



Expanded Learning Programs Evaluation 2018-19 Findings Brief

Prepared for West Contra Costa Unified School District, Expanded Learning Office

ABOUT THIS FINDINGS BRIEF

The West Contra Costa County Unified School District (WCCUSD) Expanded Learning Office partners with Public Profit, an external evaluator, to collect and analyze data on program participation, program quality, school day alignment, and program effectiveness. This findings brief contains the results of the 2018-19 evaluation and includes information about:

- who attends the programs and how often,
- the quality of program practices as experienced directly by youth,
- youth and family opinion about the quality and impacts of the program,
- how the Expanded Learning Programs align with West Contra Costa Unified School District's goals, and
- progress towards student academic outcomes.

Analyses throughout this brief compare Expanded Learning participants and their non-participant peers. This brief also includes analyses comparing Expanded Learning participants that attended 100 days or more of the program and their peers that attended less than 100 days of program, because research suggests that youth begin to benefit after roughly 100 days of consistent program participation.¹ This findings brief is accompanied by a separate document of data tables that more thoroughly present the findings.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

West Contra Costa Unified School District collaborates with selected community based organizations that have expertise in youth development and out of school time programming to operate its 30 Expanded Learning Programs funded by [ASES](#), [ASSETS](#), and [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#). Each Expanded Learning Program offers academic support, enrichment activities, and supper five days per week throughout the school year. In 2018-19, West Contra Costa Unified School District partnered with 4 youth-serving community based organizations vetted and chosen by the Expanded Learning Office to serve as lead agency partners to run programs: [Bay Area Community Resources](#) (BACR), [Boys and Girls Club of Contra Costa](#), [Love. Learn. Success.](#) (LLS), and the [YMCA of the East Bay](#).

¹ Huang, D., La Torre, D., Leon, S., Duong, N. and Hodson, C. (2011) "Supporting Student Success in Middle Schools: Examining the Relationship between Elementary Afterschool Program Participation and Subsequent Middle School Attainments" National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from: <https://www.cse.ucla.edu/downloads/files/Huang.etal.AERA.paper.pdf>.

Additionally, West Contra Costa Unified School District partnered with leadership from local government, philanthropists, and organizations who specialize in visual and performing arts, mentoring, sports, and STEM programming to provide high quality enrichment activities to program participants throughout the academic year. WCCUSD Expanded Learning Programs operate every day school is in session and are open to all students² at no cost to families.³

THEORY OF ACTION

Research into the impact of expanded learning programs tells us that regular participation in high quality programs benefits participating youth and their families. Regular participation means attending the program consistently. Research also suggests that youth are more likely to benefit from afterschool programs when they participate for approximately 100 days or more.⁴ These benefits include outcomes for youth that are a direct result of the expanded learning program itself: improved academic behaviors (e.g. improved grades and achievement test scores); increased school engagement (e.g. positive feelings and attitudes toward school); and improved non-academic skills such as social emotional skills (e.g. improved feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem).

In addition, expanded learning programs can contribute to other positive academic outcomes for youth such as English fluency, classroom performance, and increased school day attendance. Families also experience outcomes such as engagement in the school community.

Investment in Program Staff

Point-of-service quality - the quality of the interactions between youth and staff, youth and environment, and youth and each other - is the hinge between youth participation and impact. Recognizing this relationship between participation, quality, and impact, the WCCUSD Expanded Learning Office makes an investment in program staff knowledge, skills, and mindsets through year-round support and professional development opportunities that build high quality point-of-service practices. This includes monthly professional development trainings, coaching, and technical assistance provided by West Contra Costa Unified School District, totaling over 40 hours of professional development each school year. Lead agencies also work with program staff throughout the year to plan program curriculum, develop program policies, and provide professional development opportunities.

² Host schools determine specific criteria for priority student enrollment, such as low academic performance or social needs.

