# West Contra Costa Unified School District
# After School Programs 2013-14

# Building Quality Programs for
# Our Students

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the following people for their active contribution to the 2013-14 evaluation and report:

We are grateful to the West Contra Costa Unified School District After School Programs office for their support of this evaluation.

Katharine Sullivan, After School Program Coordinator
Alicia Azcarraga, Project Assistant
Joey Taber, Clerk

We also extend our thanks to the Agency Directors, Site Supervisors, and Group Leaders of the City of El Cerrito Parks and Recreation Department, Bay Area Community Resources and the YMCA – East Bay that provide services to the children and youth of West Contra Costa Unified School District every day. Their active participation in the evaluation is key to the success of this report.

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# SUMMARY

Research tells us that regular participation in high quality out-of-school time programs leads to positive outcomes for young people (Figure 1). The quality of the out-of-school time program is critical, although often overlooked.

Lacking a specific focus on quality, out-of-school time programs usually provide a safe environment lead by caring and supportive adults. However, young people also deserve the chance to learn new skills, broaden their horizons, develop social-emotional competencies, and practice leadership. These youth development outcomes in turn set youth up for lifelong success, increasing the chance that they will be healthy, productive adults.

### FIGURE 1. THEORY OF ACTION FOR WCCUSD AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS 2013-14
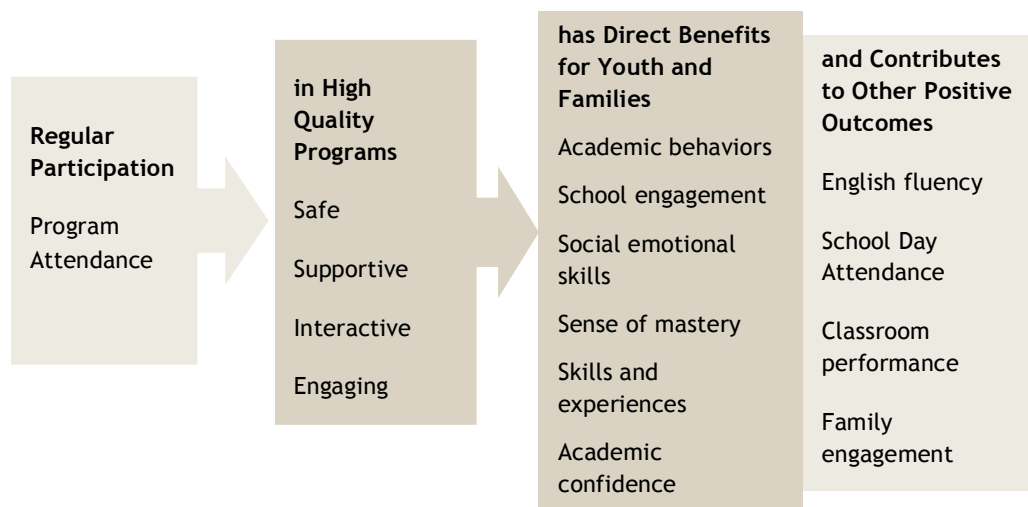
**Regular Participation**

Program Attendance

→

**in High Quality Programs**

Safe

Supportive

Interactive

Engaging

→

**has Direct Benefits for Youth and Families**

Academic behaviors

School engagement

Social emotional skills

Sense of mastery

Skills and experiences

Academic confidence

**and Contributes to Other Positive Outcomes**

English fluency

School Day Attendance

Classroom performance

Family engagement

In 2013-14, West Contra Costa Unified School District's After School Programs Office put quality first. WCCUSD After School Programs Office chose to use the Program Quality Assessment from the Weikart Center as a roadmap to define and measure quality. The PQA is a research-validated observation and assessment tool that brings with it many advantages: strong support and materials to help networks use the tool, extensive trainings on high quality program practices, and guidance on how to use the data collected using the tool to guide on-going program and staff improvement. Together, the trainings and supports aligned with the PQA tools made it ideal for the District as they embarked on the journey to put quality first.

WCCUSD After School Programs used the tool both to assess quality and as the roadmap for the conversation about quality among the District's After School Programs:

- ASP site leadership from all 28 sites attended monthly trainings in the aligned program practices.

- They then had the option to attend monthly follow up meetings to explore the content of the trainings with their peers District staff. Attendance at these meetings averaged 16 participants.

- All 28 sites used the first, foundational sections of the tool to assess their own programs, first as a site team near the start of the year and then with support from the District ASP office mid-year.

- Meanwhile, a group of 9 sites piloted the full tool and received extra training and support and wrote program improvement plans based on their assessment data.

- These pilot sites also observed and assessed their site a third time alongside the external evaluation team in the spring.

- As part of the District's own reflections, the 9 pilot sites provided feedback on the PQA roll out at the end of the year and made recommendations for the coming year.

- The evaluation team also visited a sample of 5 additional sites to conduct an external assessment and gather additional program quality data to support the evaluation.

Evidence from multiple sources suggests that using the PQA was a successful strategy for defining, measuring and improving quality.

- In an end of year focus group among a pilot group of 9 sites that used the full PQA tool, **site leadership repeatedly characterized the PQA as their roadmap to quality**. As one Site Supervisor stated, "Having a framework enlightened me on what a successful program should look like. PQA was the tracks that kept us on our way there."

Moreover, evidence also suggests that WCCUSD After School Programs are providing a safe and supportive environment for youth.

- **86% of youth reported feeling safe in the program** while 99% of parents agreed the program kept their children safe.

> **❝** *My kids are happy and safe and I feel great knowing my kids are in good hands. Great job!"* – Elementary Parent

- **All sites met minimum standards for safety**, as measured by Program Quality Assessment (PQA) observations.

- **89% of youth reported that there is an adult who cares about them** in the program; 87% of youth reported that they feel like they belong.

At the same time, the PQA showed key areas for growth among the programs: programs found they need to provide additional structure in their skill-building activities and foster additional leadership opportunities among participants.

- While **nearly all sites met minimal standards for a supportive environment**, a PQA domain that measures welcoming environment and support for skill-building.  When sites fell short, it was almost always by not fully implementing core skill-building practices, such as providing opportunities for active learning, having a clear learning objective, or asking open-ended questions to foster reflection.

- **Only 72% of youth reported that they get to help other students** in their program, a measure of youth's opportunities to mentor others. However, most sites met minimum standards in promoting youth interaction. These established program practices are a solid foundation on which to build youth leadership in the coming years.

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**Promising Practice: Fostering Peer Relationships**
*During site observations, several sites demonstrated strong practices in setting the tone for the day, in creating a warm welcome (greeting youth), and in creating specific opportunities for youth to get to know each other. They did this through opening check-in questions, activities about a program's core values, and by creating opportunities for youth to work together in small groups or in pairs.*

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- **Sites have room to grow in promoting engagement**: giving youth opportunities to plan, makes choices and reflect. While 79% of youth report that adults listen to what they have to say, only 58% report that they help decide rules or activities in the program. Few sites met minimum standards of engagement during observations, although several provided opportunities for youth to reflect on what they had learned at the end of after school activities — a key step in the learning cycle.

- **Nearly all parents (98%) report being satisfied or very satisfied with the program.** Similarly, 98% report that their child tells them good things about the program.

> &#8220;*[My daughter] has had the opportunity to work on her leadership skills, conflict management and creative arts. She is able to keep on top of her homework and her grades have improved as a result! The staff is wonderful and always acknowledges me when I come and makes time to talk if needed.*&#8221; – Elementary Parent

Meanwhile, in order for youth to benefit from high quality programs, they have to attend regularly. Evidence shows that youth attend programs fairly consistently. In fact, nearly all programs were able to reach their attendance requirements, a great improvement from the prior year.

- **Youth attended after school programs for an average of 117 days** in 2013-14, well past thresholds at which youth are likely to benefit.

- **Nearly all programs (26 out of 28) met their attendance targets** in 2013-14 compared to only 17 of these programs in the prior year.

**FIGURE 2. AVERAGE PROGRESS TOWARD ATTENDANCE GOALS BY PROGRAM TYPE**
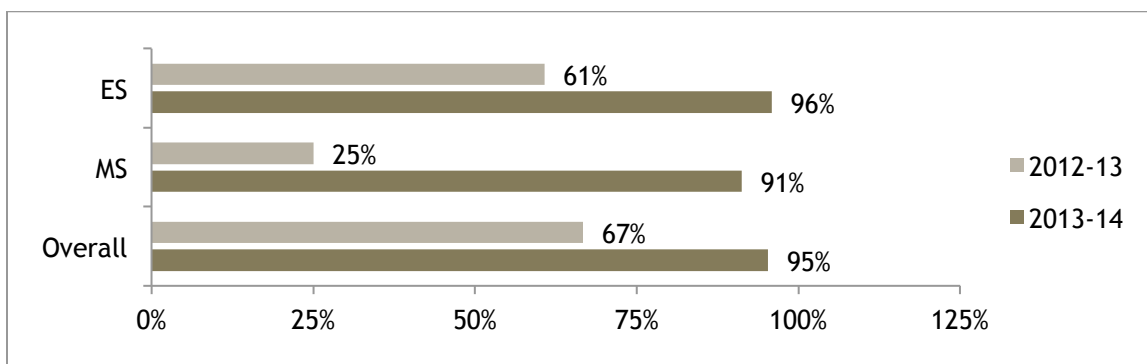


Source: WCCUSD After School Programs Office and Cityspan attendance system; 24 Elementary sites, 4 Middle School sites

Ultimately, programs are making a difference for students, their parents and the District as a whole. WCCUSD After School Programs has identified 3 key areas where they intend to have impact:

1)  WCCUSD After School Programs aim to develop non-academic, social-emotional skills, promote a sense of mastery and expand horizons.

    Evidence suggests that these Programs achieved this goal for many participants, although not all:

    • **After School Programs can support social emotional skills.** 84% of elementary youth report that they are proud of things they have done in the After School Program while 77% report that they are better at making friends.

    • **After School Programs promote mastery for many participants;** 84% of elementary youth are proud of things they've done in the After School Programs; 75% report that they are better at something they used to think was hard, a key measure of mastery.

2)  WCCUSD After School Programs develop youth's academic skills.  The approach to developing these skills is two-fold. In part, ASPs can support the development of non-cognitive academic behaviors and skills that set youth up for success. These behaviors and skills include developing strategies to prioritize and plan school work and feeling more connected to school.

    At the same time, ASPs can reinforce academic content such as reviewing and practicing math problems, providing time to practice vocabulary and reading comprehension, and providing science-focused activities.

    Evidence suggests that After School Programs are successful in developing these skills, although not among all youth.

    • **After School Programs can support academic skills and school engagement.** 74% of youth reported that they feel better about school because of the After School Program. 81% reported that they are better at getting their homework done. While not part of the scored observation, many sites were observed to provide supportive homework help and academic enrichment activities such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

*❝I'm very thankful to the afterschool program cause it has helped my kid to be more involved in class and do his homework on time."*
– Elementary Parent

- **13% of English Learners in After School Programs were redesignated** as English proficient in 2013-14. This is nearly one and half times the rate for the District as a whole (9%).

- **After School Program participants came to school an additional 4,765 days in 2013-14.** This additional in-school time translates into more learning time for students, and higher revenue for WCCUSD. Based on reimbursement rates, these additional school days attended are valued at $182,166 in additional revenue for WCCUSD.

" *Because of the program, my son has developed leadership skills and has become reclassified in English. I am very satisfied with the program.*" – Elementary Parent

3) WCCUSD After School Programs seek to benefit families by providing care for children so that parents can work or go to school, by helping youth complete school work when parents cannot and by increasing the family's connection to the school community.

Evidence suggests that After School Programs are successful in supporting families:

- **After School Programs support working families.** Nearly all parents (98%) report that the After School Programs enable them to go to school or work.

- **96% of parents agreed that they feel more comfortable at their child's school** because of the After School Program.

" *I'm happy with the program because I work till 4pm and I don't have anyone to pick them up and I don't like them walking home alone or waiting for me on the school grounds by themselves. So, I'm very happy that they are here, with an adult watching them. Being a single parent it's very hard for me working and taking care of them. This really helps a lot. Thank you.*" – Elementary Parent

Building on the great work of 2013-14, the journey to improve quality continues in 2014-15:

- **All WCC ASPs are using the full PQA tool to assess quality at their sites.** All sites will conduct a self-assessment and receive two additional assessments: one by the District and one by the external evaluation team.

- **Group Leaders are receiving training in high quality program practices.** Site Leadership and District staff are partnering to provide training in high quality program practices, monthly, to front line staff. This is in addition to on-going training for the Site Leadership as in the prior year.

- **All sites will develop data-driven program improvement plans** and learn techniques for one-on-one staff coaching to improve staff practices that support quality.

- Finally, **the District After School Programs Office is working with the West Contra Costa Education Fund** (the Ed Fund) to broaden the conversation about quality and define quality community-wide. The goal is to pilot the PQA in neighboring community-based after school programs.

As the journey toward quality unfolds, WCCUSD ASP and their partners will continue to keep the ultimate goal in mind: to give the youth in WCCUSD the best possible chance to beat the odds and grow into healthy, happy and productive teens and adults.

