



CENTER FOR URBAN AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

School of Education
IUPUI

Evaluation of the Project RELATES
After-school program¹

Summative report: 2007-08

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¹ There are many people who contributed to the success of the formative evaluation process and we are greatly appreciative of their efforts. Thank you to the Project Relates administrative team and the After-school program staff who so kindly and effectively articulated their perceptions of the program.

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Introduction

The Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME), a research and evaluation center at Indiana University School of Education at Indianapolis has been contracted by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to conduct an external evaluation of Project RELATES (Reaching Everyone by Linking After-school to Educational Standards). The following report is a year-end, summative evaluation, which examines trends and evidence across all of the sites. In this report, we provide an overview of the program before turning to describing the evaluation design and summarizing the short-term performance measures. The report concludes with recommendations for program improvement.

Overview of the After-school Program

In 2003, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis established Project RELATES to offer “academic enrichment to high-poverty and low-performing schools.” One component of Project RELATES is the After-school program (ASP), which provides homework help, reading practice, and participation in a variety of enrichment activities. The after-school program runs through the school year from August to June, with the exception of school holidays. The program is held at seven sites: Central Catholic School, Holy Angels Catholic School, Holy Cross Central School, St. Andrew & St. Rita Catholic Academy, St. Anthony Catholic School, St. Joan of Arc School, and St. Philip Neri School. Six of the schools are part of a consortium called the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies. Attendance at each site ranges from about 50 to over 100 students per day.

Each session begins at the end of the school day with a snack, at most sites. The afternoon is then divided among three major program components: homework completion, reading practice, and enrichment activities. Students are given 30 to 60 minutes to work on homework assignments. At some sites, students receive homework help from program staff, while at others, they work independently. The reading component consists of Accelerated Reader as well as a partnered reading program called Reading Buddies during which an older child reads to a younger child. The program utilizes community partners in order to offer a number of enrichment activities including Spanish Club, Art with a Heart, Fun and Fitness, and music lessons. Other enrichment activities such as Drama Club, Tae Kwon Do, Spell Bowl, and Walking Club are site-specific. All sites provide opportunities for children to play with educational games and toys as well.

In accordance with the funded grant proposal, at each school site “students are divided into groups by grade levels” and “each school provides the same programming” including 30-60 minutes of homework time, 30-60 minutes of reading practice, 30 minutes of library time to use Accelerated Reader and Math Facts in a Flash on a daily basis, and 60 minutes of extracurricular activities such as Spanish Club, Fun and Fitness, and Art with a Heart. In addition, the most recent grant application specifies that there will be a “focus on ‘student empowerment’ and increased family involvement in addition to specific academic assistance—teaching students how to be good students, and teaching their teachers and parents how to help them most effectively.” In order to meet these focused goals, the grant described the following essential elements to be included at each site:

- Instruction in the evidence-based Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) model (specifically the Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration and critical Reading strategy, WICR);
- Learning styles inventory to assist staff in providing an optimal learning environment for each student;
- Reading Buddies mentoring program;
- Math Pentathlon program (new strategic curriculum);
- Field trips for middle school students to visit nearby colleges and universities; and
- Tutoring by Marian College work-study students.

Evaluation Methods

This evaluation followed a mixed methods design examining qualitative and quantitative data about program implementation and student/staff experiences in Project RELATES. The evaluation team was interested in providing feedback regarding the strengths and challenges in implementing the three components of the after-school program. In order to do justice to this process, evaluators observed the program and interacted with program participants in multiple formal and informal ways. Three over-arching questions guided the formative evaluation of the After-school program:

1. To what extent does program implementation align with evidence-based out of school time (OST) practices described in the Twenty-first Century Learning Center proposal narrative?
2. To what extent is student participation in each of the three components of the After-school program associated with the student outcomes of Project RELATES?
3. To what extent were program outcomes and goals achieved?

Participants

Teachers at **six of the seven sites** completed the student behavior surveys for children who were regular participants in Project Relates. Table 1 shows the number of regular participants compared to the number of behavior surveys completed at each site.

Table 1

Participation and Teacher Behavior Survey Completion by Site

School	Total number of regular participants (30+ days)	Number of students whose teachers completed survey
Central Catholic School	64 (13.4%)	78 (17.5%)
Holy Angels School	42 (8.8%)	56 (12.9%)
Holy Cross School	112 (23.4%)	113 (25.4%)
St. Andrew and St. Rita Catholic Academy	61 (12.7%)	75 (16.9%)
St. Anthony Catholic School	57 (11.9%)	70 (15.7%)
St. Joan of Arc School	91 (19%)	2 (.5%)

St. Philip Neri School	52 (10.9%)	51 (11.5%)
Total	479 (100%)	445 (100%)