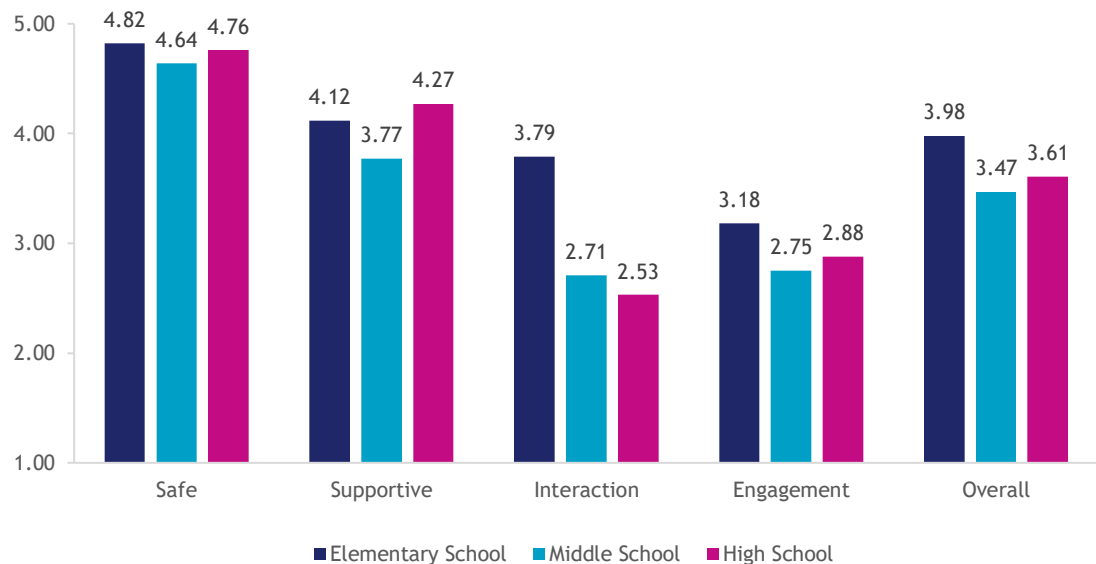
³ Per grant legislation, school-based 21st Century and After School Education and Safety programs are allowed to charge a fee but may not turn away youth for inability to pay.

⁴ Weiss, H. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. (Harvard Family Research Project Brief Series: Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation No. 7). Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/issues-and-opportunities-in-out-of-school-time-evaluation/understanding-and-measuring-attendance-in-out-of-school-time-programs>.

Investment in Quality Programs

With a foundation of point-of-service quality and a framework for continuous quality improvement, West Contra Costa Unified School District continued to use the [Program Quality Assessment \(PQA\) Tool, a research-validated observation tool used in youth development programs around the country](#) to measure staff practices and program quality. On average, PQA scores showed that Expanded Learning Programs at all grade levels provided youth with a safe and supportive environment in which they learn and grow (with scores above 4.5 and 3.5, respectively). On average, elementary programs scored higher in comparison to middle school and high school programs in the interaction domain, which measures peer interaction and community building. Elementary programs also scored higher than both middle and high school programs in the engagement domain, which measures program engagement through choice, planning, and reflection. All programs, regardless of grade level, could improve their scores in this area.⁵ The Expanded Learning Office continues to use PQA scores to support staff in continuing to implement high-quality youth development practices and thereby deepen the impact for participating youth.

Figure 1. Programs provided youth with a safe and supportive environment, and could further improve their scores in the engagement domain

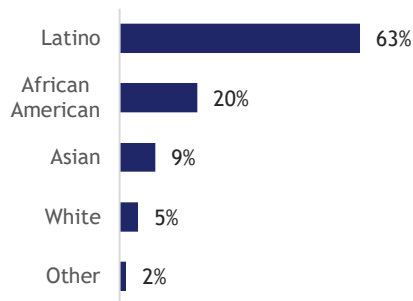


Source: Site visits were conducted by Public Profit and WCCUSD Expanded Learning Office District staff and scored using the School-Age Program Quality Assessment Tool (SAPQA) and Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool (YPQA) in the fall and spring. Site visits to elementary programs used the SAPQA tool and those to middle and high school programs used the YPQA tool (N=30).