# LANDSCAPE OF WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT'S AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Recent studies indicate that 1 in 5 (11.3 million) of K-12 youth in America are left unsupervised after school.[1] These numbers are troubling, especially for youth living in communities with high levels of community stressors such as poverty, because youth without consistent supervision from 3pm-6pm are at a higher risk of becoming victims of violent crimes and engaging in risky behaviors such as smoking and drug use.[2] Youth who are not supervised and do not have access to enriching and supportive environments after school are also at a higher risk of experiencing academic difficulties, dropping out of school, and non-optimal social-emotional development.[3] Research has shown however, that after school programs can support youth academically and socially.[4]

## There is a Need for High Quality After School Programs

West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) serves communities and youth who are in particular need of high quality after school programs. The district has higher dropout rates, lower graduation rates, and lower percentages of students scoring Proficient and Advanced on state tests than the California state average. A substantial portion of WCCUSD students are English Learners (35%), while an even greater proportion of After School Program participants are English Learners (47%). Over two-thirds of all students in the District receive free or reduced price meals (71%), a commonly used indicator of low-income status.[5] An even greater proportion of students at the After School Program Sites are eligible for free or reduced prices meals (85%).[6]

Additionally, there are few viable options for families that need a safe place for their children to be during after school hours. Although there are an estimated 14,800 after school slots needed for elementary and middle school students, there are only about 700

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[1] Afterschool Alliance. (2014) *America After 3 PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand.*

[2] Riggs, N. R., & Greenberg, M. T. (2004) "The role of neurocognitive models in prevention research." In D. Fishbein (Ed.): *The science, treatment, and prevention of antisocial behaviors: Application to the criminal justice system:Vol. 2. Evidence-based practice.* Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.

[3] Mahoney, J.L, Parente, M.E. & Zigler, E.F. (2009) "Afterschool programs in America: Origins, Growth, Popularity, and Politics." *Journal of Youth and Development* Vol. 4(3).

[4] Durlak, J.A., Weisssberg, R.P., & Pachan, M. (2010) "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents." *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 45.

[5] Ed Data (http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/), accessed 9/29/2014.

[6] From the WCCUSD After School Programs Office 21st Century Learning Centers grant application, December 2013.

slots available in community-based, city and county programs. District programs are necessary to close that considerable gap.[7]

## About WCCUSD After School Programs

School-based After School Programs are supported by the WCCUSD After School Programs Office. Publically-funded After School Programs operate in 28 schools throughout West Contra Costa Unified School District, including 24 elementary schools (grades K-6) and 4 middle schools (grades 7-8). The WCCUSD After School Programs are open to all students at the host school at no cost to the family. In some cases, schools may determine specific criteria for priority student enrollment, such as low academic performance or social needs.

All of the After School Programs on WCCUSD campuses receive funding through the After School Education and Safety (ASES) and 21st Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant programs administered by the California Department of Education.

The After School Programs operate with the following goals for each grant, with a particular focus on improving children and families' well-being by supporting the development of their physical, social-emotional, and academic skills.

**ASES grant goals:** programs provide children and youth with safe and educationally enriching alternatives during non-school hours, including literacy, academic enrichment, and safe, constructive activities.

**21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant goals:** programs provide students with academic enrichment opportunities and additional supportive services necessary to help them meet state and local standards in the core content areas. 21st CCLC programs are intended to:

- Improve academic achievement
- Provide enrichment services that reinforce and complement the academic program
- Provide family literacy and related education development services

### Staffing

WCCUSD After School Programs share a basic staffing pattern across all sites, though specific staff duties may vary somewhat from site to site. Shared features include a full-time Site Supervisor, a Lead Teacher, and youth development workers (Group Leaders).

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[7] Avila, Tanya and Public Profit. (2011) "Out-of-School Time Programs in West Contra Costa County: Community Need, Current Capacity, and Program Characteristics." The West Contra Costa Public Education Fund.

Many After School Programs also work with additional service providers for specific services, and some may rely on regular volunteer assistance as well. At some sites, certificated teachers provide targeted academic assistance and academic enrichment activities for After School Program participants through extended contracts.

The **Site Supervisor** is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the After School Program, for supervising staff, for recruiting and retaining youth, and for establishing and maintaining relationships with school administrators and faculty, the families of participating students, and the staff of local community based organizations.

**Lead Teachers** are certificated school day teachers who promote integration with the school day through aligning After School Program activities with state curricular standards, providing professional development for after school staff, and facilitating ongoing communication between the After School Program and the school day staff.

**Group Leaders** (i.e., line staff) provide the bulk of direct service to youth in After School Programs, and are responsible for leading activities and assuring that youth are safe and supervised during program hours. Group Leader positions are generally part-time, part-year, hourly jobs that are often filled by college-age students and community members.

## Program Operations & Links to Host Schools

Each After School Program is managed by a local community-based organization known as a lead agency. In West Contra Costa, three lead agencies partner with the District to run the programs:

- Bay Area Community Resources (BACR)
- City of El Cerrito Park and Recreation Department
- YMCA of the East Bay

Working in close partnership with school leadership, lead agencies are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the After School Program, including staffing, budgeting, program design, and managing extensive compliance and reporting requirements.

After School Program quality is supported by close relationships between the After School Program staff and regular school day staff. When the After School and regular school day are well aligned, After School Program activities can complement and reinforce regular school day learning, and provide seamless and integrated services for students.

## Program Activities

Publicly-funded After School Programs in West Contra Costa County provide a range of academic, physical, and enrichment activities. Within these broad categories, program staff and community partners develop activities to suit the unique interests and needs of the student population (see examples in Table 1).

### TABLE 1. SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

| CATEGORY | SAMPLE ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|
| Academic Support | • Skill Building Activities<br>• Homework Help<br>• Small Group Intervention |
| Physical Activities | • Basketball<br>• Football<br>• Soccer<br>• Volleyball<br>• Dance<br>• Ballet<br>• Baton & Flags |
| Enrichment | • Fashion Design<br>• Art in the Heart<br>• Cooking<br>• Animation<br>• Science Exploration |
| Other | • Leadership Homeroom |

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# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

## Evaluation Questions

**This report is guided by the following questions:**

1. To what extent do West Contra Costa Unified School District's After School Programs recruit and retain youth?
    a. *To what extent do programs provide the required access (3 hours per day, 5 days per week)?*
    b. *To what extent do they meet state and federal attendance requirements?*
    c. *What is the pattern of participant attendance? Do youth attend frequently and regularly?*

2. To what extent are West Contra Costa Unified School District's After School Programs providing a high quality experience for participants? Are the programs safe, supportive, interactive and engaging?

3. To what extent are programs meeting District goals related to youth and family outcomes?
    a. *To what extent do participants improve their academic skills and classroom performance? To what extent do they meet or exceed standards and District goals?*
    b. *To what extent do participants show improved behavior and achieve strong personal growth in non-academic areas?*
    c. *To what extent do parents improve their skills and help their children with school work?*

4. How did the Program Quality Assessment pilot affect programs' ability to assess and improve their programs in 2013-14 and to plan for 2014-15? How successful was the rollout? What factors contributed to this success?

# Program Quality: A Theory of Action

Research into the impact of after school programs tells us that regular participation in high quality programs benefits participating youth and their families. These benefits include outcomes for youth that are a direct result of the after school program itself: improved academic behaviors, increased school engagement, and non-academic skills such as social emotional skills.

In addition, after school programs can contribute to other positive outcomes for youth and their families: academic outcomes such as English fluency and classroom performance and family outcomes such as family engagement in the school and in the participant's academic work (Figure 1).

## FIGURE 3. THEORY OF ACTION FOR WCCUSD AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS 2013-14
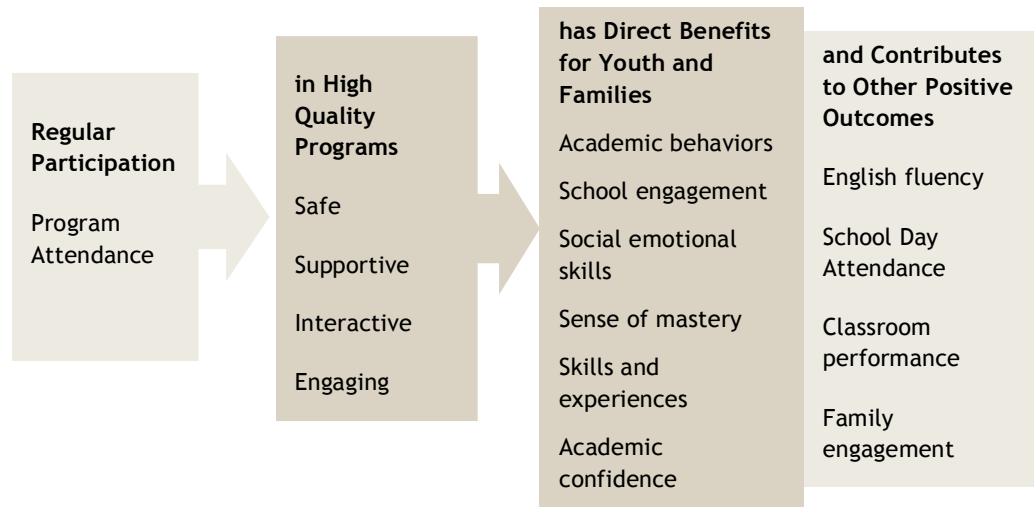
| Regular Participation | in High Quality Programs | has Direct Benefits for Youth and Families | and Contributes to Other Positive Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program Attendance | Safe | Academic behaviors | English fluency |
| | Supportive | School engagement | School Day Attendance |
| | Interactive | Social emotional skills | Classroom performance |
| | Engaging | Sense of mastery | Family engagement |
| | | Skills and experiences | |
| | | Academic confidence | |

In 2013-14, West Contra Costa Unified School District's After School Programs Office put quality first. Using a research-validated tool (the Program Quality Assessment) as their roadmap, the After School Programs office launched an initiative to assess and improve the quality of the District's 28 After School Programs.

# ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

## WCCUSD After School Programs Serve Those in the District who Need Services Most

WCCUSD After School Programs served 4,192 youth during the 2013-14 school year, or 14% of all students enrolled in WCCUSD that year. Attendance records indicate that After School Programs in elementary schools served 3,378 youth, and middle school-based programs served an additional 814 youth.

After School Programs served a smaller proportion of White youth participants, a slightly higher proportion of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander youth participants, and the same proportion of American Indian/ Alaskan Native youth as the District. After School Programs served an equal proportion of male and female students.

### TABLE 2. YOUTHS' RACE/ETHNICITY

| Race/Ethnicity Category | WCCUSD After School Programs (N = 4,192) | WCCUSD (N = 30,720) |
|---|---|---|
| Hispanic/Latino | 59% | 57% |
| African American | 23% | 21% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 12% | 11% |
| White | 6% | 12% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | less than 1% | less than 1% |

Source: WCCUSD After School Programs' Cityspan attendance system; Ed-Data, 2013-2014.

WCCUSD After School Programs serve a greater proportion of English Learners and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a key indicator of socio-economic status, compared to the District. Nearly half (47%) of After School Program participants were English Learners in 2013-14, compared to only 35% in the District as a whole.[8] A large majority of After School Program participants (85%) were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, compared to 71% of District students overall.[9]

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[8] After School Programs participant information directly from WCCUSD student data; District data from Dataquest (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest), accessed 9/29/2014.
[9] After School Programs participant information directly from WCCUSD; District data from Ed Data (http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/), accessed 9/29/2014.

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After School Program participants live primarily in three zip codes: 94801, 94804 and 94806, where the proportion of families living in poverty ranges from 15% to 25% of all families, compared to 15% for California as a whole.[10]

**FIGURE 4. PROPORTION OF WCCUSD AFTER SCHOOL PARTICIPANT BY ZIP CODE**
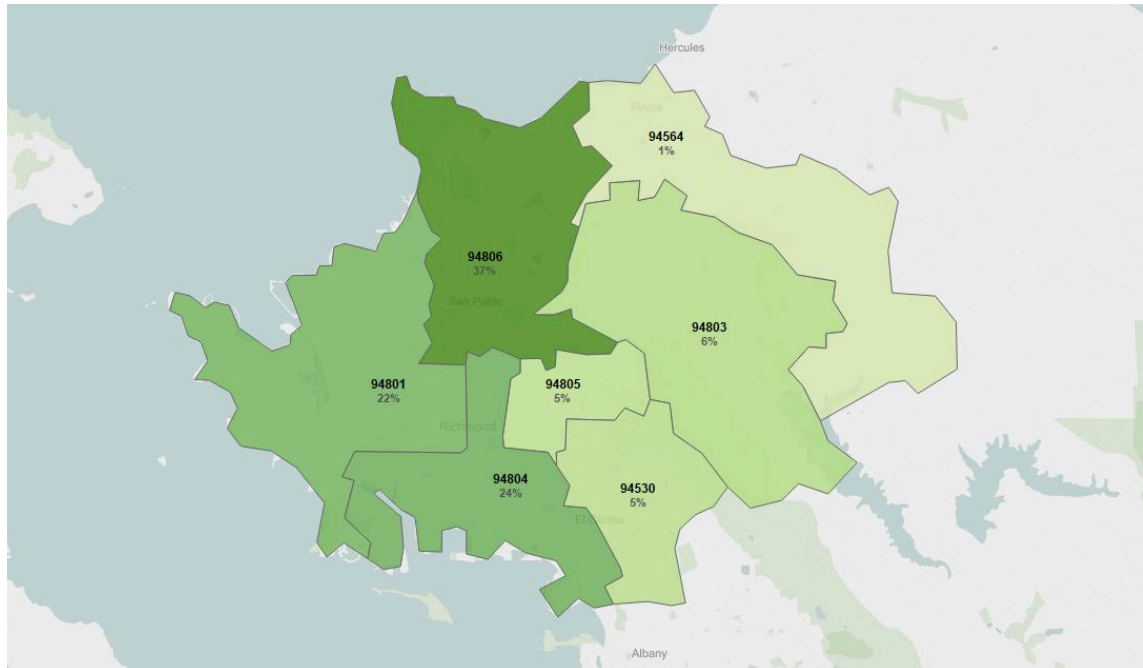


Source: WCCUSD After School Programs' Cityspan attendance system for youth who attended After School during the 2013-2014 Academic School Year and had a valid zip code reported (N=4,192).