Measures

Observations. Program observations were conducted over 35 weeks for a total of 15 observations at each site. Observers followed a hands-off, eyes-on approach and generally did not actively participate in the activities for the first two months of the program. During this time, they carefully observed each component multiple times without being intrusive. Then during month three, observers began to assist students with homework as needed. Additionally, observers interacted informally with program participants. Seven observers were present for about 315 hours during the program. They took copious notes while observing program delivery and participant interactions, and generated extensive field texts. These field texts represented a description of exactly what they observed along with a parallel interpretive summary of participant experiences within each component. At the end of each month the team reviewed the field texts to identify common themes that were used to direct their observations during the program. Observers focused on implementation challenges, level of student engagement, organization of the program components at each site, and overall student and staff affect.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with the site director at each site during November and May. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Sample prompts included, “What is going really well this year in the After-school program?”, “How have students responded to the structure of the program?”, “How have the supplemental programs such as Art with a Heart and Fun and Fitness contributed positively or negatively to the program?”, “How have the schools’ teachers supported the program?”, and “How have the students’ families supported the program?” Spring interviews focused on program changes since the fall interview. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The evaluation team carefully reviewed the transcripts, coded salient statements, and looked across respondents to generate common themes.

Focus groups. Focus group discussions were conducted with parents at each site during March. Focus groups lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Sample prompts included, “What are the most important parts of the After-school program?”, “How does the After-school program help your children progress in reading and math?”, “How does the After-school program support your role as a parent or caregiver?”, and “What needs improvement in the After-school program?” The focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The evaluation team carefully reviewed the transcripts, coded salient statements, and looked across respondents to generate common themes.

Outcome database. A database was created which included demographic information, program attendance, reading and math grades, and test results for each student who participated in the After-school program. This information was collected through the 21st Century Learning Centers database called EZReports, through site director reports, and through the Renaissance website, where student scores on the STAR reading and math tests were recorded. Behavior reports compiled by teachers were also utilized to determine whether students had improved on various behavior indicators since the start of the school year.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data. Each member of the research team read the observation notes, interview transcripts, and focus group transcripts independently. They applied codes representing the sentiment of each paragraph or data cluster and/or developed codes identifying patterns within the data. As a group, the team met to discuss the relationships among the codes, to compare memos, and to combine similar codes and memos into broader patterns or themes. Next, they divided into groups in order to return to the original data sources to identify representative examples from observations and quotations from interviews. Finally, the entire team met to share the findings which resulted in specific themes. This process follows the standards of qualitative evaluation (Schwandt, 2007; 2008; Patton, 2002). In addition, we employed several validity techniques, primarily triangulation through the multiple data sources, but additionally, we had our codes and conclusions reviewed by peers outside of the team in order to make sure our conclusions were valid and unbiased. Likewise, the project lead, Jill Bradley-Levine, was in constant communication with the site directors, project directors, and other key staff in order to conduct member checks on our data and conclusions. This type of cooperative relationship creates an overall better understanding of the data and leads to more valid conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative data. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for each of the outcomes variables reported in the short-term performance worksheets. The percentage of students meeting each target area was calculated using the formulas provided on the worksheet. The overall percentage of passing was compared to the targets and a dichotomous decision (met or failed to meet goals) was recorded and submitted to the State using the EZReport portal. Only students who attended 30 or more days are included in the student outcomes analysis and reported on the short-term performance worksheet.

Short-term Performance Measures

A requirement of the grant was to set short-term performance measures for each year and then report the outcomes to the state. These results have been included in this report and are discussed in detail below. Table 2 shows the number and respective percentage of 30+ student results on the three primary short-term performance measures: **student behavior improvement, student attendance rates, and student improvement in math and reading.**

Table 2

Short-term Performance Indicators by Site

	Behavior improvement from fall to spring (35% target)	95% attendance rate (96% target)	Math grade improvement (45% target)	STAR math improvement (45% target)	Reading grade improvement (45% target)	STAR reading improvement (45% target)
Central Catholic	23 59%*	53 82.8%	14 35.9%	21 65.6%*	22 56.4%*	17 51.5%*

Holy Angels	8 21.6%*	26 61.9%	21 56.8%*	0 0%	18 47.4%*	15 51.7%*
Holy Cross	44 86.3%*	77 68.8%	44 52.4%*	24 42.1%	40 49.4%*	48 60.8%*
St. Andrew/St. Rita	30 66.7%*	60 98.4%*	28 50.9%*	Not available	30 54.5%*	2 50%*
St. Anthony	32 64%*	47 82.5%	9 23.1%	Not available	7 17.5%	11 42.3%
St. Joan of Arc	Not available	80 87.9%	21 34.4%	30 55.6%*	27 44.5%	26 44.8%
St. Philip Neri	22 95.7%*	41 78.9%	26 72.2%*	Not available	20 57.1%*	11 42.3%
All Sites Combined	159 64.9%*	384 80.2%	163 46.4%*	75 52.4%*	164 47%*	115 51%*

*Indicates target was met

Overall the majority of indicators were met, and as a whole the targets were met for all indicators with the exception of attendance (80.2%). St. Andrew/St. Rita met all data targets with the exception of STAR Reading for which no data were reported. St Andrew/St. Rita was the only site to meet the attendance target. Central Catholic and Holy Cross achieved all targets except for attendance and improvement in one of the math achievement indicators. St. Joan of Arc only met one category, STAR math improvement, but was extremely close on both reading achievement targets. Having just one additional student would have resulted in 45% meeting the target.