⁵ For more detailed Program Quality Scores for fall and spring by site, see Data Tables, Section 3.

WCCUSD EXPANDED LEARNING PARTICIPANTS

The Expanded Learning Program sites served 4,707 students, 29% of all youth at the 30 host schools.



Programs served a high proportion of Latino/a and African American students



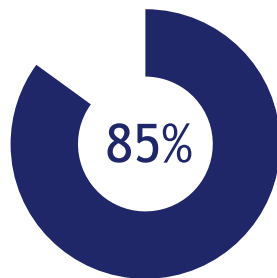
Most participants live in the zip codes 94806 or 94801

39%

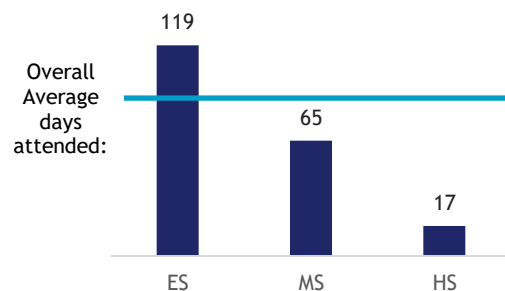
39% of Expanded Learning participants were English Learners



Programs served an equal proportion of female and male students



85% of students at Expanded Learning Programs' host schools were eligible for FRPL



Participants attended 87 days of program on average

Sources: Cityspan Attendance System and California Department of Education's Dataquest (retrieved July 2019); WCCUSD demographic records for English Language Learner status (August 20, 2018 - June 7, 2019).

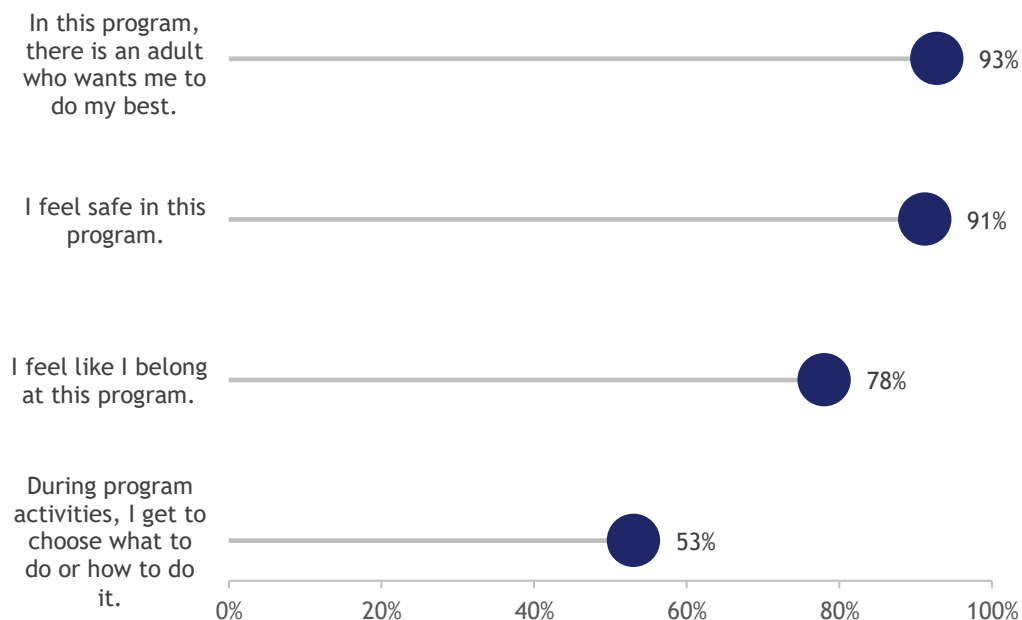
YOUTH FEEDBACK

As part of the evaluation, youth participate in a survey designed to capture their opinions and experiences directly. Since they are the main participants of the program, it is important to give them the opportunity to voice their own perspectives. Youth survey data suggests that youth are experiencing a high quality program and that they are reaping the intended benefits of the program, such as increased social emotional skills and stronger academic skills that prepare them for high school, college, and career.⁶