WCCUSD After School Programs prioritize serving youth who need additional academic support. As a result, After School Program participants are less likely to test at grade level compared to their WCCUSD peers. On the 2012-13 CST English Language Arts, only 34% of 2013-14 After School Program participants performed at Proficient or higher, compared to 45% for the District as a whole. On the 2012-13 CST Math, 44% of 2013-14 After School Program participants performed at Proficient or higher, compared to the 51% of the District overall.

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[10] 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, American Fact Finder (http://factfinder2.census.gov/), accessed 9/29/2014.

## Some WCCUSD Programs Retain Youth Year-Round; Other Do Not

Research shows that when youth attend structured, high quality programs regularly, they reap the intended benefits. Youth do not need to attend a specific number of days, but research does suggest that at about 100 days, young people are more likely to benefit from participating in the program.

For younger youth in WCCUSD After School programs – those in grades K-6 – about 72% attend 100 days or more. For middle school youth – those in grades 7-8 – about 35% attend 100 days or more.

Overall, youth attended WCCUSD After School Programs an average of 117 days. Elementary School youth attended an average of 127 days, while Middle School youth attended an average of 74 days (Figure 3). Among elementary programs, 54% of participants attended at least 85% of program days. On the other hand, only 17% of middle school students attended 85% or more of program days.

### FIGURE 5. AVERAGE PARTICIPANT DAYS ATTENDED
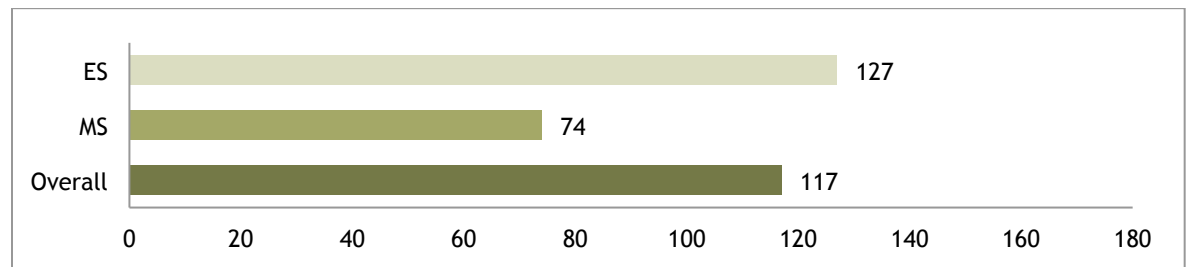


Source: WCCUSD After School Programs' Cityspan attendance system; 24 Elementary sites (n=3,378), 4 Middle School sites (n=814).

The evaluation team investigated whether the middle school participants' low attendance rate was due to sporadic attendance year-round (participants attend off and on all year) or to brief, but sustained attendance (participants attend regularly, but only for a few months out of the year).

The team found that 28% of middle school participants attended at least 85% of the possible programs days between their first and last day of program attendance. We conclude, then, that some middle school youth do attend regularly during the period when they are coming to the program. However, depending on the District's goals, retaining youth in the programs may still be an area where middle school programs can grow.

Notably, 80% of elementary participants attended at least 85% of available program days between their first and last day of program attendance.

# WCCUSD After School Programs Meet Grant Requirements

WCCUSD After School Programs are expected to meet specific attendance targets based on their grant funding amounts. These programs must meet an 85% attendance target established by the California Department of Education (CDE).

In the 2013-14 school year, the majority of both Elementary and Middle School programs met their CDE attendance targets, with 23 of 24 Elementary programs and 3 of 4 Middle School programs meeting or exceeding the 85% measure. This represents a substantial improvement from the 2012-13 school year, when only 16 of the same elementary school programs and 1 of the same middle school sites met or exceeded 85% of their attendance goal (Figure 4).

## FIGURE 6. AVERAGE PROGRESS TOWARD ATTENDANCE GOALS DEFINED BY CDE, BY PROGRAM TYPE
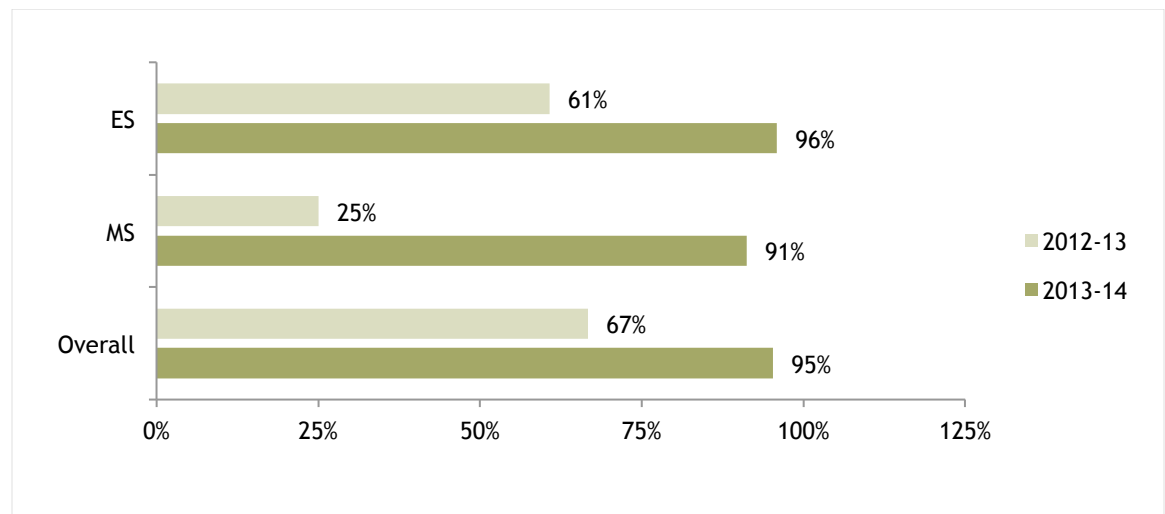


Source: WCCUSD After School Programs Office and Cityspan attendance system; 24 Elementary sites, 4 Middle School sites

# PROGRAM QUALITY

As articulated in the Theory of Action, youth can be expected to achieve positive outcomes when they participate in programs that are safe, supportive, interactive and engaging. This section presents particularly notable findings related to program quality, demonstrated by site visit observations and survey feedback.

WCCUSD's definition of program quality aligns with the Program Quality Assessment (PQA), a research-based point of service quality observation tool used by out of school time programs nationally.

### FIGURE 7. YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY PYRAMID
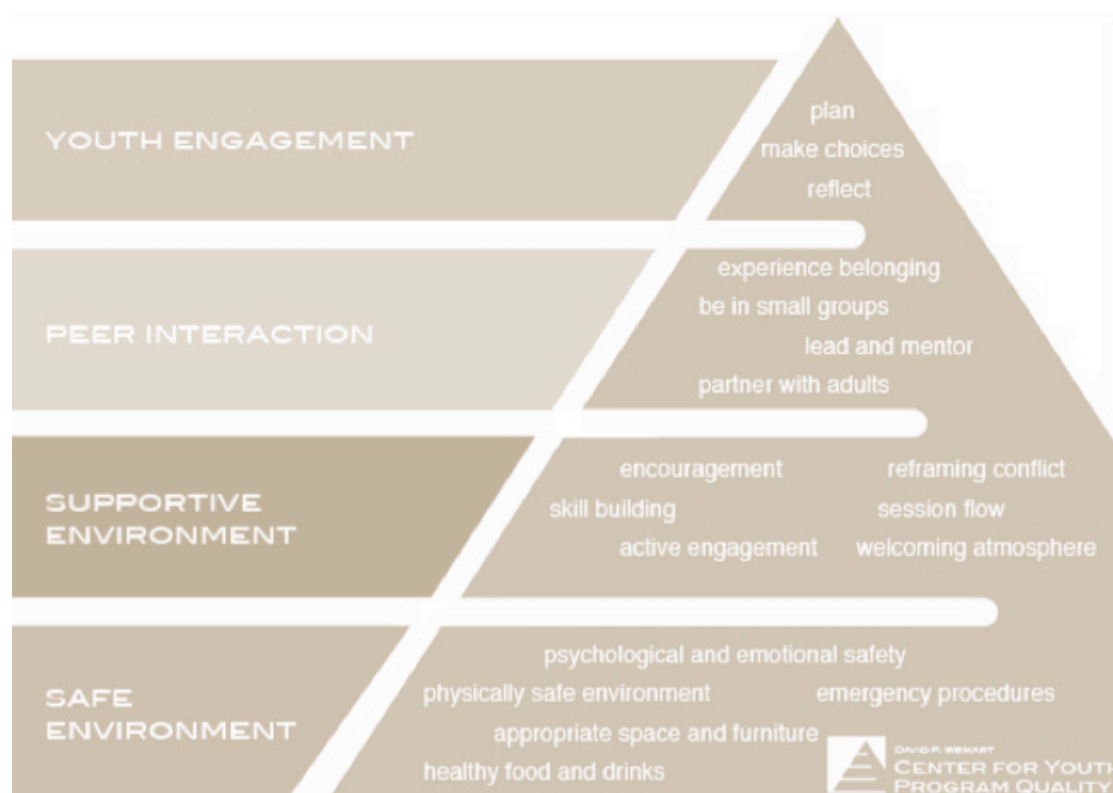


Source: Adapted from Youth PQA Handbook by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2007.

The Program Quality Assessment (PQA) includes four domains:

1. **Safe Environment** – Youth experience both physical and emotional safety. The program environment is safe and sanitary. The social environment is safe.

2. **Supportive Environment** – Adults support youth to learn and grow. Adults support youth with opportunities for active learning, for skill building, and to develop healthy relationships.

3. **Interaction** – There is a positive peer culture in the program, encouraged and supported by adults. Youth support each other. Youth experience a sense of belonging. Youth participate in small groups as members and as leaders. Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.

4. **Engagement** – Youth experience positive challenges and pursue learning. Youth have opportunities to plan, make choices, and reflect and learn from their experiences.

The quality domains are inter-related and build upon one another. Broadly speaking, programs need to assure that youth enjoy a Safe and Supportive environment before working to establish high quality Interaction and Engagement. For example, a program in which young people are afraid to try new things for fear of being ridiculed by others - an example of an unsupportive environment - is not likely to be an interactive, engaging place for kids.

Using the PQA, all 28 sites conducted a self-assessment in fall 2013. In the winter, WCCUSD After School Programs Office staff conducted observations with site staff. The District then charged sites to use feedback from those observations to drive program quality improvements.

Then, in spring 2014, the evaluation team of certified PQA assessors conducted visits to a sample of 15 sites. We report data from these external assessor visits in the following pages.

In addition to the visits, youth, their parents and school day staff completed self-administered questionnaires about the quality of the programs using survey instruments developed by the evaluation team.

*" The after school program has provided an extremely safe and productive environment for my daughter after school. She has had the opportunity to work on her leadership skills, conflict management and creative arts. She is able to keep on top of her homework and her grades have improved as a result! The staff is wonderful and always acknowledges me when I come and makes time to talk if needed. They are very caring and attentive to all the kids and their needs and I am grateful to have such a place for after school care so I can work."*
– Elementary Parent

# Youth Have a Safe Place to be During After School Hours

**Benefit to Youth**

*86% of youth reported feeling safe in the program.*

**Program Practice**

*All visited sites met minimum standards for youth safety, scoring 3+ on the Safe Environment Domain.*

**Parent Opinion**

*99% of parents agreed that programs keep their youth safe.*

The foundation of a successful after school program is an environment in which all students are physically and emotionally safe. Research has demonstrated that students' perceptions of danger are associated with their school performance and achievement test scores.[11] This suggests that students' foundational needs (e.g., safety and well-being) are essential to address before they can attend to higher order tasks such as learning. Programs that provide a safe environment also allow students to feel a sense of belonging and express themselves in authentic ways. Furthermore, environments that promote physical and emotional safety are conducive to positive peer and staff-student relationships.

## Programs Provide a Safe Environment

Available evidence suggests that all programs are providing a safe environment for young people. Site observations indicate that most programs assure youths' safety, with nearly all observed elementary and middle programs providing a safe environment consistently and well (scoring a '3' or '5' on indicators in this domain where a '1' indicates that the practice was not observed or did not meet minimum standards, a '3' indicates a basic standard of practice, and a '5' indicates a strong practice). However, at some sites, programs did not meet minimum standards for emotional safety as visitors observed slurs or other name-calling not addressed by staff.

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[11] Ratner, H., Chiodo, L., Covington, C., Sokol, R., Ager, J., & Delaney-Black, V. (2006). "Violence Exposure, IQ, Academic Performance, and Children's Perception of Safety: Evidence of Protective Effects" in *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly: Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 52(2), 264-287.

## Most Youth Feel Safe

The majority of youth (86%) report that they feel safe in their program. However, there is considerable variation among sites. At twelve sites, more than 90% of youth reported feeling safe. On the other hand, at five sites, fewer than 80% of youth reported that they feel safe. On average, a higher percentage of youth reported feeling safe in middle school programs compared to elementary sites. At middle school sites, 92% of youth agreed that they feel safe in their program, compared to 84% of youth in elementary school programs. In addition, all five sites where fewer than 80% of youth reported feeling safe were at elementary schools.

### TABLE 3. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED PHYSICAL SAFETY IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE

|  | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| I feel safe in this program. ✪ | 84% | 92% |
| I have rarely had other kids hit or push me when they are not just playing around. | 84% | |
| I have rarely had mean rumors or lies spread about me at this program. ⊙ | 82% | |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my religion. | | 96% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my gender. | | 95% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my physical or mental disability. | | 95% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my sexual orientation (or perceived orientation). | | 94% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my race, ethnicity or national origin. ⊙ | | 90% |
| I have rarely been bullied for any other reason. ⊙ | | 81% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014; Elementary school responses represent the percent of youth who selected "Never" or "Only some of the time" when asked how often they experienced physical or verbal bullying. Middle school responses represent the percent of youth who selected "0 times" or "1 time" when asked how many times they had been bullied for a specific reason.