Teacher Behavior Survey

Table 3 shows the frequency that specific answers were selected for each indicator listed on the behavior survey. These frequencies reveal that teachers felt students made the greatest improvement in the areas of completing homework to the teachers' satisfaction and overall academic performance while the areas of greatest decline were behaving well in class and being attentive in class. The percents represent the percent of the total number of students across all sites that showed improvement, no change, or decline for the indicators.

Table 3

Behavior Changes for All Sites on Each Survey Indicator

Item	Significant Improvement	Moderate Improvement	Slight Improvement	No Change	Slight Decline	Moderate Decline	Significant Decline
Turning in his/her homework on time	46 (14.7%)	83 (26.5%)	86 (27.5%)	74 (23.6%)	19 (6.1%)	5 (1.6%)	0
Completing homework to your satisfaction	77 (21.8%)	100 (28.3%)	83 (23.5%)	69 (19.5%)	18 (5.1%)	6 (1.7%)	0
Participating in class	48 (13.6%)	85 (24.1%)	130 (36.9%)	77 (21.9%)	10 (2.8%)	2 (.6%)	0

Volunteering (for EC or more responsibilities)	40 (11.8%)	61 (17.9%)	110 (32.4%)	117 (34.4%)	10 (2.9%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)
Attending class regularly	21 (9.2%)	12 (5.2%)	37 (16.2%)	142 (62.0%)	12 (5.2%)	2 (.9%)	3 (1.3%)
Behaving well in class	39 (12.5%)	66 (21.2%)	83 (26.7%)	87 (28.0%)	22 (7.1%)	12 (3.9%)	2 (.6%)
Being attentive in class	47 (13.2%)	90 (25.3%)	101 (28.4%)	82 (23.03%)	24 (6.7%)	11 (3.1%)	1 (.3%)
Academic performance	59 (15.8%)	123 (32.9%)	106 (28.3%)	67 (23.0%)	10 (2.7%)	7 (1.9%)	2 (.5%)
Coming to school motivated to learn	37 (10.9%)	81 (23.8%)	112 (32.8%)	87 (19.6%)	19 (5.6%)	4 (1.2%)	1 (.3%)
Getting along well with other students	37 (11.6%)	83 (26.0%)	87 (27.3%)	82 (25.7%)	20 (6.3%)	5 (1.6%)	5 (1.6%)

Table 4 shows the mean answer for each indicator on a seven point Likert scale (1 = Significant improvement, 2 = Moderate improvement, 3 = Slight improvement, 4 = No change, 5 = Slight decline, 6 = Moderate decline, and 7 = Significant decline). The average answer selected for each indicator was between 2 and 3, showing slight to moderate improvement. However, the mean of one indicator, “Attending class regularly,” was between 3 and 4, showing no change to slight improvement. Students at Central Catholic, St. Andrew and St. Rita, and St. Anthony showed slight improvement overall, according to teachers. However, teachers at Holy Angels felt their students exhibited no change in behavior overall while teachers at Holy Cross and St. Philip Neri felt their students showed slight to moderate improvement overall.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviation for All Behavior Survey Items by Site

	Central Catholic	Holy Angels	Holy Cross	St A and SRC	St Anthony	St Joan of Arc	St Philip Neri
Turning in his/her homework on time	2.89 (1.02)	3.94 (.53)	2.01 (.81)	3.44 (1.20)	3.09 (1.33)	1.50 (.71)	2.20 (.93)
Completing homework to your satisfaction	2.80 (1.07)	3.81 (.85)	1.84 (.85)	3.37 (1.23)	2.52 (1.26)	1.50 (.71)	2.02 (.98)
Participating in class	2.70 (1.00)	3.72 (.82)	2.49 (.85)	3.07 (1.06)	2.57 (1.13)	1.50 (.71)	2.26 (.91)
Volunteering (for EC or more responsibilities)	3.10 (1.21)	3.67 (.89)	2.53 (.88)	3.24 (1.19)	3.03 (1.11)	1.50 (.71)	2.83 (.95)
Attending class regularly	3.14 (1.11)	3.81 (.59)	3.79 (.82)	4.30 (1.00)	3.56 (.97)	1.50 (.71)	2.19 (1.27)
Being attentive in class	2.92 (1.13)	3.85 (.94)	2.51 (.94)	3.31 (1.36)	2.97 (1.52)	1.50 (.71)	2.22 (.96)
Behaving well in class	3.13 (1.27)	3.85 (.94)	2.53 (1.06)	3.38 (1.38)	3.18 (1.44)	1.50 (.71)	2.31 (1.12)
Academic performance	2.54 (1.17)	3.79 (.84)	2.15 (.82)	2.97 (1.38)	2.59 (1.20)	1.50 (.71)	2.34 (.89)

Coming to school motivated to learn	2.83 (1.17)	3.76 (.87)	2.55 (.90)	3.29 (1.23)	2.92 (1.20)	1.50 (.71)	2.50 (.98)
Getting along well with other students	2.70 (1.10)	3.78 (.88)	2.34 (.99)	3.42 (1.45)	3.31 (1.22)	1.50 (.71)	2.23 (1.14)

Implementation Fidelity

In order to illustrate implementation across sites CUME has rated each site on the essential elements for the year. Table 5 shows the ratings for each site. We have then provided evidence for these ratings in the implementation summary below.