Program Quality

The youth survey includes items aligned to the PQA framework to capture youths' perceptions of program quality. A safe and supportive environment (both physical and emotional), where youth feel they belong and which allows youth to learn and grow, is foundational to program quality. Youth reported that their Expanded Learning Program was a safe place with supportive adults. A strong majority of youth reported feeling safe in the program (91%) and that there is an adult in the program who wants them to do their best (93%). About three-quarters of youth felt like they belong in the program (78%). While only a little over half felt they get to choose what to do or how to do it (53%), this is an improvement from 2017-18 (48%) and 2016-17 (37%).

Figure 2. Youth reported high quality experiences



Source: Youth Survey, Feb-March 2019 (N=1,522). Percentage represents the proportion who responded positively.

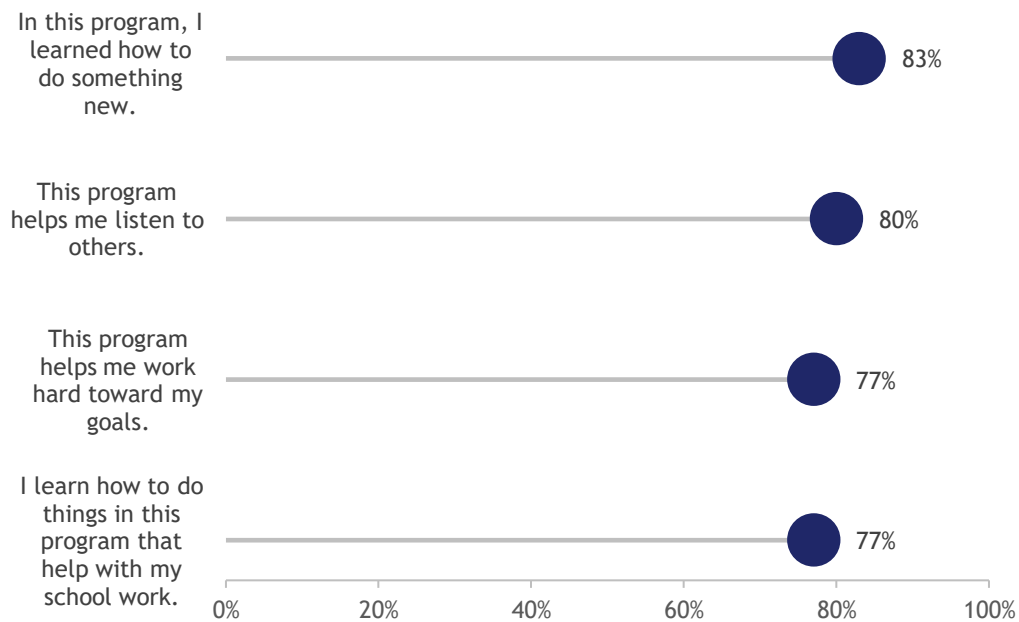
⁶ This section only includes a subset of questions asked on the youth survey. For complete youth survey results, see Data Tables, Section 4, Tables 6-12.

Direct Outcomes

As outlined in the theory of action, regular participation in high quality expanded learning programs benefits participating youth as a direct result of the program itself: improving academic behaviors and social emotional skills, increasing school engagement, and, particularly for older participants, preparing youth for college and career.

A majority of youth reported that they learned how to do something new in the program (83%). Most youth reported that the program helps them listen to others (80%) and work hard towards their goals (77%). About three-quarters of youth learned how to do things that help with their school work (77%).