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Middle school male participants were less likely to report feeling safe in their program. African American students were more likely to report experiencing bullying compared to their peers (on items marked in Table 3). Middle school Asian participants were more likely to experience harassment for their race, ethnicity or national origin compared to Latino peers.

> ❝ *At times I believed that my daughter is teased/bullied by others so at time I don't feel that she is safe. But because it does not happen on a regular basis she continues to be in the program."*
> – Elementary Parent

> ❝ *My kids are happy and safe and I feel great knowing my kids are in good hands. Great job!"*
> – Elementary Parent

## Parents and Staff Agree that the Programs Keep Youth Safe

Parents, school day teachers, and principals also provided their perspectives on program safety in the year-end surveys. The vast majority of parents (99%) felt that the After School Program was a safe place for their child. Moreover, more school day staff ranked "creating a safe place for our students" as a top strength of the After School Program than any other item from a list of nine possible strengths (see page 36 for more on the staff survey).

# YOUTH SAFETY PERCEPTIONS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Comparing rates of bullying among After School Program participants with bullying in the regular school day can provide valuable context for understanding youth experience. In 2012-13, students in WCCUSD completed the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), a survey developed for the California Department of Education that serves as a rough benchmark for rates of physical and verbal harassment. In general, youth report similar rates of bullying during the school day as in the After School Programs.

With regards to physical bullying, a slightly higher percentage of WCCUSD ASP participants (16%) reported frequent physical bullying compared to CHKS respondents (14%).

When looking at verbal harassment, 15% of elementary school age CHKS respondents reported that other children frequently spread mean rumors or lies about them. In contrast, 19% of elementary After School Program participants reported this.

In middle school, reported rates of bullying for most reasons were roughly equivalent between CHKS respondents and After School Program participants. However, a greater proportion of After School Program participants reported being bullied for a disability compared to school day respondents (5% and 2% of respondents, respectively).

| | After School | WCCUSD CHKS |
|---|---|---|
| **Elementary School** | **(n=1,555)** | **(n=642)**[12] |
| Other kids frequently hit or push me when they are not just playing around (most of the time or all of the time). | **16%** | 14% |
| Other kids frequently spread mean rumors or lies about me at this program (most of the time or all of the time). | **19%** | 15% |
| **Middle School** | **(n=326)** | **(n=1,366)**[13] |
| I have been harassed or bullied for my religion several times (2 or more times). | **4%** | 4% |
| I have been harassed or bullied for my gender several times (2 or more times). | **5%** | 4% |
| I have been harassed or bullied for my physical or mental disability several times (2 or more times). | **5%** | 2% |
| I have been harassed or bullied for my sexual orientation or perceived orientation several times (2 or more times). | **6%** | 4% |
| I have been harassed or bullied for my race, ethnicity or national origin several times (2 or more times). | **10%** | 11% |
| I have been harassed or bullied for any other reason several times (2 or more times). | **19%** | 17% |

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[12] 5th grade students only.
[13] 7th grade students only.

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# Youth Have Opportunities to Form Encouraging & Caring Relationships with Adults in a Supportive Environment
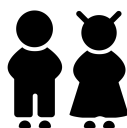
**Benefit to Youth**

*89% of youth reported that there is an adult who cares about them in the program.*

**Program Practice**

*Most visited sites met minimum standards, scoring 3+ on the Supportive Environment Domain. However, all sites could improve their support for skill-building in the program.*

**Parent Opinion**

*97% of parents reported that there is an adult in the program their child can talk to about his or her problems*

Research on youth development suggests that after school programs provide a valuable context for youth to develop positive relationships with their peers and adults.[14] These relationships can provide a foundation that encourages youth to pursue positive social connections with others outside of the program.

Additionally, opportunities to develop relationships with adults and peers can buffer youth from the negative impact of risk factors (e.g., poverty, living in violent neighborhoods).[15] Thus, the quality of student-staff and peer relationships is a key element in providing a supportive environment to students.

## Programs Provide Support and Build Skills

Available evidence suggests that all programs are providing a supportive environment for young people. Site observations indicated that most programs provide a warm, welcoming atmosphere, with nearly all observed programs scoring a '3' or '5' on indicators in much of this domain. Overall domain scores ranged from 3 to 4.5, with an average of 3.6 among elementary programs and 3.5 among middle school sites. Sites at all levels scored highest in the scales "staff provide a welcoming atmosphere" and "session flow is planned, presented, and paced for children/youth", indicating that the sites are maintaining some core elements of a supportive environment.

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[14] Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R., & Hansen, D. 2003. "Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities" in Journal of Youth and Adolescence 32(1), 17-26.

[15] Masten, A. S., & Coatsworth, J. D. 1998. The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. American Psychologist, 53, 205–220.

However, all sites could improve their learning and skill-building opportunities, with most sites failing to meet minimum standards for at least some of these program practices. In particular, sites have room to grow in practices that support skill building and in providing encouragement.

**Promising Practice: Skill Building and Encouragement**

*At one site the Group Leader led an activity where youth got to make bubbles using soapy water on their desk's top surface. During the activity, the Group Leader read questions from the lesson plan designed to increase the challenge by having youth try to create bubbles in specific ways, such as creating two bubbles apart from each other and then try to bring them together.*

*At another site, the Group Leader asked an opening question to generate hypotheses about air resistance, then allowed youth to respond with various ideas. Even when the ideas seemed like they would not work, the Group Leader responded with non-evaluative encouragement: "OK, we can try that as a hypothesis. We can try that today."*

## Youth Have Access to Caring Adults

Overall, program participants reported having supportive relationships with staff, agreeing that adults in their program care about them and want them to succeed (Table 4).

However, youth responded less positively when asked about how adults receive them, with only 78% of respondents agreeing with the statement "I feel like the adults are happy to see me here." While the reason for this discrepancy cannot be answered with available data, it may suggest that program staff are focusing on setting high expectations, perhaps at the expense of providing a warm atmosphere.

" *The after school program staff are very nice, and really do their best to monitor and assist the kids. From what I can see the staff work well together. I feel very comfortable with most of the staff and would certainly send my daughter back next year. The staff are great!"*
– Middle School Parent

**TABLE 4. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED CONNECTION TO CARING ADULTS IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE**

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| In this program, there is an adult who wants me to do my best. | 93% | 91% |
| There is an adult who cares about me in this program. ● | 88% | 89% |
| I feel like the adults are happy to see me here. ● | 78% | 78% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

English Learners were less likely to report that there is an adult who cares about them in the program, but were more likely to report that they felt adults in the program were happy to see them (marked in Table 4).

## Parents and Staff Agree that the Programs Connect Youth with Caring Adults

Parents, school day teachers, and principals provided additional perspectives on After School Programs' success in providing youth with a supportive environment. The vast majority of parents reported that their child connected with caring adults at the program, with 99% of parents agreeing that their child feels comfortable with the after school staff and 97% of parents reporting that there is an adult in the program their child can talk to about his or her problems.

Teachers and principals also indicated that After School Programs are providing a supportive environment for attendees. Nearly half (42%) of educators rated "providing positive, caring adults in our students lives" as one of the top 3 strengths of the After School Program at their site and only 17% selected it as a key area of improvement (see page 36 for more on the staff survey).

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# Youth Experience Positive Interaction with their Peers
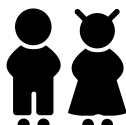
**Benefit to Youth**

*87% of youth reported that they feel like they belong at their program. However, only 72% of youth agreed that they get to help other students in their program.*

**Program Practice**

*Most visited sites met minimum standards, scoring 3+ on the Interaction Domain. However, all sites could improve opportunities for youth to collaborate with each other.*

**Parent Opinion**

*96% of parents agreed that their child's After School Program provides opportunities to develop leadership skills.*

Programs where program staff provide students with opportunities to interact with their peers in pro-social ways generate a positive peer culture and opportunities for youth to develop their social and emotional skills. Moreover, collaboration and cooperative learning can increase social competence, improve conflict resolution skills, increase youth's sense of belonging and, in some situations, even lead to a greater acceptance of differences.[16],[17]

**Promising Practice: Fostering Peer Relationships**

*Program observations at several sites demonstrated strong practices in setting the tone for the day, in creating a warm welcome (greeting youth), and in creating specific opportunities for youth to get to know each other, even though it was at the end of the year.*

*At one site, the Group Leaders brainstormed with the youth possible opening check in questions, then narrowed the list down to two and asked them to vote for one. Once they voted, a Group Leader wrote the question on the board. Then, each youth in turn shared how their day was and then answered the check in question.*

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[16] Hromek, R. & Roffey, S. (2009). Promoting social and emotional learning with games. *Simulation Gaming, 40(5)*, 626-644. doi: 10.1177/1046878109333793

[17] Slavin, R. E. (1995, October). *Research on cooperative learning and achievement: what we know, what we need to know*. Retrieved from http://www.emporia.edu/~hollandj/it820fa14/article.pdf

### Programs Build Community and Provide Opportunities to Collaborate

Of the sample of 9 sites rated on this domain through site observations, most sites demonstrated minimum quality practices supporting positive interaction and collaboration, scoring a '3' on most items in this domain. Overall domain scores ranged from 2.8 to 3.8. Both elementary school and middle school programs scored highest on average in the scale "children have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging", which was also reflected in youth survey results (Table 5).

However, programs scored lower on average in scales addressing opportunities for children and youth to develop leadership skills or partner with adults. These results suggest that while most programs have succeeded in providing an environment where youth have positive relationships with one another and feel they belong, sites could expand the opportunities for youth to collaborate with one another and for adults to share leadership with participants.

### Youth Are Part of a Community of Peers

Youth reported having positive social relationships and a sense of belonging in their program overall, with a moderately high percentage of participants agreeing that they have a friend in their program who cares about them and that they feel like they belong at their program (Table 5).

In contrast, a substantially lower proportion of participants agreed that they get to help other students in their program (72% overall). Middle school respondents especially reported a lack of opportunities to help other participants in their program, with only 66% agreeing with this question compared to 73% at Elementary sites (Table 5).

**TABLE 5. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED INTERACTION OPPORTUNITIES IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE**

|  | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| I have a friend in this program who really cares about me. | 89% | 90% |
| I feel like I belong at this program. | 87% | 87% |
| I get to help other students in this program. | 73% | 66% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ☉ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

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**Promising Practice: Youth Responsibility**

*At one site, two students are selected each day from the 1ˢᵗ - 4ᵗʰ grade group and the 5ᵗʰ - 6ᵗʰ grade group to lead snack distribution. Before they called up table groups to come get their snack, the two students spent about a minute figuring how they were going to reorganize the placement of the crates for easy distribution. Once the crates were set up the way the students wanted them to be, the two students then surveyed the cafeteria looking for the quietest table and called them to line up in two single file lines. The snack leaders each inspected their respective lines by walking up and down making sure students were quiet and in a perfect line before handing out snack packages.*

*Staff members were completely removed from the operations of snack time allowing the students to take control. Students who were not snack leaders on this day were aware of behavioral expectations and very cooperative with the student leaders.*

## Parents and Staff Agree that the Programs Provide Opportunities to Work Together

While youth survey and site visit results suggest that participants could benefit from more opportunities to collaborate with their peers and practice leadership skills, parent survey feedback is more positive on these points. On average across all programs, 97% of parents agreed that the After School Program gave their child "opportunities to 'make a difference' by helping other people, the school or the community" and 96% of parents reported their child having opportunities to develop leadership skills.

However, school day teacher and principal surveys echoed the patterns found in site visits and youth survey results, with only 14% of respondents identifying "improving our students' leadership skills" as a top strength of the After School Program, and 30% indicating it was a key area for improvement. School site staff were somewhat more ambivalent when reflecting on After School Programs' effect on peer-to-peer relationships, with 28% of respondents identifying "improving our students relationships with other students" as a strength and 25% considering it an area for improvement (see page 36 for more on the staff survey).

**❝***This program gives my child the opportunity to develop communication skills with his peers."* – Elementary Parent

## Youth Are Engaged
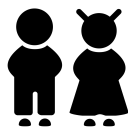
**Benefit to Youth**

*79% of youth agreed that the adults in their program listen to what they have to say. On the other hand, only 58% of youth reported being able to help decide rules or activities in their program.*

**Program Practice**

*Few visited sites met minimum standards to support youth engagement; however, several sites showed promise.*

**Parent Opinion**

*"[This is a] program where kids can open up - reach out or become more involved in activities."*

*- Elementary School Parent*

Programs that provide engaging activities for youth can increase youth's sense of mastery and accomplishment, particularly when youth are exposed to challenging opportunities. Moreover, After School Programs strategies can promote metacognition, or "thinking about thinking," and self-regulated learning by providing opportunities for youth to plan and reflect on their activities. Both self-regulated learning and metacognition have been linked to academic achievement and a decrease in negative behaviors such as substance use.[18,19]

### Programs Can Provide Opportunities for Youth to "Think About Thinking"

Of the sample of 9 sites rated on this domain through site observations, few scored a 3 or better in youth engagement, a domain that measures opportunities for youth to make plans, choose how to conduct activities, and reflect on those activities. Domain scores varied widely among all programs, ranging from 1.8 to 4.0, with most programs scoring a 3 or below overall and/or falling short of the minimum standards in at least one scale (6 of 9 sites).

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[18] Pintrich, P. & DeGroot, E. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82*(1), 33-40. Retrieved from http://web.stanford.edu/dept/SUSE/projects/ireport/articles/self-regulation/self-regulated%20learning-motivation.pdf

[19] Gestsdottir, S., Bowers, E., von Eye, A., Napolitano, C. M., & Lerner, R. M. (2010). Intentional self regulation in middle adolescence: the emerging role of loss-based selection in positive youth development. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 39*(7), 764-782. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9537-2

Elementary and middle school programs scored similarly on the scales in this domain, with lower average scores in the "Children/youth have opportunities to make plans" scale (2.2 and 2.0 respectively) and somewhat higher scores for "Children/youth have opportunities to reflect" (3.1 and 3.0 respectively).