Table 5

Implementation Fidelity Ratings for All Major Program Components

	Central Catholic	Holy Angels	Holy Cross	St. Andrew/St. Rita	St. Anthony	St. Joan of Arc	St. Philip Neri
Homework help	3	2	3	1	3	2	1
Reading practice	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
Library time (AR & Math Facts)	3	2	3	1	3	2	2
Enrichment activities	2	2	3	3	2	3	2
Use of AVID (WICR)	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Use of Learning styles inventory	2**	2**	2**	2**	2**	2**	2**
Reading Buddies	2	2	2	1	3	2	1
Math Pentathlon	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Field trips to colleges	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
College tutors*	1	1	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*

1 = Needs improvement; 2 = Satisfactory; 3 = Exemplary
 *Although college tutors were not observed at these sites, high school tutors were utilized.
 **Although the site director reported that the learning styles inventory was administered to students, it did not appear to affect the structure of the program.

Homework Help

It was clear that homework help is a primary focus at all sites. According to site director interviews, despite tight schedules that include enrichment activities as well as reading and math practice, homework is the one part of the program that is consistently an emphasis. In addition,

most parents indicated that it is important to them that their children finish homework because they do not have time to help their children with homework when they get home. Although most staff and parents emphasized the importance of completing homework, students often did not take full advantage of the time given to work on homework. However, the importance of homework help was solidified as most staff asked children if they had homework and checked completed homework before students were allowed to participate in some of the enrichment activities. For example, one site director talked about a time when a student said he did not have homework so she checked with other students in his class to see what homework they had. The student admitted that he did have homework he could complete during that time. Observation notes, interview transcripts, and parent focus group discussions pointed to three challenges that sites faced when it came to homework help.

The first challenge was that the **time set aside for homework was either too long or too short** depending on the age of the student. The youngest students did not have enough homework to keep them busy for the entire time allotted for homework help, while the oldest students had too much homework in relation to the amount of time for homework help. Parents also indicated that they were aware of times when their children were bored during homework time because they either did not have homework or they had finished their homework. Some sites remedied this issue by dividing children by grade so that older students would have more time for homework help while younger students could move on to reading practice activities or playing with educational games. However, this solution is not in keeping with the spirit of the grant proposal, which specifies that the learning styles inventory should be utilized to divide students according to optimal learning environment. Other sites provided enrichment worksheets and/or activities. For example, one site asked the students' teachers to put together packets of worksheets that would supplement what students were learning during the school day. Another site provided worksheet packets that the site director put together. The CUME team determined, as they helped students with these packets, that the worksheets were not engaging or they were age inappropriate. For example, students were asked to add up the worth of several coins when they had not yet learned the value of those coins in school. In this case, the students became frustrated quickly, and skipped over these sheets or stopped working on the packets altogether.

The second challenge was that some sites were **insufficiently staffed** to provide help while supervising large groups of students. For example, at one site, two staff members supervised an average of 50 students during time allocated for homework help, which meant that during 60 minutes of homework time, each student could receive two to three minutes of individual help. In reality, most students did not receive any help since staff spent most of their time helping just a few students. Parents also noted in focus group discussions that some sites seemed to be understaffed. At sites where students were divided into smaller working groups by age or individual needs, and where one staff member supervised and helped a smaller group, there was greater on-task behavior and more homework completed. For instance, at a site where students were divided by individual need, one staff member worked with groups of students no larger than 10. In this case, students received twice as much individual help than students at sites where students remained in large groups with only a few staff members helping them. Parents at two sites indicated that they believed test scores were directly related to the amount of personal attention and tutoring that students received during the program. Conversely, off-task behavior

occurred more often at sites where students remained in large groups. At these sites, students often became distracted from homework when staff members were helping individual students. Several sites used high school student volunteers as well as members of the CUME evaluation team to alleviate staffing shortfalls. For example, a site director said, “We do have one high school student coming in to work with kids tutoring.” At another site, four students from a local Christian high school developed their Spanish skills by helping tutor Spanish-speaking children at the site. Observations also indicated that in cases where staff members were unavailable, students helped each other by working together and/or tutoring each other. For example, older students who either did not have homework or who had finished their homework regularly helped younger students with their homework at one site. Parents indicated that they felt it would be good for older students to tutor younger students when they had finished their own homework. A parent said, “I think it would be kind of a nice little thing for them to give a kindergartener or first grader a middle school mentor during after care. Pair them up and that way that would be something they could look forward to. My son would have loved to work with the younger kids.”