Figure 3. Youth reported positive direct outcomes



Source: Youth Survey, Feb-March 2019 (N=1,522). Percentage represents the proportion who responded positively.

“What I like best about the program is that I get the help that I need when I don't understand something. I like the teachers or adults that help me through my work and understanding what I need to do. All the staff members are very respectful and kind to the kids who come to the program. I feel safe and confident about myself, that I can do anything that is possible to achieve my goals and aspirations. I like how the staff can encourage students that they can do anything without having doubt or any of the negative actions.”

- High School Participant

FAMILY FEEDBACK

The evaluation also gathers input from families to help continuously improve its programs. West Contra Costa Unified School District seeks feedback from families since they, too, have unique experiences of and opinions about the program. Family survey data suggests that families also perceive a high quality program. They note that most of all, the program provides a safe place for their youth and they have good relationships with program staff. Overall, families reported being satisfied with the Expanded Learning Program (99%) and that their child says good things about the program (98%).⁷

Program Quality

Families overwhelmingly report that the Expanded Learning Program is a high quality program. Nearly all family members reported that the program is a safe place for their child (99%), that their child feels comfortable with staff (99%), and that there is an adult in the program their child can talk to about their problems (98%). Furthermore, a strong majority reported that their child has opportunities to try new things (99%) and to develop leadership skills (98%). Most family members agreed that the program provides activities that meet their child's interests and needs (96%).

“A key strength to the program is the interaction between staff and students. I truly appreciate the projects they provide to keep the children interested and at the same time keeping a learning environment.”

- Elementary School Family Member

Direct Outcomes

Family members also reported that their child gained valuable academic behaviors and leadership skills from the program. Nearly all family members agreed that the program teaches skills that help their child in school (98%), and most reported that their child's attitude toward school has improved (94%).

The majority of family members reported that the Expanded Learning Program was welcoming and engaging. Nearly all report that at least one staff recognizes them when they visit the Expanded Learning Program (98%) and that staff listens to them when they have a question or comment (99%). A strong majority agreed that there are opportunities for parent participation in the program (95%). Slightly fewer family members agreed that they know more about what goes in the school day (91%) or that they are more involved in their child's school because of the program (87%).

⁷ For complete family survey results, see Data Tables, Section 4, Tables 13-17.

SCHOOL DAY ALIGNMENT

A cornerstone of high quality expanded learning programs is aligning efforts with what happens during the school day. This does not mean that expanded learning programs are an extension of the school day. Rather, the school day and expanded learning are complementary, working in concert to provide unique learning experiences for youth. In order to determine school day alignment, we surveyed school day staff (school day teachers, Expanded Learning lead teacher, school counselors, and other school day staff), school day leadership (the principal and vice principal), and the Expanded Learning Program staff (the site supervisor and group leaders) about their relationships and communication with the Expanded Learning Program.⁸

Relationships

School day staff and Expanded Learning Program staff surveyed reported that there is a strong partnership between the Expanded Learning Program and the school (87%). A majority of staff reported that teachers are willing to collaborate with the Expanded Learning Program (83%) and that Expanded Learning Program staff are responsive to the ideas and suggestions from school day staff (93%). However, fewer staff agreed that the curriculum and instruction in the Expanded Learning Program reinforces concepts taught during the school day (75%).



The program coordinator is an asset to our school. She cares about all students and communicates with teachers to how she may best serve the students academically. She communicates well with the parents for any concerns as well as their child's progress.”

- Elementary School Day Teacher

Communication

Site leadership at schools also reported the frequency of communication between administrators and Expanded Learning Program Site Supervisors, a necessary component of strong relationships. Many staff surveyed reported frequent (2-3 times per month or more) communication about student discipline issues and policies (55%), the needs or progress of individual students (38%), and issues related to classrooms and shared spaces (34%). Fewer staff reported frequently discussing the planning of program content (19%) or curriculum concepts being taught in school (19%).

⁸ This section only includes a subset of questions asked on the staff survey. For complete staff survey results, see Data Tables, Section 4, Tables 18-23.