**Promising Practice: Youth Talk About What They Are Doing or Thinking**

*At one site, the Group Leader led the 5th/6th graders outside after homework and made sure each had a paper and pen. He asked the youth to fold their paper into quarters and then write in what "Caring" – one of the YMCA's four core values – means to them. He then had them toss their paper into the middle of the circle where another youth picked it up and read it to the group. Youth were then asked to reflect on what was read aloud and on what caring means to them.*

*The group then went through this process with the other 3 core values: Honesty, Respect and Responsibility. The Group Leader used open-ended questions such as "What do you mean by that?" and "What does respect mean to you?" during the discussion to ask youth to expand on their answers.*

## Youth Have Some Opportunities to Plan, Choose and Reflect

Youth surveys reflect similar areas for improvement as observed in site visits. Youth respondents reported limited opportunities for involvement in program planning, with only 58% of youth agreeing that they "help decide things like activities and rules" in their program – the lowest positive response rate across all youth survey items. Elementary school and Middle school participants also differed in their response to this item; while younger youth were closer to the average with 59% in agreement, only 51% of older youth responded positively.

However, responses varied widely. While many youth did not report having an influence on program rules or activities, a much greater proportion of youth reported feeling that their voice is heard in their program. Overall, 79% of respondents agreed that, "the adults/staff members here listen to what I have to say" (Table 6).

English Learners were more likely to report opportunities to make decisions about program activities and rules, as well as find program activities thought provoking (marked in Table 6).

### TABLE 6. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED ENGAGEMENT IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| The adults/staff members here listen to what I have to say. ● | 79% | 80% |
| The activities in this program really make me think. ● | 72% | 68% |
| I help decide things like activities and rules in this program. | 59% | 51% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

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### Promising Practice: Structured Opportunities for Reflection

*The "outcomes" for homework time were written on the board in front of the class: "quiet, soft voiced homework time" and "finish homework."*

*At the end of the homework time, the Group Leader asked the 2nd graders to do a thumbs up/thumbs down reflection on two questions: "Show me on your thumbs how well you think you did as a person" and "How did the class do as a whole?"*

*She then asked a few students "Who can tell me what they liked about today?" followed by "Do you guys think we were able to accomplish our outcomes?" About 7 young people were able to talk about their experience in homework in response to these questions.*

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# THE USE OF THE PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS PROVIDED A VALUABLE ROADMAP TO QUALITY FOR WCCUSD AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

All nine Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Pilot Sites' Site Supervisors participated in a focus group in May 2014, giving the Site Supervisors an opportunity to reflect on the first year implementing these tools. The guiding questions for the group were:

- How did the PQA pilot affect programs' ability to assess and improve their programs in 2013-14 and to plan for 2014-15?
- How successful was the rollout? What contributed to this success?
- How has the rollout helped programs plan for 2014-15?
- How satisfied were the pilot programs with the PQA Pilot?

**OVERALL, THE PQA PILOT WAS A SUCCESS.** The Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Pilot led to program quality improvements at the sites. When asked directly, all the Pilot Sites agreed that their program improved in 2013-14 because of the PQA Pilot:

*We were successful in making the kids feel confident and cared for.*

*How I judge my success was my students' engagement and having a high enrollment.*

*I know we still have a lot of work to do, but I did see an improvement.*

In particular, the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) provided a roadmap to quality for the Site Supervisors. Site Supervisors noted:

*Even for a new coordinator, it was very helpful to have that roadmap for the language for what program quality is.*

*Being able to stay on track toward a program we can be proud of. Having a framework enlightened me on what a program should run like, what a successful program should look like. PQA was the tracks that kept us on our way there.*

While for some this roadmap helped them navigate a relatively new job; for at least a few sites the PQA served to connect the existing dots. As a couple of Site Supervisors noted, it brought together years of knowledge and experience in one framework:

*It was a great year. I have been doing this for many, many years, and this year put together all the components of what I've learned over the years. All the stuff we've always done, but putting it together. A light bulb came on.*

Moreover, all Pilot Sites would recommend using the full PQA to other sites and all were satisfied with the PQA Pilot. Finally, all Pilot Sites agreed that the PQA would help them plan for 2014-15, although none had begun to do so yet.

**DISTRICT SUPPORT WAS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS.** From the follow up sessions, to the Youth Work Methods trainings, to Katharine Sullivan, the District's Coordinator of After School Programs modeling practices at their site, nearly every Site Supervisor mentioned that they appreciated WCCUSD After School Programs Office (ASP Office) support and that it was integral to their success this year:

*I want to give a shout out to [District After School Programs Office staff] Katharine and Alicia for breaking down each one of the*

*trainings that we had and giving us the opportunity to say "I don't understand, I don't get it." Not only that, but also coming to us and being those open people [when I said] "I don't know what it looks like, can you model it for me?" and they had no trouble modeling it for me. That's what really helped me to succeed this year.*

**THE PQA BRINGS CONSISTENCY, BUT ALSO AN ADDITIONAL SET OF EXPECTATIONS THAT CAN BE OVERWHELMING.** Pilot Sites noted that, in the past, expectations for After School Programs in the District had shifted year to year as a result of staff turnover at the ASP Office. Site Supervisors were glad to hear that the PQA would continue into next year because it meant consistency from one year to the next. However, they reported that they feel caught between conflicting expectations of the ASP Office, District staff at their sites, parents, students and their own lead agencies. In that context, the PQA is simply another set of expectations that pull them in different directions:

*I have been working for the District for 7-8 years, and the most consistency that we've had is the fact that Katharine is still here now. We have gone through so many different types of surveys, so many different managers, systems, that we are really trying to just hold on so that we don't lose it from year to year.*

*The fact that you can reassure us that this is going to be the process next year, I think that holds a lot of weight in the upcoming year. If we were going to change and go with something totally different next year, I would lose it. This process has made us look inward a different way as opposed to*

*past years that I've worked with the school district.*

The Pilot Sites strongly agreed that the process was overwhelming at first, especially the sheer number of site visits over the course of the year:

*So many things coming at us [in the Pilot] and sometimes I just wanted to say, can we pause it, can we take a break?*

When asked whether they would recommend the full PQA to the other sites, one Site Supervisor said "I can see the merits of the PQA now, but the process was difficult and it was a big commitment." Another said that throughout the year, he would look at the sites not going through the Pilot and think to himself, "you have no idea," referencing the many different parts that go into using the full PQA and the scrutiny they were under as Pilot Sites.

**THE PILOT SITES' PERSISTENT CHALLENGE WAS COACHING THEIR LINE STAFF ON THE PQA ITSELF AND ON THE QUALITY PROGRAM PRACTICES ALIGNED WITH THE PQA.** During a brainstorm of the challenges encountered during the year, many staff listed some variation of this theme, such as "providing all the information I received and teaching my staff about PQA," "explaining process to staff," "staff buy-in of PQA," and "taking it back to site." Moreover, when asked to choose the 3 top challenges across the entire brainstormed list (over a dozen different items), all 9 staff marked a variation on "taking it back to staff" as one of their top challenges.

**THE PILOT SITES APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM OTHERS AND EACH OTHER.** Through informal and formal opportunities to meet with each other, through the monthly meetings and the additional sessions, and, for some, mentoring opportunities, Site Supervisors

learned a lot through peer conversations and modeling:

*Actually going to another site to observe a high performing site was really helpful.*

The middle school sites, in particular, thought it would be helpful to have a middle school break out at the monthly meetings at least some of the time:

*It would be nice to break up the group, some of the time, for the middle school to get a chance to plan together.*

The sites felt like these networks of support, including peer sharing and visiting other sites, could be expanded in 2014-15:

*Having a mentor to help us go through the process would have been nice, a really high performing site walk us through it and show us what we were able to do with little resources.*

*I think for next year, [the other sites starting the full PQA] should have a buddy site.*

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE FOCUS GROUP INCLUDE:

- WCCUSD After School Programs should continue to use the PQA tools as a roadmap for and measure of quality in the District's After School Programs.
- The After School Programs office should continue to provide opportunities for Site Supervisors to share best practices with each other, especially how they supervise and coach their Group Leaders.

# DIRECT OUTCOMES

High quality after school programs benefit young people directly, by building skills, expanding horizons and supporting positive academic behaviors and school engagement. Through these pathways, after school programs can also contribute to academic success. In addition, programs can provide an avenue for families to engage further with the school community. For information on these contributory outcomes, see page 43.

## Youth Have Opportunities to Build Academic Behaviors and Skills
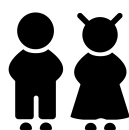
| Benefit to Youth | Program Practice | Parent Opinion |
|---|---|---|
| *84% of youth reported that they know why it's important to do well in school. However, only 74% of youth agreed that they feel better about school because of the After School Program.* | *While not part of the scored observation, many sites were observed to provide supportive homework help and academic enrichment activities such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).* | *91% of parents reported that the After School Program helps their child complete their homework on time, and as a result of the After School Program, their child's attitude toward school has improved.* |
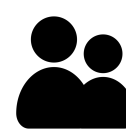
After school programs can build learning strategies, academic mindsets and academic behaviors, such as study habits and homework completion, which help youth succeed in school. Youth must develop academic behaviors such as test-taking skills and the ability to prioritize and plan study time in order to succeed. When youth consistently engage in academic behaviors and develop related non-cognitive skills, they are more likely to improve their academic performance.[20]

❝ *I'm very thankful to the afterschool program cause it has helped my kid to be more involved in class and do his homework on time."*
– Elementary Parent

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[20] Farrington, C.A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T.S., Johnson, D.W., & Beechum, N.O. (2012).*Teaching adolescents to become learners. The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance: A critical literature review.* Chicago: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

## Programs can promote academic skills

Overall, the majority of youth reported that participation in the After School Program improved their academic skills. In particular, over 8 in 10 reported that the program helps them know why it's important to do well in school. However, only 3 in 4 overall reported feeling better about school, with only 2 in 3 middle school participants reporting this. Especially compared to other survey responses, this suggests that programs can continue to grow in building participants' academic skills.

### TABLE 7. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED ACADEMIC SKILLS IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| This program helps me to know why it's important to do well in school. ● | 84% | 83% |
| I am better at getting my homework done on time. | 80% | 84% |
| I learn how to do things in this program that help with my school work. ⊙● | 80% | 74% |
| Because of this program, I feel better about school. ● | 76% | 66% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

English Learners were more likely to respond positively to all the academic skills survey items, with the exception of "I am better at getting my homework done on time" (marked in Table 7). African American participants are less likely to report that they learn things in the program that help with their school work, compared to their Latino peers.

> 66 *Thanks to the afterschool program, I can work without any problem. And, my daughter gets her homework done, which I could not help her with. Also, there are other activities in which she learns and makes friends. Thank you!"* – Elementary Parent (translated from Spanish)

Parent respondents agreed that the After School Program benefited their child academically. For example, ninety-one percent (91%) of parents agreed that the program helps their child "get their homework done on time", as well as agreed that their child's attitude toward school has changed since coming to the After School Program.

As seen in the following section on School Day Alignment (page 36), school day staff feel that the academic support the After School Programs provide could continue to improve. For example, the most commonly selected suggestion for improvement was to improve students' study skills, followed closely by "improve students' academic content knowledge."

## Youth Are More Engaged in School

Quality after school programs can also help participants feel more engaged in school by increasing their sense of belonging at their school, as well as positive attitudes toward school and learning.[21] Higher levels of school engagement have been connected to other positive academic outcomes, including increased school day attendance, academic performance, and standardized test scores. Lower levels of engagement, however, have been associated with poor school attendance (absenteeism and/or dropping out of school) and negative behavior.[22]

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[21] Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

[22] Klem, A.M., Connell, J.P. (2004). Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74* (7), 262-273.Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

About 3 in 4 youth report feeling more engaged in school because of the program. A greater proportion of elementary youth report improved school engagement compared to middle school participants. However, across the board, increasing participants' connection to the school may be an area for improvement for WCCUSD After School Programs.

### TABLE 8. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT BY PROGRAM TYPE

|  | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| This program helps me feel like a part of my school. ● | 79% | 75% |
| This program has helped me care about my school. ☉● | 79% | 72% |
| This program helps me enjoy learning. ● | 75% | 64% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ☉ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

English Learners were more likely to report that their program helps them feel like a part of their school, care about their school, and enjoy learning. African American and Asian participants are less likely to report that the program helps them care about their school compared to their Latino peers.

> **" *I love the program and that my daughter develops many different skills, gets better at doing her homework, and has more friends at school. She feels very comfortable in the program with the staff and the other students.*"**
> – Elementary Parent (translated from Spanish)

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# ALIGNMENT WITH THE SCHOOL DAY

After school partnerships between schools and community partners can benefit youth, the CBOs and schools. Youth benefit when programs intentionally support academic behaviors and learning, which in turn can improve academic outcomes for participants.[23]

After school can benefit schools by providing additional caring adults in the lives of its students, supporting a positive school climate through events and performances, providing enrichment, science, art, leadership and recreation not available during the school day, and reinforcing academic concepts.[24]

Finally, CBOs can benefit by having the opportunity to meet their mission to support youth in most need of their services, by accessing school day resources and expertise to improve program quality and staff engagement, and by having access to school day information to individually support students.[25]

### ALIGNMENT: ACADEMICS

Among school staff at sites that house an After School Program, nearly 9 out of 10 staff reported that the program aligns well academically with the school day. Most (90%) reported that the activities complement school day learning; 89% reported that the program supports the schools' academic goals for its students (Figure 5). Staff at elementary programs were slightly more likely to report that programs aligned academically with the

school day compared to middle school staff. Lead Teachers were slightly more likely to report that the activities complement school day learning (94%) compared to the average.

The handful of principals (7) who completed the survey were unanimously positive. All agreed that the programs aligned with school day academics.