The third challenge was that there were many **environmental distractions** that made it difficult for students to focus on work. Observations showed that typical behaviors such as making noises, playing with bags, pencils, or other school supplies, and talking to friends were common during homework time. These distractions seemed to be lessened at sites where students were divided into smaller groups. For instance, staff members were able to provide more one-on-one attention to students and manage distractions at the site where students were divided into groups according to grade level. One site had reduced the problems these distractions caused for some students by identifying the differing environmental needs of students. For example, they had one space where students worked in complete silence and another space where students listened to music as they worked. This acknowledgment that students have different learning styles appeared to assist students in completing more work during the allotted time.

Although all of the students were able to take the **learning styles inventory** by spring, the results were not used at most sites to identify the optimal homework environment for individuals or groups. For example, students were still arranged in groups according to grade level for homework time at most sites. In addition, at several sites, students completed homework in the same room. The arrangement of students for homework help is likely related to how many staff work in a particular program. For example, sites with more staff members were able to spread their students out among different classrooms. However, there was some discrepancy about how staff could be utilized. Some sites believed that two adults must be with students at all times while other sites placed small groups of students with one staff member in various rooms around the school. Despite these issues, the learning styles inventory could be utilized more effectively at every site. For example, it may be appropriate to continue grouping the youngest students together because they have little or no homework. However, the second through eighth graders could benefit by being grouped according to learning style rather than age or grade level.

Reading

In addition to homework help, reading activities focusing on fluency, comprehension, and enjoyment were an important core academic component of the After-school program. During a

focus group discussion, a parent reported that at her school “They require them to read in the after school program. There is time set aside where they are actually reading which is great because we have the Accelerated Reader program here at the school and they are required to read so much per grading period. They get some time here. They are not distracted by games. They are not distracted by TV. There is time that is reading time and every kid is reading.” Another parent said, “Every time I have come in they are always seeing the kids lining up against the wall with a book. All of them are reading. I know they are doing a really good job with reading. They are really stressing that. When they are not sitting over here reading, they are in the library taking reading tests.”

Although the Accelerated Reader (AR) program was not utilized early in the school year due to technical problems, observations indicated that most sites eventually incorporated AR as a regular part of the After-school program. During the spring semester, most site directors implemented a schedule to assure that all students would have the opportunity to use the library and take AR tests regularly. For example, one site director said in an interview that she realized that some students avoided going to the library when she gave them a choice during the fall. So in the spring, she created a schedule to make sure that all students went to the library at least once during the week. Often students were rewarded with praise or small presents when they did well on an AR test. For example, when a student reported getting 100% on an AR test, the site director gave her a chocolate treat. During a focus group discussion, one parent explained that at her child’s school they have placed students in teams that work toward a common goal. She said, “It’s a teamwork concept. They say you need to do your part and make sure that the group reaches their 95% (goal). It also encourages the next person to enhance their reading to get to the overall goal. I like the team building concept with the accelerated reader program.”

The Reading Buddies program was also observed to be a support for AR since older students read to younger ones, who then took AR tests over the books that had been read to them. In a focus group discussion, a parent said, “The older kids read with the younger kids. They help them with the tests and things.” Even though the Reading Buddies program was not implemented until several weeks into the school year, observations indicated that it was popular among children of all ages. There were many examples that show children’s enthusiasm for the program. In one case, a young boy chose to leave Fun and Fitness, a popular choice especially for younger boys, to read with an older boy in the library. The site director at that school shared that the younger boy had cried the day before because he had not been chosen for Reading Buddies so she had promised that he would be chosen the next day. In other cases, older students asked if they would be doing Reading Buddies that day as if they enjoyed participating in the program.

Enrichment

Enrichment activities included both site-based programming as well as classes offered through community partners such as the Spanish Club (offered by Language Link), Art with a Heart, and piano lessons (offered by the Fine Arts Society Music Academy). Overall, it was observed that

students participated widely in these activities, enjoying them and responding positively. However, there were times when these activities took time away from homework help. One site director indicated that she felt enrichment programming was secondary to homework help and that she felt frustrated that there were so many enrichment activities offered. On the other hand, another site director said that she was grateful for the enrichment activities because they offered her the opportunity to work on homework with smaller groups of students.

In addition, parents reported that communication about enrichment opportunities could be improved. For example, during focus group discussions, parents at one site reported that they did not feel information about enrichment activities was communicated to them very efficiently. One parent said, “My daughter would come home and would tell me what all they were having. I didn’t receive any paperwork on it. What are the details on this particular activity? Who is the contact person? Where is the number? Yes, you are telling me this is starting, but I need to know the hours or how much it is going to cost. I think it is good that it is there but I think more communication as far as what is going on would at least help me. She wants to be part of it, but I need more information.”