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM ALIGNMENT TO ROADMAP 2022

[Roadmap 2022](#) is West Contra Costa Unified School District's 5-year strategic plan focused on achieving students, engaged communities, and invested employees. Developed by Superintendent Duffy in 2017-18, this plan sets specific goals toward an ambitious and equity-centered plan for the students, staff, and broader communities served by West Contra Costa Unified School District. These goals place particular emphasis on student achievement, particularly [early literacy](#), [reclassification](#) of English Language Learners to English Language Proficient, and [A-G requirements](#).

Early Literacy

Early Literacy development begins from birth to three years old and is closely linked to a child's experience with text and oral language. The interactions that young children have with literacy materials and caregivers in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading, and writing development. In West Contra Costa Unified School District, Early Literacy instruction is based on the areas of reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness and writing in grades Pre-K through 2nd grade. West Contra Costa Unified School District's goal is to ensure that students are reading at grade level by the third grade, as this is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. West Contra Costa Unified School District recognizes that early literacy starts well before third grade which is why it wants to ensure that every child has the power of literacy and the opportunity for a lifetime of success.

The [FastBridge early Reading Assessment](#) measures and monitors reading skill development and assesses risk. Results from this assessment, taken by West Contra Costa Unified School District's students in Kindergarten and 1st grade, indicate that Expanded Learning participants are significantly more likely to be classified as low risk of learning problems (36%) than their non-participants peers (32%).⁹ Participants that attended 100 days or more of program and participants that attended less than 100 days were classified as low risk at similar rates (36% and 35%, respectively).

[STAR Reading Assessments](#) measure a wide range of literacy skills and identify where students fall on a learning progression aligned to the state's grade-level standards. Results from this assessment, taken by students in 1st through 6th grade, indicate that participants are significantly less likely to be at or above the benchmark (30%) than their non-participant peers (34%) at their end-of-year assessment in the spring. However, ELP participants that attended 100 days or more

⁹ Throughout the report, use of the word "significantly" refers to a statistically significant difference between two groups. The statistical significance testing results are available in the Data Tables.

of program were significantly more likely to be at or above the benchmark (33%), compared to participants that attended fewer than 100 days (22%).¹⁰

Reclassification

Reclassification means a student who is classified as an *English Language Learner* on the Initial [English Language Proficiency Assessments for California test \(ELPAC\)](#) becomes *Reclassified Fluent English Proficient* (RFEP) as measured by the following criteria: ELPAC, Standardized interim assessment, Parent opinion and consultation, Teacher evaluation, Writing/ELD Level (secondary only), and Grade Level Work (secondary only). West Contra Costa Unified School District's goal is to ensure all English Language Learners reclassify by 6th grade, obtaining English proficiency in order to be successful in A-G classes and college or career graduation. Reclassification occurs when a child demonstrates language proficiency sufficient to be successful in their academic classes. Reclassification is an indicator that students are on track for future academic success.

Analysis of reclassification rates amongst West Contra Costa Unified School District students indicate that Expanded Learning participants and non-participants are reclassified as English Proficient at similar rates (7% and 6%, respectively). Participants that attended 100 days or more of program were significantly more likely to be reclassified in 2018-19 (11%) than their peers that attended less than 100 days (5%).¹¹

College and Career Readiness

West Contra Costa Unified School District has identified college and career readiness as a priority for its students. This means going beyond state requirements for high school graduation and focusing on [University of California \(UC\)/California State University \(CSU\) requirements for admissions](#). Known as the "A-G requirements," these requirements are a series of 15 courses determined by UCs and CSUs to provide foundational knowledge and fundamental skills necessary to be successful in college and career. Students must receive a grade of "C" or better in each of these courses to demonstrate sufficient proficiency in order to be ready for college level course work, post-secondary education and career attainment. West Contra Costa Unified School District's goal is to transform today's scholars to become tomorrow's leaders by preparing them with the foundational knowledge and fundamental skills necessary for civic participation, access to higher education, and career attainment to successfully lead in the 21st century.