However, as noted below (page 38), school day staff tended to view academic content and activities as key areas for improvement for the Programs, suggesting that while the After School Programs do support the academic goals for the school somewhat, they should aim to continue developing in this area.

### ALIGNMENT: COMMUNICATION

School day staff were less likely to report practices that support strong communication between the school and the After School Program. While most (89%) reported that they know which students attend the program, less than half (49%) reported visiting the program regularly. Only three-fourths reported being familiar with the program's daily activities. Moreover, only two-thirds communicate with the program about specific students (Figure 5).

While 95% of the Lead Teachers reported knowing which students attend the After School Program, only 63% reported visiting the program regularly. Principals responded more positively to these questions than other staff.

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[23] Little, Priscilla. "Supporting Student Outcomes Through Expanded Learning Opportunities." Harvard Family Research Project. January 2009.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

## FIGURE 8. SCHOOL DAY ALIGNMENT: ACADEMICS AND COMMUNICATION



| 90% | 89% | 89% | 76% | 69% | 49% |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| This program provides activities that complement school day learning. | This program supports our goals for students' academic success. | I know which students attend our after school program. | I am familiar with the daily activities of this after school program. | I communicate with this program about specific students. | I visit this program regularly. |
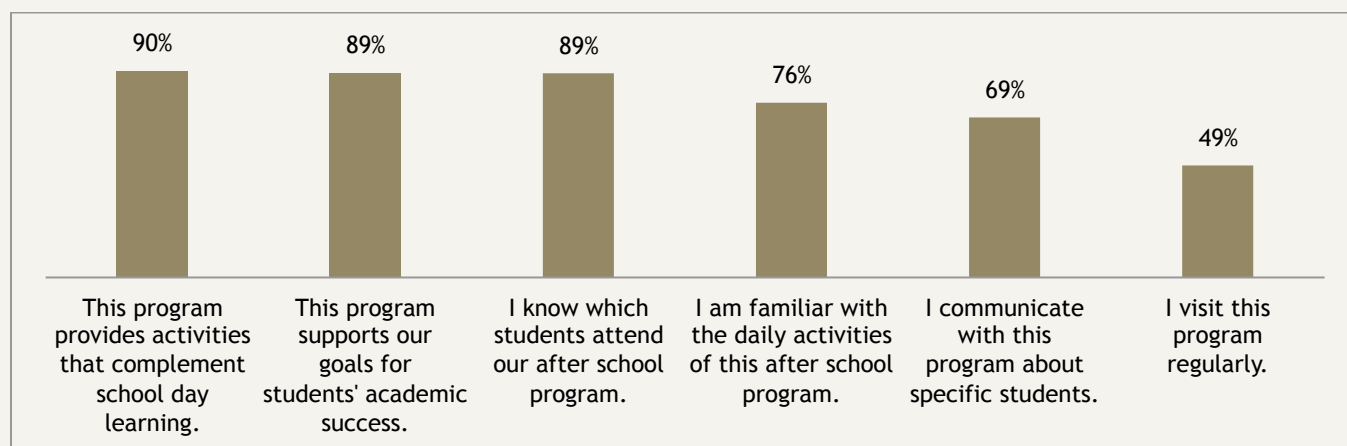
Source: School day staff survey, February – April 2014, n=283.

Since few school day staff reported that they are familiar with the program activities or visit regularly, this suggests that After School Programs should find ways to make school day staff more familiar with the strengths of the Programs. Programs may consider presenting at school-day assemblies, hosting tours of the program, partnering with the school day for major events, and finding ways for students to share their experiences in the program with the school day.

### STAFF PERCEPTION: AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

When asked to rank the top strengths of the After School Program from a list of 9 possibilities, school day staff overwhelmingly ranked "creating a safe place for our students" as a top strength. Many also ranked "providing positive, caring adults in our students lives" and "helping students complete their homework on time" as key strengths (Figure 6).

## FIGURE 9. AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM - STRENGTHS



| | |
| --- | --- |
| Creating a safe place for our students. | 66% |
| Helping our students complete their homework on time. | 46% |
| Providing positive, caring adults in our students lives. | 42% |
| Improving our students' study skills. | 33% |
| Exposing our students to new experiences. | 29% |
| Improving our students' academic content knowledge. | 29% |
| Improving our students' relationships with other students. | 28% |
| Improving our students' leadership skills. | 14% |
| Engaging our parents with the school. | 12% |

Source: School day staff survey, February – April 2014, n=283.

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However, school day staff felt that academic-specific activities in the After School Program could be improved. Half of the respondents ranked "improving our students' study skills" and "improving our students' academic content knowledge" as key areas for improvement (Figure 7).

Although ranked a top strength, 4 in 10 school day staff also ranked "helping our students complete their homework on time" as a key area for improvement, which may suggest that while support for homework is seen as a critical component of the program, the nature and quality of that support still has room for improvement.

**FIGURE 10. AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

| Area | Percent |
|------|---------|
| Providing positive, caring adults in our students lives. | 17% |
| Creating a safe place for our students. | 23% |
| Improving our students relationships' with other students. | 25% |
| Improving our students' leadership skills. | 30% |
| Exposing our students to new experiences. | 30% |
| Engaging our parents with the school. | 34% |
| Helping our students complete their homework on time. | 42% |
| Improving our students' academic content knowledge. | 49% |
| Improving our students' study skills. | 50% |

Source: School day staff survey, February – April 2014, n=283.

# Youth Learn Social and Emotional Skills and Develop Mastery
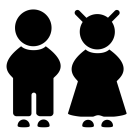
### Benefit to Youth

*84% of elementary youth are proud of things they've done in the After School Program.*

*77% of all youth reported being better at making friends because of the After School Program.*

### Parent Opinion

*96% of parents felt that their child has opportunities to try new things in the After School Program.*

*91% of parents felt that their child participates in activities that meet their child's interests and talents.*

In addition to skills that have a direct impact on academic success, after school programs can benefit young people, directly, in other ways. These programs can provide opportunities to persevere and master skills, to build social and emotional skills and to expand youth horizons through new skills and experiences. Available evidence shows that WCCUSD After School Programs are providing these direct program benefits for many participants.

## Youth Persevere and Master Skills

Perseverance – or grit – is associated with success in a wide range of settings.[26] After school programs can provide opportunities for youth to practice perseverance and achieve mastery by promoting skills development and positive learning strategies.[27] While promoting skill-building is still an area where WCCUSD programs can grow, evidence from the youth surveys shows that at least some youth experience mastery.

Over 8 in 10 youth reported feeling proud of things they have done in the program, often an indicator of skill building and mastery. A similar percent of youth reported that the program helps them work hard toward their goals. Elementary youth were more likely to respond positively than their middle school peers.

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[26] Duckworth et al. (2007). "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals" Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92 (6). Retrieved from http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf.
[27] Farrington, Camille, et al. (June 2012). Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Non-cognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review. The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

### TABLE 9. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED MASTERY IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| I feel proud of things I've done in this program. | 84% | 79% |
| This program has helped me work hard toward my goals. ☉● | 83% | 77% |
| I am better at something I used to think was hard. ✪● | 75% | 77% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ☉ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

Female participants and English Learners were more likely to report being better at something they used to think was difficult. English Learners were also more likely to agree that their program has helped them work hard toward their goals. Asian participants were less likely to report that the program helped them work hard toward their goals, compared to their Latino peers.

> ❝ *The after school program have improved my child's creativity and her learning skills. She looks forward into going to school and enjoys all the staff and classmates.* ❞
> – Elementary Parent

## Youth Expand Their Horizons

High quality after school programs can support learning in a variety of dimensions. In particular, after school can and should provide active and meaningful learning that builds skills and learning that expands horizons through new experiences.[28,29]

Elementary youth were more likely to report that they get to try something new (85%) or learn about something new compared to middle school participants.

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[28] Learning in Afterschool Project Position Statement. Retrieved from http://www.learninginafterschool.org/documents/PositionStatement.pdf.
[29] Birmingham, Jennifer, et al. (November 2005). Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation. Policy Studies Associates. Retrieved from http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf.

**TABLE 10. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED NEW SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE**

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| In this program, I get to try new activities/something I had not done before. ● | 85% | 77% |
| In this program, I learned how to do something new/a new skill that I'm excited about. ● | 80% | 66% |
| In this program, I learned about a new topic or subject that interests me. ⊙✪● | 72% | 69% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

English Learners were more likely to report getting to try something new, learning how to do something new or learning a new skill, and learning about a new topic of interest. Female participants were also more likely to report learning how to do something new, as well as learning about a new subject that interests them. White participants were less likely to report that they learn a new topic or subject that interests them compared to their peers.

## Parents Agree that Youth Learn New Things

Parents agreed that youth expand horizons. A large majority of parents (96%) felt that because of the program, their child has opportunities to try new things. Also, 91% of parents felt that their child is provided activities that meet their child's interests and talents. At the same time, several parent comments revealed that parents often wanted to see a greater diversity of activities or have their child cycle through the different activities offered in the program.

❝ *The after school program have improved my child's creativity and her learning skills. She looks forward into going to school and enjoys all the staff and classmates."* – Elementary Parent

❝ *I would love for the afterschool program to have more fun activities for the kids. Hopefully it can bring music or dance or other things. Overall it's ok, but it needs more."*
 – Elementary Parent

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## Youth Build Social and Emotional Skills

Participation in high quality after school programs is commonly associated with enhanced social and emotional skills.[30] These outcomes can be achieved through staff and peer modeling, with opportunities for youth to practice and apply social and emotional skills in the program.

Programs where program staff provide students with opportunities to interact with their peers in pro-social ways generate a positive peer culture and opportunities for youth to develop their social and emotional skills. Across both school levels, about 3 in 4 youth reported building social emotional skills (Table 11). In particular, 77% of youth at each grade level report that because of the program, they are better at making friends.

**TABLE 11. PARTICIPANTS' SELF-REPORTED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN AFTER SCHOOL BY PROGRAM TYPE**

| | Elementary (n=1,555) | Middle (n=326) |
|---|---|---|
| Since coming to this program, I am better at making friends. ●✪ | 77% | 77% |
| This program helps me listen to others. ⊙● | 77% | 71% |
| In this program, I learn how to work out my problems. ● | 75% | 72% |

| ✪ Gender difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ❖ 100 days difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ⊙ Ethnicity difference is statistically significant (p<.05) | ● English Learner difference is statistically significant (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014.

English Learners were more likely to agree that their After School Program helped them make friends, listen to others, and learn how to work out their problems. Female participants were also more likely to report that they were better at making friends since attending their program. African American participants were less likely to report that the program helps them listen to others, compared to their Latino peers.

> **" *My daughter's school work has improved. Her teacher comments on my child's improved behavior.* "** – Elementary Parent

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[30] Durlak, J.A., Weisssberg, R.P., & Pachan, M. 2010. "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 45.

# CONTRIBUTORY OUTCOMES

## After School Programs May Contribute to Improved School Day Attendance and English Learner Redesignation

Research shows that programs that specifically provide activities with the goal of improving academic performance can have a modest impact on academic success.[31] Also, high quality after school programs can engage youth with the school community and lead to improve school day attendance – and decreased chronic absence – which are closely linked to improved academic outcomes.

Of particular relevance in California, after school programs can foster English Learner success. They can provide time to practice English, support the student's home language, and promote connections to home and family.[32] Through these supports, after school can contribute to fluency in both English – which leads to additional academic success – and in the home language – which can also support academic success.[33]

A high quality program that provides a safe and supportive environment, positive interactions and engaging opportunities, and builds academic skills increases young people's connection to school. Participants' school day attendance rates are common ways to measure young people's connection with school.

Available data suggests that WCCUSD After School Programs are a key partner in supporting school day attendance and English Learner redesignation, themselves critical foundations for academic success.

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[31] Durlak, Joseph & Weissberg, Roger. (2007) "The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills." Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Retrieved from www.casel.org/library.

[32] Maxwell-Jolly, Julie. Fall 2011. "English Learners and Out-of-school Time Programs: The Potential of OST Programs to Foster EL Success." Afterschool Matters, 14. Retrieved from http://www.niost.org/Afterschool-Matters/afterschool-matters-fall-201132.

[33] Goldenberg, Claude. Summer 2013. "Unlocking the Research on English Learners." American Educator, 37(2). Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/ae/summer2013/index.cfm.

## School Day Attendance and Chronic Absence

On average, After School Program participants attended more school days in 2013-14 than in 2012-13. While overall attendance rates are high and this change was modest – participants attended 95.99% of enrolled days compared to 95.40% in the prior year – even modest changes in school day attendance can improve future academic success.

The improvement in school day attendance rates is particularly strong in the early elementary grades (1st through 3rd) and in 7th grade.[34] Moreover, school day attendance rates increased for African American, Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander participants.[35]

### FIGURE 11. CHANGE IN SCHOOL DAY ATTENDANCE RATE BY SUBGROUPS
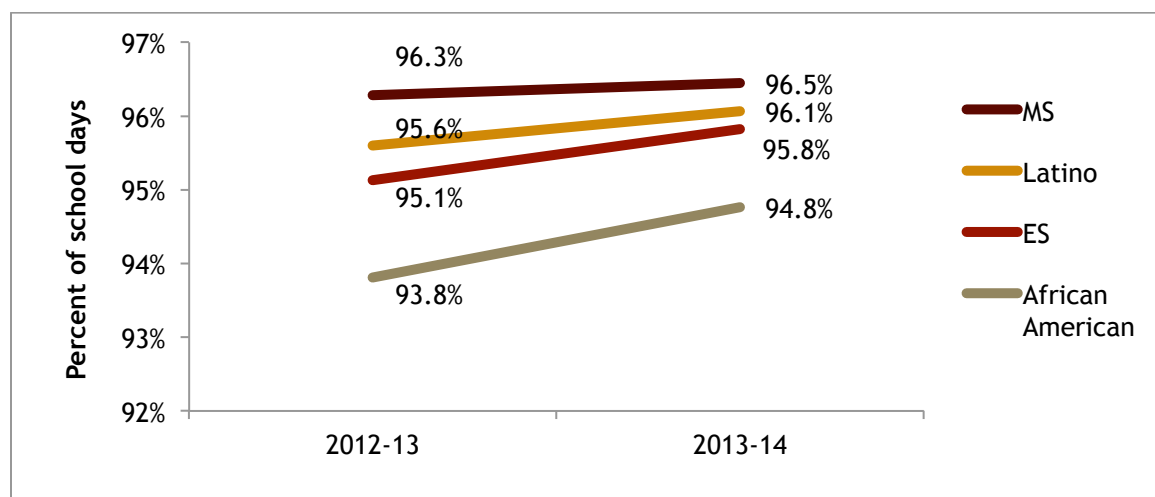


Source: WCCUSD; school day attendance rates in the prior and current years for participants in the 2013-14 After School Program; an increase in attendance rates is a positive change.