Each site offered a variety of enrichment activities although the offerings depended largely on site resources and staff talents. All of the sites offered opportunities to play with educational toys and games when homework time was over or when students did not have homework. These included simple games such as Candyland© and more complex games such as chess as well as educational toys such as Legos©, puzzles, and blocks. Some sites organized these activities more than others. For example, one site invited a parent to come in to lead a Chess Club for the students.

A few sites offered physical activities for the children outside of the Fun and Fitness program. Some were educational while others were for exercise alone. For example, at one site, the site director led the younger children in a game where they ran across the gym to where she stood when she called out the first letter of their name. She also organized the game so that the children were practicing addition and subtraction. At another site, children participated in a Walking Club every day before they began homework help. At a third site, the parish priest taught Tae Kwon Do to the children. Several sites also took children outside and encouraged them to play actively by setting up organized games such as kick-ball, football, and dodge-ball. Several parents indicated during focus group discussions that they felt giving students the opportunity to play before they began homework was a good idea because the children had been in school all day and they needed a chance to unwind before beginning work again.

Almost every site sponsored some site-specific activities. For example, two sites offered Drama Club, where children were invited to write and act out plays, and sing and dance. At both of these sites, parents were invited to watch a student performance. One parent indicated that she would like to see a drama club at her child’s school. Other sites offered Spell Bowl Team, school newspaper, Rosary Club, and Sign Language Club. Students participated in these site-based activities at the same rate as they did in the activities which occurred across sites such as those listed below.

Spanish Club. Spanish Club was observed at almost every site. Attendance figures indicated that Spanish Club was more popular with the younger children than the older children. This may be a result of the types of activities utilized. For example, younger children participated in games and singing, and were rewarded with stickers while older children created sentences, conjugated verbs, and read stories. Spanish Club for older children looked more like school whereas for younger children it looked more like play. Parents nonetheless reported being impressed with what their children had learned in Spanish Club. During a focus group discussion, one parent said, “He still will use the Spanish words all the time just in normal conversation. I wish he could do more of the Spanish, actually. Little ones this young really seem to absorb it well. I’d like to see him actually do a little more of that Spanish stuff.” Several other parents made similar comments and, overall, were quite impressed with the Spanish Club. One site director also observed that the fiesta for parents hosted by Spanish Club was a positive way for parents to see what their children had learned while in the program.

Observations indicated that the Spanish instructors struggled with classroom management issues during the first semester. Although some had classroom management plans, these were not implemented consistently. Other instructors did not appear to have classroom management plans so students caused more disruptions. Observation notes showed that one instructor never addressed this disruptive behavior and, in fact, made excuses for students’ behavior, saying that they were tired after a long day. However, all Spanish instructors did pay attention to student behavior in that they changed activities when they saw that students were not responding positively. This showed an awareness of the students’ needs and an interest in engaging the students in the work. In addition, classroom management improved during the spring semester because more After-school program staff addressed management issues when they arose. For example, one staff member made a child apologize to the Spanish instructor for disrespectful behavior. He then suggested a new seating arrangement to the Spanish instructor that would help curtail the student’s poor behavior.

Fun and Fitness. Overall, children enjoyed Fun and Fitness, which focused on teamwork, fitness, and having fun. Observations indicated that instructors were patient with children even when they were not listening, following instructions, or cooperating. But because every instructor maintained a soft, calm, voice as they explained activities or corrected behavior, incidences of disruptive behavior were less common during Fun and Fitness classes than some of the other enrichment classes. Instructors appeared to have a positive rapport with the students at every site. During the spring semester, at least one new Fun and Fitness instructor taught the class at some of the sites. He brought a teenage helper. Both had positive rapport with the older children, especially, and gave this age group more opportunities to play organized sports games including basketball and soccer. During a focus group discussion, one parent did express concern that the younger children get extremely tired if they have Fun and Fitness on a day when they also have physical education at school. She said her son came home one evening and fell asleep at 6:30 p.m. because he was so tired. She suggested that children be given the chance to not participate in enrichment activities.

Art with a Heart. Observations indicated that Art with a Heart (AWAH) instructors were encouraging and caring toward the children and most of the children enjoyed and looked forward to art. For example, instructors offered many compliments to children about their work. They

also took photos of the children with their work and talked enthusiastically about the exhibition that was held at each site at the conclusion of the AWAH program there. During focus group discussions, parents said they were impressed with the art projects their children were able to finish in Art with a Heart. Some even said they wished the program could be offered more often and for longer periods of time throughout the year.

Music lessons. Though numbers were low, those students who took piano lessons seemed to enjoy them as was clear by their attention and hard work during classes. In a few cases some students progressed more quickly than others in the class and appeared to feel bored. However, instructors found ways to address this issue. For example, one instructor utilized head phones so that students could work on songs at their own pace. Violin lessons and drumming were also offered at a few sites. These were both popular activities. However, offering additional activities may place additional burden on the site due to space issues. For example, during a violin lesson in the site director's office, staff continually interrupted the lesson because they needed to take care of important business in that office. Thus, that space was inappropriate for the lessons since students were having difficulty focusing. It was also noted that all of the students chosen to participate in drumming at one site were boys. The site director said she did not intentionally do this, but she recognized that this may not be fair to the girls since she selected those who would be allowed to participate.