On the youth survey, a strong majority of high school youth reported that they are on track to meet A-G course requirements for high school because of the program (91%). Furthermore, most 7th - 12th graders reported feeling more prepared for the next grade level because of the

¹⁰ For complete early literacy data, see Data Tables, Section 5, Tables 24-27.

¹¹ For complete reclassification data, see Data Tables, Section 6.

Expanded Learning Program (75%); in particular, all high school youth felt prepared (100%). High school youth also reported that they have gained skills that will help support their transition to college (92%) and to the career/workforce (96%).

Data collected by West Contra Costa Unified School District suggests that program participants are more likely than their non-participant peers to be prepared for college and beyond. Program participants in 12th grade were significantly more likely to graduate from high school (85%) compared to their non-participant peers (73%). Furthermore, A-G courses required for UC and CSU admission were completed by 21% of program participants, compared to 17% of their non-participant peers.^{12, 13}

PROGRESS TOWARD ADDITIONAL STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

School Day Attendance

There is a strong relationship between students attending school and their academic outcomes; all else being equal, higher school attendance is associated with better outcomes.¹⁴ By promoting school attendance, expanded learning programs can support student achievement, build positive relationships between youth and program staff and their peers, provide engaging enrichment activities, and provide much needed support for struggling students, all of which give students another reason to come to school.

Youth who participated in an Expanded Learning Program attended school at a significantly higher rate than their non-participant peers (95% compared to 92%, on average), which translates to approximately five more days of academic instruction. A significantly smaller proportion of WCCUSD Expanded Learning participants were chronically absent (10%), compared to their non-participant peers (12%), aligned with the previous finding that participants attend school at higher rates.¹⁵

¹² There was not enough data to analyze the difference in UC/CSU admission eligibility between ELP participants who attended 100 days or more and their peers that attended less than 100 days.

¹³ For complete college and career readiness data, see Data Tables, Section 5, Tables 38-41.

¹⁴ Chang, H. & Romero M. (2008). Present, engaged, and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades. National Center for Children in Poverty.

¹⁵ For complete school day attendance data, see Data Tables, Section 7.

Grade Point Average

Students' class grades, reflected in their grade point average (GPA) can be a strong predictor of future academic performance and college success.¹⁶ For both middle and high school students, participants achieved a slightly higher average GPA than non-participants (see Table 1). Further, participants that attended 100 days or more of program had a slightly higher average GPA than their peers that attended less than 100 days.¹⁷

Table 1. Participants' GPA is higher than non-participants'

		Average GPA
Middle School	Participants	2.63
	100+ days	2.71
	<100 days	2.60
	Non-Participants	2.55
	Participants	2.45
High School	100+ days	2.72
	<100 days	2.44
	Non-Participants	2.11

Source: WCCUSD GPA records; matched to participant records maintained by the programs (August 20, 2018 - June 7, 2019) per program attendance records; Participants (n=1,833), non-participants (n=3,769), participants attending 100 days or more (n=222), participants attending less than 100 days (n=1,611).

English Language Proficiency

In line with the findings about Reclassification on page 11, English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) scores indicate that Expanded Learning participants who are designated as English Learners are significantly more likely to have well-developed English skills (11%) than their non-participant English Learner peers (8%). Further, English Learner participants that attended 100 days or more of program are significantly more likely to have well-developed English skills (13%) than English Learner participants who attended less than 100 days (9%).¹⁸

¹⁶ Hodara, M., & Lewis, K. (2017). How Well Does High School Grade Point Average Predict College Performance by Student Urbanicity and Timing of College Entry? REL 2017-250. *Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest*. Retrieved from: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2017250.pdf

