechanism begins with accurate expectations. A student sees a small number of genuinely available choices and can understand each game's purpose, input requirements, social conditions and stopping behavior. The student then decides whether to enter. Inside the module, instructions and controls support the actual rules. On completion or intentional exit, the student returns to a recognizable hub state and understands whether another visit would resume or restart.

Each link can fail independently. Accurate metadata can lead to a failed launch. A working launch can lead to inaccessible controls. Accessible play can end with an ambiguous loss of progress. A technically correct return can still feel coercive if it immediately promotes another game. Testing only catalog clicks would miss most of the mechanism.

For an interruption, the useful promise is truth rather than universal persistence. If a game cannot resume, that limitation should be understandable before leaving or relaunching. If it can resume, the state must belong to the appropriate person and device context. Shared sign-in alone does not prove either behavior. An anonymous session need not become an account simply to preserve a catalog choice.

Friendly competition is a possible branch, not the engine of the first journey. Any later competitive concept would need to explain who participates, whether comparison is optional, how results are understood and what happens when someone declines. A solo experience should not become a lesser version because the player avoids ranking. Public scores, network play, automatic sharing and cash-like incentives are outside the proposed first slice.

The mechanism is falsifiable. If accurate information does not improve choice, if a direct link offers an equally understandable return, or if maintaining the catalog creates more work than it saves, the case for the hub weakens. If accessible entry works but the candidate puzzle remains unsuitable, that finding supports changing the module rather than declaring the whole journey successful.

7. Design concepts to investigate

Three concepts are worth comparing as descriptions of behavior, without selecting a visual layout or approving implementation.

A concise play brief. Before entry, show the purpose, verified controls, timing conditions, availability and what happens on exit. The student should be able to explain the next action in their own words. Optional adult detail can cover provenance and restrictions without making every visitor read an extensive notice. The risk is overloading a short activity with more preparation than play.

Choice by practical fit. Let visitors identify a relevant need, such as keyboard input or no sound, before offering eligible games. The labels must describe tested capabilities rather than vague accessibility promises. The risk is false exclusion: incomplete metadata could hide a usable game. A small catalog may need clear descriptions more than a filter system.

A recognizable return. Restore the previous chooser context after exit and explain resume or restart when relevant. An explicit end can respect the player's intention without a streak, countdown or automatic next game. The risk is adding unnecessary navigation when a simple browser return already works. Comparison with that baseline is essential.

Microsoft's input guideline treats menus and gameplay as part of the access problem and discusses digital controls and alternatives to demanding input sequences. Its time-limit guideline concerns non-core interface deadlines and ways to avoid or adjust them. It explicitly distinguishes these from timing that is part of a game's rules. These are developer recommendations, not certifications of the proposed puzzle or rules requiring every game to be untimed. Microsoft, S6, S7

For the candidate spatial puzzle, source-and-destination selection and a labeled grid could be investigated alongside direct touch. A sequential alternative must preserve the meaningful rule decisions rather than merely provide a link back to the hub. Whether it can do so is unknown until the rules are defined and assessed with relevant players. The report does not substitute a theoretical accessible mode for actual equivalent play.

8. Risks, equity and the work of keeping promises

The most immediate risk is inaccurate availability. A card that looks playable can mislead even when its destination is only a concept. External destinations can change, while a hosted module can fail after an update. A small catalog reduces the number of records to maintain but does not eliminate the maintenance

job. Someone must own status checks, withdrawal and correction.

A second risk is making participation compulsory in practice. A student may feel unable to decline an adult's suggested activity. Competition, streaks or visible comparison could intensify that pressure. This report proposes an explicit no-play option, private feedback and no reward for completing an evaluation. These are protective design and research choices, not demonstrated effects of the current service.

Equity includes the cost of assistance. If one input route routinely requires an adult to explain controls or recover a session, describing both routes as available conceals unequal effort. If the game requires sound, stable connectivity or a personal device, the catalog should not disguise that requirement. Accessibility and school suitability need individual evidence; neither follows from a provider's educational branding.

Privacy obligations should be proportionate to the task. A basic choice-and-return evaluation can record task outcomes without building a persistent student play history. Any later identity, accomplishment or Runstr connection would require separate authorization and audience controls. Choosing to play does not constitute consent to publish a result. Shared After Class Points and module-specific mastery must retain their distinct meanings; this report proposes no earning or conversion rule.

There is operational burden for adults too. Content review, broken-link checks, device restrictions, support and responding to reports all consume time. The evaluation should record these tasks instead of counting only student-facing convenience. A catalog that saves a student one decision but requires continuous adult repair may be a poor fit for a small team.

Rights, age fit, moderation needs and school approval remain unresolved for any named future module. No source in this report certifies compliance or safety. The practical response is to keep claims specific and to withdraw an uncertain listing, not to use a general "school-safe" label as evidence that every destination has been checked.

9. Evaluation and criteria for changing course

Figure 4

Decisions that follow from observed problems

Wrong expectations

Revise the description

Assess controls, time and stopping comprehension before adding more games.

Inaccessible or failed play

Repair or withdraw the candidate

A correct catalog cannot compensate for unusable gameplay.

No advantage over approved links

Simplify or reconsider the hub

Do not treat more sessions as proof of a better decision.

Proposed decision logic, not study results or numerical thresholds.

Decisions that follow from observed problems

Proposed decision logic, not study results or numerical thresholds.

- A0. EAG product definition
 - S6
 - S7
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Figure 4. Decisions that follow from observed problems

Proposed decision logic, not study results or numerical thresholds.