Though the year-to-year changes in attendance rate were modest, participants came to school an additional 4,765 days in 2013-14. This additional in-school time translates into more learning time for students, and higher revenue for WCCUSD. Based on reimbursement rates, these additional school days attended are valued at $182,166 in additional revenue for WCCUSD.[36]

---

[34] The increase in school day attendance was statistically significant (p < .05) overall and for 1st through 3rd graders; it was moderately significant (p = .054) for 7th graders; the increase was not statistically significant for any other grade; 8th graders showed an average decrease in school day attendance although this difference was not statistically significant.

[35] The increase in school day attendance was statistically significant (p < .05) for these groups; it was not statistically significant for White participants; other ethnic groups were too small to run this analysis.

[36] To calculate the value of the total change in days attended, evaluators summed the days attended in 2012-13 and 2013-14, and multiplied the difference by $38.23/day, the per pupil per day reimbursement.

Being chronically absent – in some ways the inverse of school day attendance – means that a students is absent 10% or more of their days enrolled in school. Missing this many days puts a student far behind in school, and chronic absence is a strong predictor of poor academic outcomes, particularly of dropping out of school.[37]

The occurrence of chronic absence decreased among After School Program participants year-to-year. While 11.2% of 2013-14 participants were chronically absent in 2012-13, only 8.2% were chronically absent in 2013-14. This change is particularly strong among 1st and 2nd graders.[38] Furthermore, the occurrence of chronic absence decreased among African American and Latino participants.[39]

### FIGURE 12. CHANGE IN CHRONIC ABSENCE BY SUBGROUPS
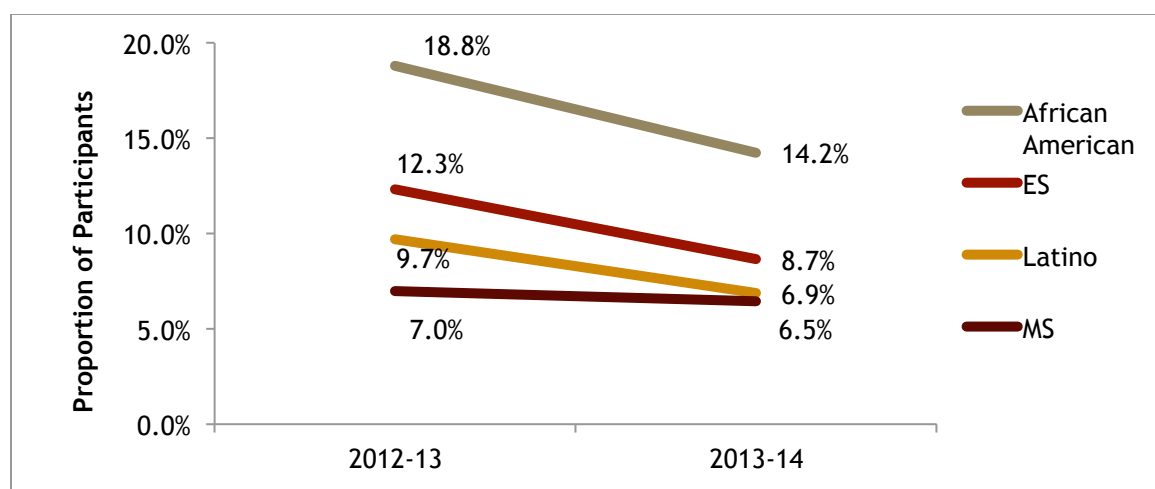


Source: WCCUSD; proportion of participants in the 2013-14 After School Program who were chronically absent in the prior and current years; a *decrease* in chronic absence is a positive change.

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[37] Chang, H and Romero, M. (2008). Present, Engaged and Accounted for: the Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
[38] The decrease in the proportion of youth who were chronically absent was statistically significant (p < .05) overall and for 1st and 2nd graders; it was not statistically significant for other grades.
[39] The decrease in the proportion of youth who were chronically absent was statistically significant (p < .05) for these groups; it was not statistically significant for Asian/Pacific Islander or White participants; other ethnic groups were too small to run this analysis.

“ *Because of the program, my son has developed leadership skills and has become reclassified in English. I am very satisfied with the program.”*
– Elementary Parent

### English Learner Redesignation

After School Program participants who began the year as English Learners were redesignated at a higher rate compared to the District as whole. Across the District, 9% of students were redesignated in 2013-14, while 13% of After School Program participants were redesignated. As stated earlier in the report, After School Programs serve a higher proportion of English Learners than the District as a whole (47% compared to 35%). Taken together, this suggests that After School Programs in WCCUSD can be a critical support for English Learners in their journey to English fluency, which is key to their academic success.

### Core Course Grades (Middle School Only)

An analysis of English and Math course grades, available only for middle school participants, suggested that After School Program participants may have lower grades in Math, but higher grades in English over time.[40,41] However, there were large limitations to this data as several participants were enrolled in more than one English or Math class at a time, the count of youth with two years worth of unique data was small (approximately 300 participants only), and participants could not be compared to those who did not participate in an After School Program.

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[40] Comparing participants to themselves at a prior time, Math course grade decreased from 2.21 in the prior year (2012-13), 2nd semester to 2.06 in 2013-14, 2nd semester (letter grade converted to a 4.0 scale using the College Board conversion (www.collegeboard.com), $p < .05$; this analysis could only be conducted on those who were in 8th grade in 2013-14 for whom there were 2 semesters of unique grades available, n=301).

[41] Comparing participants to themselves at a prior time, English course grade increased from 2.43 in the prior year (2012-13), 2nd semester to to 2.64 in 2013-14, 2nd semester (letter grade converted to a 4.0 scale using the College Board conversion (www.collegeboard.com), $p < .05$; this analysis could only be conducted on those who were in 8th grade in 2013-14 for whom there were 2 semesters of unique grades available, n=257).

## Programs Engage Families

**Parent Opinion**

*98% of parents are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their child's After School Program.*

> ❝*My son has improved a lot. I really like that he enjoys the After School Program. He tells me everything he does with so much excitement. That makes me happy and I know he's with great people who make a big difference in school. Thanks to all the staff. Great job.*"
>
> - Elementary Parent

Family engagement covers at least two dimensions: a) the support families can give their children in building academic skills and reinforcing learning opportunities outside the classroom and b) the skills and supports that schools – and after school programs – can provide families in order that they do this well.[42]

As a step toward rich family engagement, parent participation in after school programs can help build a sense of community within the program. Parents who participate may also build skills, resources, and community connections that empower them to provide their children with the support they need to be successful both in and out of school.

Overall, parents with students in the After School Program reported being seen and heard by the After School Program. Nearly all (97%) reported that a program staff member recognizes them when they visit. Similarly, nearly all (98%) reported that staff listen when they have a question or comment.

> ❝*I feel that the After School Program is great for my child. They call me and let me know how her day is and keep me informed on her progress.*"
> - Middle School Parent

> ❝*[The staff] are magical! They really listen and are always super polite.*" - Elementary Parent

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[42] Lopez, M. Elena & Caspe, Margaret. (June 2014). "Family Engagement in Anywhere, Anytime Learning." *FINE Newsletter*, VI(3). Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/family-engagement-in-anywhere-anytime-learning.

## Some parents do not know whether there are opportunities for parent participation in the Programs

On the other hand, parents are less sure about opportunities for them to participate in the program itself. While a majority of parents (79%) reported that there are opportunities for parent participation in the program, many (15%) weren't sure if there were such opportunities (responded "Don't Know" to the survey question). At 4 of the 28 sites, more than 25% of parents didn't know if there were opportunities for parent involvement, including 3 of the 4 middle schools.

*If there are opportunities for parent involvement, I would love to help or be involved."* - Elementary Parent

## Parents feel comfortable at the school, but could feel more engaged in the school community

Nearly all parents (96%) agreed that they feel more comfortable at their child's school because of the After School Program. However, fewer parents agreed that they know more about what goes on in the school day or that they are more involved in their child's school because of the program.

Few school day staff perceived engaging families with the school as a strength of the After School Program; 34% felt that it was a key area for improvement for the Program at their site (see also page 38 above).

## Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the Programs

Nearly all parents (98%) report being Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the program. Similarly, 98% report that their child tells them good things about the program. These findings are consistent across grade levels and sites.

*This is a great program for the kids. I'm very thankful for it"*
- Elementary Parent

*Thank you for providing the After School Program. I have to say, this program is the highlight of his day. My only comment would be to communicate with me right away when he has any academic, social or behavioral issues. Thanks!"* – Middle School Parent

## After School Programs support working parents

For the overwhelming majority of parents (98%), the After School Programs enable them to go to school or work. Again, these findings are consistent across grade levels and sites.

*"I'm happy with the program because I work till 4pm and I don't have anyone to pick them up and I don't like them walking home alone or waiting for me on the school grounds by themselves. So, I'm very happy that they are here, with an adult watching them. Being a single parent it's very hard for me working and taking care of them. This really helps a lot. Thank you."* – Elementary Parent

# APPENDIX A: SITE VISIT METHODOLOGY

Site visits provide observationally based data about key components of program quality, as research has demonstrated that point of service quality is strongly related to positive outcomes for youth.

Using the PQA, all 28 sites conducted a self-assessment in fall 2013. In the winter, WCCUSD After School Programs Office staff conducted observations with site staff. The District then charged sites to use feedback from those observations to drive program quality improvements.

Then, in spring 2014, the evaluation team of certified PQA assessors conducted visits to a sample of 15 sites. We report data from these external assessor visits in the following pages.

Visits were conducted using the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) and Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), research-based point of service quality observation tools used by out-of-school time programs nationally. Site visitors have been certified as statistically reliable raters by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

The PQA includes four domains:

1. **Safe Environment** – Youth experience both physical and emotional safety. The program environment is safe and sanitary. The social environment is safe.

2. **Supportive Environment** – Adults support youth to learn and grow. Adults support youth with opportunities for active learning, for skill building, and to develop healthy relationships.

3. **Interaction** – There is a positive peer culture in the program, encouraged and supported by adults. Youth support each other. Youth experience a sense of belonging. Youth participate in small groups as members and as leaders. Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.

4. **Engagement** – Youth experience positive challenges and pursue learning. Youth have opportunities to plan, make choices, and reflect and learn from their experiences.

The quality domains are inter-related and build upon one another. Broadly speaking, programs need to assure that youth enjoy a Safe and Supportive environment before working to establish high quality Interaction and Engagement. For example, a program in which young people are afraid to try new things for fear of being ridiculed by others - an example of an unsupportive environment - is not likely to be an interactive, engaging place for kids.

Research indicates that the foundational programmatic elements of physical and emotional safety (described in the Safe and the Supportive Environment domains) support high quality practice in other domains. In general, programs' ratings will be higher for the foundational domains than for Interaction and Engagement (Figure 10).

**FIGURE 13. YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY PYRAMID**
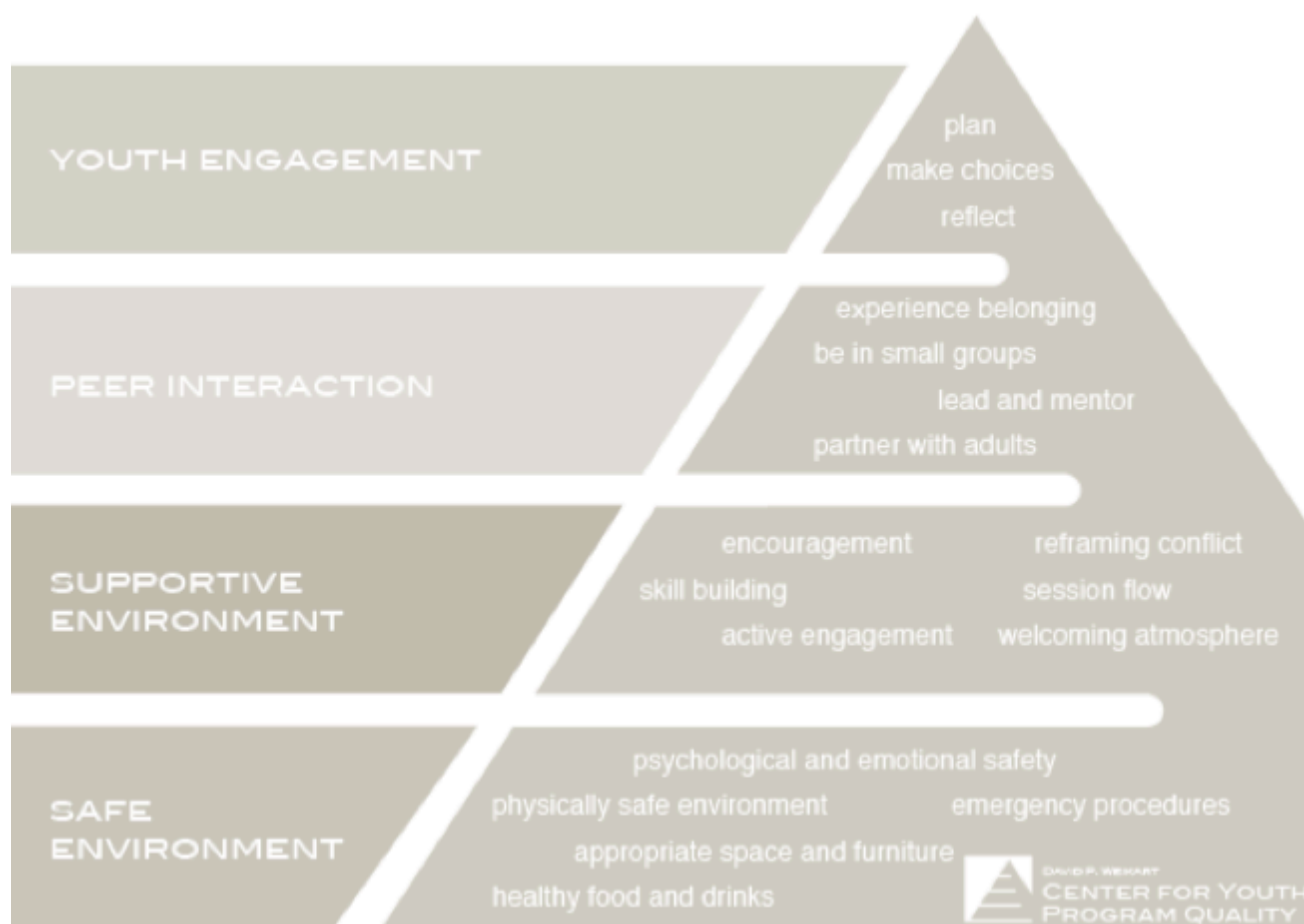


Source: Adapted from Youth PQA Handbook by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2007.