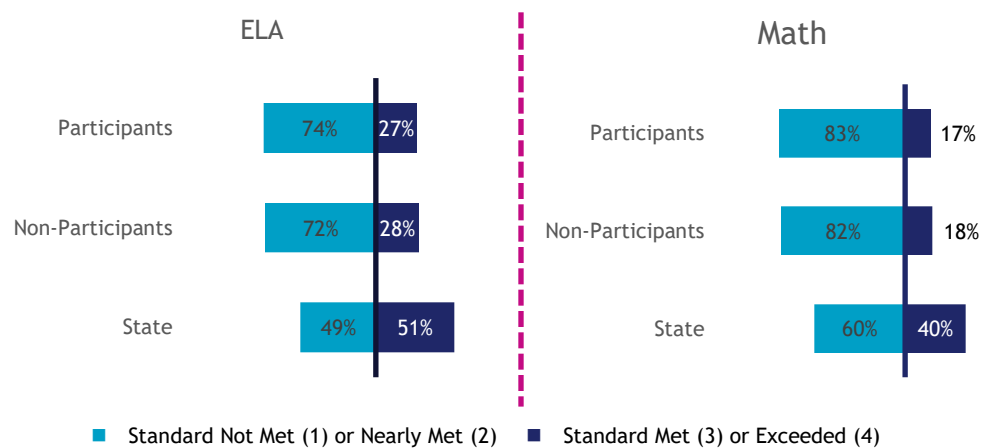
¹⁷ For complete GPA data, see Data Tables, Section 5, Tables 36-37.

¹⁸ For complete ELPAC data, see Data Tables, Section 5, Tables 42-43.

English Language Arts and Math Assessments

Each year, students across California take a standardized test of their English and math knowledge and skills to assess their progress against the state’s educational standards. Expanded Learning participants’ achievement levels follow the pattern of their non-participant peers in both the [SBAC](#) ELA and math assessments. Overall, the majority of all students did not meet ELA or math standards. The proportion of West Contra Costa Unified School District students (both participants and non-participants) who did not meet the ELA or math standard was considerably higher than the state, where 49% of students did not meet the ELA standard and 60% did not meet the math standard (Figure 4).¹⁹

Figure 4. Participant achievement levels follow their peers’ patterns



Source: WCCUSD SBAC records; matched to participant records maintained by the programs (August 20, 2018 - June 7, 2019); Participants with ELA Scores (n=2,506), non-participants with ELA Scores (n=6,570), participants with math scores (n=2,557), and non-participants with math scores (n=6,692); Statewide comparisons drawn from the 2019 SBAC Results, includes scores from students in 3rd-11th grade, retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/2018-19-CA-SBAC-Results>

Participants who attended more than 100 days met or exceeded the ELA standard at a similar rate as participants who attended less than 100 days (26% and 28%, respectively). Scores on the SBAC math followed the same pattern: 17% of participants met or exceeded the math standard, regardless of number of program days attended.

¹⁹ For complete SBAC data, see Data Tables, Section 5, Tables 28-35.

CONCLUSION

Through significant investment in point-of-service quality, WCCUSD Expanded Learning Programs provided youth with a safe and supportive environment. Youth and families both reported experiencing a high quality program where youth experience the intended benefits of the program, such as increased social emotional skills and stronger academic skills that prepare them for high school, college, and career.

School day staff and Expanded Learning Program staff reported that there is a strong partnership between the Expanded Learning Program and the school, a cornerstone of high quality expanded learning programs. Furthermore, the Expanded Learning Programs support West Contra Costa Unified School District's 5-year strategic plan to have achieving students by supporting early literacy, reclassification of English Language Learners to English Language Proficient, and college and career readiness. Participants in the Expanded Learning Programs attend school at a higher rate, have higher GPAs, and are more likely to have well-developed English skills than their peers who do not participate in the program.

In the 2019-20 school year, the Expanded Learning Office will continue to operate its 30 Expanded Learning Programs, focusing on providing high quality programs in service of working toward West Contra Costa Unified School District's Roadmap 2022 goals.