Additional Major Components

WICR strategies were not implemented despite the training offered in November. This could be because it was not made clear to those in attendance at the training for whom these strategies were to be used. For example, the trainer did not specify that the strategies were to be used primarily with middle-school-aged children and could be adapted for use with intermediate-aged children. In addition, the training offered only a few examples of how the strategies might be taught. Providing many ideas or allowing staff the opportunity to plan ideas during the training might have made a positive difference in the implementation of this element. One site did appear to attempt to utilize the WICR strategies during some language lessons. However, it was unclear whether they were doing this purposefully or if it was just luck that the activity looked like it might be part of AVID.

Finally, there was no evidence of **field trips to colleges** or the use of college tutors to work with students. However, there were two noteworthy program parts that coincided with these elements. First, a program referred to as Gate (we are uncertain of the spelling or what it stands for since it was only ever mentioned in conversation) was seen to be occurring. We understood that this program was established to help students prepare for the rigors of high school. However, we were never allowed to observe this program, and thus cannot comment fully on its benefit to students in the After-school program. It did seem that it might address some of the same components that visits to colleges would have addressed, had they occurred. For example, we would assume that it was meant to build students' confidence in their ability to succeed in the next stage of schooling in the same way that visiting colleges would open their minds to the possibility of education beyond high school. Second, although college tutors were never observed at any of the site's programs, some sites did utilize high school tutors. These older students were able to provide homework help and serve as positive role models. Moreover, it

appeared that just as visits to high schools or colleges might introduce further opportunities to children in the program, these interactions with successful high school students helped to open students' minds to what was possible beyond elementary school.

Although most sites did make progress toward fully implementing the **Math Pentathlon curriculum** during the spring, this was still an inconsistent part of the program. Only one site was able to offer many students the opportunity to play a variety of Math Pentathlon games. Conversely, other sites struggled to fully implement this program. For example, older children were given chances to play, but not younger children, or a few games were introduced, but not the full range available to the program. This could be a result of not having enough staff to run the program or because the staff was not fully trained. However, training was offered in both fall and spring, and new staff was hired at some sites to oversee the program. Moreover, at the most successful site, students were allowed to learn games on their own, which was not a practice at the other sites. Opportunities to work on Math Facts in a Flash aligned with computer and library-use time. At sites where students had more access to computers and/or the library, they worked on this program more often. Almost every site provided students adequate time to work on Math Facts in the spring.

Student Interactions

Overall, observations indicated that students influenced each other to act in both positive and negative ways. They exhibited behaviors typical of children and adolescents including participation in playful teasing of each other as well as some fighting with each other. However, fighting was rarely observed during the spring semester. It was also noted that interactions were often formulated around family relationships and cultural background. For example, brothers and sisters helped each other when they attended programs at sites that mixed the grade levels. In addition, at sites with special populations such as many children who are native Spanish-speakers, Latino children of all ages often helped each other with homework and other activities.

Helping behaviors. Overall, students were observed helping each other often. They helped each other with homework, and cooperated to accomplish tasks such as passing out snacks or picking up games, toys, and books. In addition, observations indicated that children exhibited helpful behaviors towards all children and not just those who were most like themselves. For example, although Spanish-speaking children often spoke Spanish to each other, they did not use language to exclude non-Spanish-speaking students. It was clear that the children were used to working together and supporting each other within the school environment. Parents also noticed these supportive behaviors. During a focus group discussion, a parent said, "It is a real nice sense of family here. I really like that. I think these kids watch out for each other and I think that is important. I'm sure they have the usual problems but I think for the most part this is really a good place for children."

There were also several examples of students being affectionate towards each other. For example, one girl hugged several other students, both boys and girls, before she went home. Another girl kissed a younger student on the forehead before she went home. Other children held hands or sat closely as they talked or worked together. In a number of cases, these interactions were the effect of a close relationship such as a brother and sister or cousins. One site director

said in her interview that she has “seen some really sweet moments when older kids are showing real care for younger kids.” Another site director said, “They are kind to each other.” A third site director noted that it makes her proud to see the older kids at her site helping the younger kids with their homework and reading. She said, “It’s just so neat to see even if it is like a first grader or a second grader wanting to read to a pre-schooler. They really enjoy that, and some of the older kids will help the younger kids, too. That makes you proud because they are in that helping role.”

Occasional inappropriate behaviors. Students were also observed influencing each other to engage in inappropriate behaviors. Most of these behaviors were merely disruptive. For example, students might shout out, act silly, or talk when they were supposed to be working. However, sometimes students’ unhelpful behavior got out of control and resulted in dangerous or cruel behavior. For example, a group of boys started throwing pencils at each other when the staff member was helping another student. Another example is when a boy asked, “What is Espanol?” and a girl replied, “Spanish, you moron.”