Program quality elements are rated according to visitors' observations and staff responses to follow-up questions. Ratings of 1, 3, or 5 are assigned based on the extent to which a particular practice is implemented. The YPQA is a rubric-based assessment, with brief paragraphs describing different levels of performance for each program quality area. Though the specific language varies by practice, the ratings indicate the following levels of performance:

- A rating of one (1) indicates that the practice was not observed while the visitor was on site, or that the practice is not a part of the program.

- A rating of three (3) indicates that the practice is implemented relatively consistently across staff and activities.

- A five (5) rating indicates that the practice was implemented consistently and well across staff and activities.

# APPENDIX B: DETAILED SITE VISIT RESULTS

| | ALL DOMAINS | | | SAFETY | | | SUPPORT | | | INTERACTION | | | ENGAGEMENT | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Avg. | %1s | %5s | Avg. | %1s | %5s | Avg. | %1s | %5s | Avg. | %1s | %5s | Avg. | %1s | %5s |
| Bayview Elementary | 4.3 | 0% | 70% | 4.6 | 0% | 84% | 4.0 | 0% | 56% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Coronado Elementary | 3.5 | 12% | 47% | 4.6 | 0% | 84% | 3.5 | 0% | 33% | 3.2 | 18% | 27% | 2.5 | 50% | 20% |
| Highland Elementary | 4.2 | 6% | 69% | 4.7 | 6% | 88% | 3.8 | 6% | 50% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Fairmont Elementary | 3.8 | 9% | 52% | 4.5 | 5% | 89% | 3.3 | 6% | 28% | 3.6 | 0% | 27% | 3.6 | 30% | 50% |
| Grant Elementary | 3.8 | 3% | 47% | 4.5 | 0% | 68% | 3.9 | 0% | 44% | 2.8 | 18% | 9% | 4.0 | 0% | 50% |
| King Elementary | 4.1 | 8% | 73% | 4.4 | 5% | 89% | 3.8 | 11% | 56% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Montalvin Elementary | 3.9 | 9% | 64% | 4.7 | 0% | 84% | 4.5 | 0% | 78% | 3.1 | 9% | 18% | 3.3 | 40% | 50% |
| Murphy Elementary | 3.8 | 5% | 47% | 4.6 | 0% | 74% | 3.8 | 6% | 39% | 3.8 | 9% | 45% | 3.0 | 10% | 10% |
| Peres Elementary | 3.9 | 8% | 59% | 4.6 | 0% | 84% | 3.2 | 17% | 33% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Sheldon Elementary | 3.3 | 19% | 43% | 4.7 | 0% | 79% | 3.2 | 11% | 22% | 3.7 | 9% | 45% | 1.8 | 80% | 10% |
| Verde Elementary | 3.7 | 11% | 51% | 4.4 | 0% | 79% | 3.0 | 22% | 22% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Washington Elementary | 3.6 | 9% | 55% | 4.5 | 0% | 84% | 3.7 | 6% | 50% | 3.6 | 9% | 45% | 2.8 | 30% | 20% |
| Crespi Middle | 3.4 | 16% | 34% | 3.8 | 11% | 50% | 3.0 | 20% | 20% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Helms Middle | 3.7 | 7% | 59% | 4.8 | 0% | 83% | 4.2 | 0% | 60% | 3.6 | 8% | 50% | 2.3 | 38% | 13% |
| Portola Middle | 3.6 | 2% | 40% | 4.5 | 0% | 78% | 3.5 | 5% | 30% | 3.4 | 0% | 25% | 3.0 | 0% | 0% |

Source: Site Visits, Spring 2014

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# APPENDIX C: DETAILED YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS

| | ALL SURVEYS<br>N = 1,881 | GRADES 3-6<br>N = 1,555 | GRADES 7-8<br>N = 326 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAM QUALITY AND CLIMATE** | % OF YOUTH WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY | | |
| I feel safe in this program. | -- | 84% | -- |
| I have rarely had mean rumors or lies spread about me at this program. * | -- | 82% | -- |
| I have rarely had other kids hit or push me in this program when they are not just playing around. * | -- | 84% | -- |
| How safe do you feel…During school? | -- | -- | 89% |
| How safe do you feel…In your neighborhood where you live? | -- | -- | 87% |
| How safe do you feel…Going home? | -- | -- | 91% |
| How safe do you feel…In this after school program? | -- | -- | 92% |
| How safe do you feel…Going to school? | -- | -- | 92% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my race, ethnicity or national origin. * | -- | -- | 90% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my religion. * | -- | -- | 96% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for my gender (being male or female). * | -- | -- | 95% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied because I am gay or lesbian or someone thought I was. * | -- | -- | 94% |
| I have rarely been harassed or bullied for a physical or mental disability. * | -- | -- | 95% |
| I have rarely been bullied for any other reason. * | -- | -- | 81% |
| There is an adult who cares about me in this program. | 89% | 88% | 89% |

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| | ALL SURVEYS N = 1,881 | GRADES 3-6 N = 1,555 | GRADES 7-8 N = 326 |
|---|---|---|---|
| In this program, there is an adult who wants me to do my best. | 92% | 93% | 91% |
| I feel like the adults in this program are happy to see me. | 78% | 78% | 78% |
| I feel like I belong at this program. | 87% | 87% | 87% |
| I get to help other students in this program. | 72% | 73% | 66% |
| I have at least one friend in this program who really cares about me. | 89% | 89% | 90% |
| I help decide things like activities and rules in this program. | 58% | 59% | 51% |
| The activities in this program really make me think. | 71% | 72% | 68% |
| The staff members here listen to what I have to say. | 79% | 79% | 80% |
| **DIRECT OUTCOMES** | **% OF YOUTH WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY** | | |
| In this program, I practice skills that help me understand what is being taught in school. | 79% | 80% | 74% |
| I am better at getting my homework done on time. | 81% | 80% | 84% |
| This program helps me to know why it's important to do well in school. | 84% | 84% | 83% |
| Because of this program, I feel more confident talking in class. | 74% | 76% | 66% |
| This program has helped me feel like a part of my school. | 78% | 79% | 75% |
| This program has helped me care about my school. | 77% | 78% | 72% |
| This program helps me enjoy learning. | 73% | 75% | 63% |
| I am better at something I used to think was hard. | 75% | 75% | 77% |

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| | ALL SURVEYS<br>N = 1,881 | GRADES 3-6<br>N = 1,555 | GRADES 7-8<br>N = 326 |
|---|---|---|---|
| This program has helped me work hard toward my goals. | 82% | 83% | 77% |
| I feel proud of things I've done in this program. | 83% | 84% | 79% |
| In this program, I learned new information about a topic that interests me. | 71% | 72% | 69% |
| In this program, I got to do something I had not done before. | 84% | 85% | 77% |
| In this program, I learned a new skill that I'm excited about. | 77% | 80% | 66% |
| This program helps me listen to others. | 76% | 77% | 71% |
| In this program, I learn how to work out my problems. | 74% | 75% | 72% |
| Since coming to this program, I am better at making friends. | 77% | 77% | 77% |

Source: Youth participant surveys administered Spring 2014; n = 1,881.

Note: For questions regarding bullying (marked with a *), "% of youth who responded positively" represents the percent of youth who, when asked how often they experienced physical or verbal bullying, selected "Never" or "Only some of the time" for Grades 3-6 and "0 times" or "1 time" for Grades 7-8.

For all other questions, "% of youth who responded positively" represents the percent of respondents who answered "Yes" to the question for Grades 3-6 and "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for Grades 7-8. Response options for Grades 3-6 were "Yes" or "No", and "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" for Grades 7-8. Language for some questions was modified slightly for Grades 3-6 to accommodate lower reading levels.

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# APPENDIX D: DETAILED PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

| | ALL SURVEYS N = 1,396 | |
|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAM QUALITY AND CLIMATE** | % OF PARENTS WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY | % WHO RESPONDED DON'T KNOW |
| This after school program is a safe place for my child. | 99% | 0% |
| My child feels comfortable with the after school staff | 99% | 0% |
| There is an adult in this program my child can talk to about her or his problems. | 97% | 9% |
| In this program, my child has opportunities to try new things. | 98% | 2% |
| This program gives my child opportunities to "make a difference" by helping other people, the school or the community. | 97% | 6% |
| This program provides activities that meet my child's interests and talents, such as sports, clubs and music. | 96% | 4% |
| In this program, my child has opportunities to develop leadership skills. | 96% | 7% |
| Because my child is in this after school program, I get chances to see what my child is learning (through events like performances and presentations). | 94% | 3% |
| My child tells me good things about this after school program. | 98% | 1% |
| How satisfied are you with this after school program? | 98% | 0% |
| **FAMILY AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT** | % OF PARENTS WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY | % WHO RESPONDED DON'T KNOW |
| This program helps my child complete their homework on time. | 94% | 1% |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| My child's attitude toward school has improved since coming to this program. | 95% | 2% |
| At least one after school program staff recognizes me when I visit. | 98% | 2% |
| The after school staff listen to me when I have a question or comment. | 99% | 1% |
| There are opportunities for parent participation in this program. | 93% | 15% |
| Because my child is in this after school program, I feel more comfortable at my child's school. | 98% | 2% |
| Because my child is in this after school program, I know more about what goes on in the school day. | 92% | 4% |
| Because my child is in this after school program, I am more involved at my child's school. | 88% | 4% |
| Because my child is in this program, I can go to school or work. | 99% | 1% |

Source: Parent surveys administered Spring 2014; n = 1,396.

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# APPENDIX E: DETAILED SCHOOL DAY STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

| | ALL SURVEYS<br><br>N = 283 | PRINCIPALS<br><br>N = 7 | OTHER SCHOOL DAY STAFF<br>N = 189 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SCHOOL DAY ALIGNMENT** | **% OF STAFF WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY** | | |
| This program supports our goals for students' academic success. | 89% | 100% | 93% |
| This program provides activities that complement school day learning. | 90% | 100% | 93% |
| I know which students attend our after school program. | 89% | 100% | 90% |
| I am familiar with the daily activities of this after school program. | 76% | 100% | 80% |
| I visit this program regularly. | 49% | 86% | 53% |
| I communicate with this program about specific students. | 69% | 100% | 75% |
| Overall, I am satisfied with this after school program. | 86% | 100% | 90% |
| **STRENGTHS** | **% OF STAFF WHO RANKED ITEM AS A TOP STRENGTH** | | |
| Creating a safe place for students. | 66% | 43% | 69% |
| Helping students complete homework on time. | 46% | 43% | 46% |
| Helping students improve study skills. | 33% | 43% | 35% |
| Improving students' academic content knowledge. | 29% | 43% | 28% |
| Exposing students to new experiences. | 29% | 43% | 28% |
| Improving students' leadership skills. | 14% | 14% | 15% |
| Providing positive, caring adults in students' lives. | 42% | 14% | 45% |

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| | ALL SURVEYS<br><br>N = 283 | PRINCIPALS<br><br>N = 7 | OTHER SCHOOL DAY STAFF<br>N = 189 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Improving students' relationships with other students. | 28% | 57% | 23% |
| Engaging parents with the school. | 12% | 0% | 12% |

| AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT | % OF STAFF WHO RANKED ITEM AS A TOP AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Creating a safe place for students. | 23% | 17% | 25% |
| Helping students complete homework on time. | 42% | 33% | 40% |
| Helping students improve study skills. | 50% | 50% | 46% |
| Improving students' academic content knowledge. | 49% | 67% | 48% |
| Exposing students to new experiences. | 30% | 17% | 32% |
| Improving students' leadership skills. | 30% | 33% | 31% |
| Providing positive, caring adults in students' lives. | 17% | 17% | 18% |
| Improving students' relationships with other students. | 25% | 50% | 26% |
| Engaging parents with the school. | 34% | 17% | 35% |

Source: School day staff survey administered Spring 2014; n=283.

Note: Many respondents did not specify their role; their responses are only included in the "All Surveys" column and account for the discrepancy between the N for all surveys and the sum of the Ns for principals and other school day staff.

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