Wrong expectations: Revise the description. Assess controls, time and stopping comprehension before adding more games.

Inaccessible or failed play: Repair or withdraw the candidate. A correct catalog cannot compensate for unusable gameplay.

No advantage over approved links: Simplify or reconsider the hub. Do not treat more sessions as proof of a better decision.

Sources: A0, S6, S7.

Figure 4. Proposed evaluation logic, not observed results or numerical acceptance thresholds. Each response targets the problem found rather than rewarding longer sessions. Text and data alternative.

The first useful study would compare a narrowly defined chooser with an ordinary approved link or short list. It should use a genuinely available game and include first-time and returning visitors, relevant input methods and actual device conditions. The protocol, participant protections and analysis decisions need to be settled before recruitment. No trial, sample or result is represented as having occurred.

The key outcome is informed access: can a participant choose a fitting game, explain its controls and stopping conditions, reach real play, then complete or intentionally leave and return? Observe these steps separately. Record where help was required and why a participant stopped. Do not combine voluntary refusal, technical failure and completion into a single success measure.

Optional feedback can ask whether the game was enjoyable, whether it matched the description and whether the person wanted to continue. Wording should allow a neutral or negative answer without disappointing an adult observer. Feedback about wanting another session is useful context, but neither an obligation nor a wellbeing measure.

Record launch reliability, instruction comprehension, accessible exit, interruption recovery and adult assistance alongside enjoyment. Time is useful for locating friction, provided loading, explanation, active play and returning are distinguished. It should not become a target to maximize. Report small-sample findings as observations about the tested participants and conditions, not population percentages with implied precision.

Continue only if the chooser provides a recognizable advantage over the baseline while the full play-and-return path works. Simplify if most visitors want one familiar game. Revise descriptions if expectations are wrong. Replace or withdraw the candidate if its rules cannot support the intended access needs. Pause expansion if keeping availability accurate exceeds the team's capacity. Reconsider the hub if it adds no useful value beyond approved direct links.

Any later educational claim would require a separate research question, defined outcome, credible comparison and evidence beyond performance inside the game. It is not a prerequisite for voluntary enjoyment and should not be added to make a weak discovery result look stronger. A negative comparative result can still be useful by directing EAG toward a smaller service or an existing alternative.

10. Methods, access limitations, references and corrections

This is a focused, question-led review, not a systematic review or meta-analysis. Searches on September 19, 2026 covered game accessibility, time expectations, wellbeing research, cognitive transfer and first-party alternatives. Original papers and official provider or institutional pages were preferred. Search results were used for discovery; full-text findings were checked in accessible originals. No interviews, game sessions, device tests or independent product evaluation were conducted.

The published Johannes and Sala papers were available as full PDFs. The later Vuorre paper remained limited-access: the source search obtained its institutional abstract, while full-text attempts failed; the record could not be reopened during report writing. Its finding is consequently described only as abstract-level context. PBS and Microsoft pages were readable. The puzzle collection's official page was retrieved, although a later page-position request failed. These access differences matter and are not evidence that a source supports claims beyond the passages available.

The review does not establish the current state of EAG's downstream product, the suitability of a particular module, or current behavior of external games. School-specific restrictions, preferences, accessible rule equivalence and maintenance costs remain gaps. Publication dates describe sources, not necessarily their data-collection periods. The report's September 2026 date does not make older study findings current measurements.

References and useful locators:

- **A0.** Education Angel Group, Game After Class product definition, reviewed September 19, 2026 for this report. Defines intended scope, not implementation or effectiveness.
- **S1. Johannes, Vuorre and Przybylski (2021).** *Video game play is positively correlated with well-being.* Royal Society Open Science 8:202049. Methods and section 4.1 limitations. Published paper.
- **S2. Sala, Tatlidil and Gobet (2018; advance publication 2017).** *Video Game Training Does Not Enhance Cognitive Ability: A Comprehensive Meta-Analytic Investigation.* Psychological Bulletin. Meta-Analysis 3, printed pages 14-16; discussion. Published paper.
- **S3. Vuorre and colleagues (2022).** *Time spent playing video games is unlikely to impact well-being.* Royal Society Open Science 9:220411. Abstract-level context only. Publication record.
- **S4. Simon Tatham.** *Portable Puzzle Collection.* Introduction, game list, licence and web-version limitations; accessed September 19, 2026. Official page.
- **S5. PBS.** *Where to Watch PBS KIDS*, "Where to Play PBS KIDS Games"; accessed September 19, 2026. Parent guide.
- **S6. Microsoft.** Xbox Accessibility Guideline 107, input implementation guidance; accessed September 19, 2026. Input guidance.

- **S7. Microsoft.** Xbox Accessibility Guideline 116, time limits; updated March 4, 2026, accessed September 19, 2026. Time-limit guidance.

Corrections should identify the statement, source and relevant passage, especially if availability or a study interpretation changes. EAG should date the correction and explain its consequence for the recommendation. No exhaustive correction or retraction search was performed. The present recommendation remains a bounded test of informed choice and voluntary return, with no claim of cognitive training, established demand or demonstrated product benefit.

Figure text and data alternatives

Complete semantic alternatives accompany each figure in this reader and its text download. Source IDs refer to the references in this report. A0 identifies EAG's product definition reviewed for the original report, not an external study or proof of availability. Other source IDs resolve to this report's reference and access record.

Corrections and entity context

Readers identifying an error can contact EAG with the section, disputed statement and supporting source. Game After Class provides the public entity context, not an external citation for EAG's product claims.