There were a few examples of physical fighting between students during the fall semester. For example, observers saw students being pushed, kicked, and punched. Some of these fights resulted from a tendency to playfully tease or make fun of each other. In one such case, two cousins were joking with each other, but as the insults became more personal, the girls got more upset and eventually slapped each other. However, these behaviors were not observed during the spring semester.

Staff/Student and Staff/Families Interactions

The After-school program was staffed by teachers, parents of former and current students, administrators, parishioners, social workers, classroom assistants, and high school volunteers. All of these individuals showed that they cared about students in some way. They were also able to build valuable relationships with families.

Staff and student relationships. Overall, observations indicate that staff members worked positively with students and their families. Staff members were very caring toward students. For example, they complimented students’ work, asked how students were feeling, and encouraged students to try harder. Staff also had high expectations for students. One site director said, “What I want them to know is that we love and care for them. We are not going to allow them to be disrespectful and rude. We want to help them. We want the best for them and we want them to succeed in the future.” During focus group discussions, parents indicated that they appreciate when expectations are clear and consistent. Although there were times when staff members were inconsistent with their enforcement of expectations, in most cases, staff members addressed behaviors, had clear expectations, and followed through with consequences appropriate to the student’s actions. For example, one site director reported that her staff communicates very effectively to parents how their children are doing in the After-school program. She believed this built trust between the staff and parents. Consistent expectations resulted in fewer instances of negative behaviors at most sites. There were a few staff members who avoided situations requiring intervention and behavior corrections, which resulted in the recurrence of negative behaviors. For example, after observing that a group of boys sitting on the floor were distracting

each other and not getting much homework done, a teacher asked them several times if they thought they should move to a table. The boys continually said they did not think they should. Because she gave them a choice rather than an instruction, they were allowed to continue to distract not only each other, but the other students in the room as well.

Staff and family interactions. Observations showed that many positive interactions occurred between staff and family members during the sign-out process. At most sites, communication between parents and staff was efficient, secure, and beneficial. For example, a site director said that parents “know we know what is going on with the child, with homework. They know we know what is going on in the classroom. They know that we will have those children complete their homework. If there is anything extra that needs to be done, it will be. Many of the teachers tell us if they need some class work completed. Parents value that.” Another site director said that the After-school program provides a bridge between school and home, saying that “it connects the families with the school and that is what we want. We want to make sure they know what is going on here. We want to make sure they have good communications with the teachers also. Everything is done to help the students.” Parents expressed similar opinions. For example, one parent said, “They care and almost in some cases they even check after your child more than you do at times on certain parts of the school day. It’s very much an extension of the school day and we are all in this together.” Conversely, a few site directors said that they did not think that the After-school program served as a bridge between school and home. For example, one site director said, “Usually the parents just directly communicate with the teachers.”

Relations between the staff and families were personal and comfortable. For example, parents often stayed for a few moments to talk to the staff members at several sites. One site director observed that parents “come in and they will sit and play for a while sometimes instead of just leaving right away. They will stay around and play a game.” The students showed signs of preference and enjoyment while at the program as well as the family members expressing emotions of appreciation and friendship. During a focus group discussion, a parent said, “I really like the fact that they encourage our children to respect themselves and others. They have a genuine love to teach children.” Another parent said, “I feel like it is my house or something. I feel comfortable.”

In relation to the sign out process some schools were quite efficient in communicating to the children that their parent had arrived through either walkie-talkies or intercoms. However, a few sites did not have such technology to communicate, and proved to be less efficient, causing some annoyance among parents who had to wait while staff and students searched for or retrieved their student. For example, during a focus group discussion at one site, several parents said they felt frustrated that they could not find their children when they arrived to pick them up.

Recommendations

Overall the After-school program has been a success. Students have had many opportunities for homework help, reading development, and academic enrichment. The evaluation design allowed for the evaluation team to get a clear understanding of the goals of the program and to examine

the extent to which those goals were achieved. The findings of the formative evaluation can be used to further improve the delivery of the program during the next year.

Recommendations for improving the After-school program include:

- Continue to build on the relationships with students and families. Increase the number of family involvement opportunities.
- Reiterate the importance of implementing the essential components of the 21st Century Learning Centers Grant including the AVID strategies for intermediate and middle school students.
- Provide professional development on all strategies especially AVID and Math Pentathlon.
- Train after-school staff on how to use results of the learning styles inventory to identify appropriate homework settings for individual students.
- Identify appropriate enrichment activities for students who do not have homework and/or complete their homework early.
- Ask teachers to critically reflect on the quality and value of the type/amount of homework given.
- Increase quantity and quality of communication between after-school staff and teachers.
- Add staff to school sites where the student: staff ratio is too high.
- Revise grant to exclude the use of college tutors if they are not available.

Recommendation for improving evaluation data include:

- Keep track of family involvement in parent nights/activities.
- Ensure that all teachers complete the behavior survey.
- Train project manager on EZReports and EZEval
- Train project manager on access of other important school databases to easily access achievement, enrollment, and attendance data.
- Keep school and after-school attendance records up-to-date.
- Include parent consent forms as part of Project RELATES registration.

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