# COMMUNITY CHANGE
# STEVENSON CAMPUS/MILLENNIUM ARTS ACADEMY

## 21st Century Community Learning Center
## End of Year Evaluation Report
## Year 1: 2013-14

## Executive Summary

The TASC Research Team recently completed the first year evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Center program at Millennium Arts Academy for the 2013-14 school year. As part of this evaluation, multiple sources of data were collected—including participant and staff surveys; official school records; and observations of program activities—in order to obtain a detailed picture of your program. Results from the staff surveys and first set of activity observations were provided to your program in our Interim report, which was distributed in March. Throughout this Comprehensive Report, we provide feedback on the rest of this data.

Major Findings:

- *Participation*: A total of 186 youth attended the 21st CCLC program during the 2013-14 school year. Of those, 38% (n=70) attended their program for 90 hours or more, thus meeting the official 21st CCLC definition of *regular* participants.
- *Academic Performance – Report Cards*
    - English Language Arts (ELA): Over the course of the 2013-14 year, 50% of participants increased their English report card grade from the first to final marking period, compared to 13% across similar sites evaluated by TASC.
    - Math: Over the course of the 2013-14 year, 44% of participants increased their math report card grade from the first to final marking period, compared to 14% across similar sites evaluated by TASC.
- *Student Responses*: According to surveys of 101 program students:
    - Youth were likely to report talking to their parents about after-school, but less likely to say their parents come to after-school events.
    - Youth expressed positive attitudes about their community, agreeing that it is important to change things that unfair.
    - Most youth indicated plans to either graduate from college or obtain an advanced graduate degree.
    - Youth reported liking the activities and feeling like they belong and are successful at the program, but were less likely to report trusting the other kids in the program.
- *Activity Observations*: According to activity observations conducted at the site:
    - Youth were respectful of one another and interacted with staff positively.
    - Staff were adept at recognizing and praising youth accomplishments.
    - Activities were well-organized and designed to challenge youth to develop intellectually and creatively.

Based on these findings, we offer the following recommendations for your program:

- Open up a dialogue with youth about how often they attend the program, and what might encourage them to attend with more consistency.
- Consider holding parent forums or events that focus on specific issues of interest or import to parents to further engage them with the program.
- Offer additional opportunities to participate in community and school improvement projects.
- Create discussion groups that allow youth to share thoughts and research about their long-term education plans.
- Incorporate trust-building exercises in activities to help strengthen peer-to-peer relationships.

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to document your 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) After-School Program, which operated during the 2013-14 school year. This analysis brings together data on student- and program-level characteristics. The report draws on multiple sources of data including official school records, participant survey data and activity observations. Feedback from other sources of data collected, including staff surveys and initial activity observations, was provided in mid-year narrative and interim reports.

The report is divided into five sections.

- The remainder of this *Introduction* provides background on the 21st CCLC program and lays out the methodology used to collect data.

- The *Demographics and Attendance* section summarizes the utilization of your 21st CCLC program and describes key characteristics of youth served by the program.

- The *Academic Outcomes* section reports on participants' educational performance in math and English language arts (ELA) classes as measured through report card grades. Information provided in the school outcomes section corresponds to data reported in your 2013 Annual Performance Report (APR), the federal reporting system that all 21st CCLC grantees are required to complete annually.

- The *Participant Experiences* section includes responses to surveys administered in the spring of 2014. These surveys were administered to elicit participants' opinions and attitudes about the programs they attended. Information on your grant, including the award amount, is also included and comes from the Department of Education. This data is available to download at http://ppics.learningpt.org.

- The *Observations* section summarizes findings from the site observation that took place in the spring. Observations were conducted using the OST observation instrument—a tool designed to rate program activities across three key domains known to result in positive outcomes for youth, including: relationships, instructional support, and activity content and structure.

In our evaluation of your 21st CCLC grant, we set out to build a systematic process to regularly monitor the quality and results of services provided by your after-school program. The data presented in this report align closely with the elements in the **NYSAN QSA tool**. This report can be used as a foundation on which to frame your programs' self-assessment. To make these evaluation findings worthwhile, we hope program managers and frontline staff will use the information provided in this report to help improve services for youth and to ensure better outcomes in the future.

## About the 21st CCLC Program

Authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the law's specific purposes are to: (1) provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students (particularly those who attend low-performing schools) meet state and local student performance standards in core academic subjects like reading and mathematics; (2) offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, which are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and (3) offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

## Evaluation Methodology

Information used for this evaluation is collected from the following sources:

- *Review of program records*. The evaluation team reviews data maintained by individual sites through the Youthservices.net online attendance tracking system. Participating sites use Youthservices.net, a web-based data system, to collect data on all participating youth, including names, OSIS numbers (unique student identification numbers), grades, enrollment dates, attendance, services received, and other personal data.

- *Review of Department of Education data*. Participants' report card grades were obtained through collection of report cards from program and/or school staff. *Note*: The evaluation team works with the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to obtain students' state assessment information. Through a data merge using participant OSIS numbers in the Youthservices.net system to match with data from the Department of Education's system, the evaluation team will be provided with data to report on the grant's APR. However, state test score information was not available from the NYCDOE at the time of this report.

- *Participant surveys*. Surveys of participating youth were administered during the 2013-14 school year. Survey responses were collected to document participants' impressions of the programs and to measure participant-level changes over time in a variety of outcome areas, including school engagement, behavior in and out of school, social skills, self-esteem, etc.

- *Activity Observations*. Trained program evaluators visited the site twice over the course of the year, evaluating program activities using the OST observation instrument. This tool rates program activities in the domains of relationships, instructional support and activity content and structure—areas shown to be related to positive outcomes for youth.

# Demographics and Attendance

A total of 186 youth attended the 21st CCLC program during the 2013-14 school year. Of those, 38% (n=70) attended their program for 90 hours or more, thus meeting the official 21st CCLC definition of *regular* participants.

Table 1 describes the population served across various criteria including demographics (gender and ethnicity), as well as grade level and level of participation in the program. Note that results presented below are only for students who completed the student survey. Thus, while report card data is presented for your full sample, survey data is only presented for the subset of the population who filled out the student survey at your site.

## Key Findings

- Surveys were completed by 101 students, the majority of which were in 9th, 10th or 11th grade.
- Over half of the participants were female, and nearly two-thirds identified as Hispanic or Latino.
- The majority of respondents (78%) participated in the program 3 days a week.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Program Participants

| | (n=101) | (%) | | (n=101) | (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade** | | | **Gender** | | |
| 8th Grade | 1 | 1.0 | Male | 44 | 43.6 |
| 9th Grade | 27 | 26.7 | Female | 55 | 54.5 |
| 10th Grade | 28 | 27.7 | Missing | 2 | 2.0 |
| 11th Grade | 30 | 29.7 | | | |
| 12th Grade | 14 | 13.9 | **Returning Participant?** | 52 | 53.6 |
| | | | | | |
| **Ethnicity** | | | **Language Spoken at Home** | | |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 3 | 3.0 | English | 91 | 90.1 |
| Black (Not Hispanic) | 36 | 35.6 | Spanish | 35 | 34.7 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 65 | 64.4 | Chinese | 2 | 2.0 |
| Native American or Alaskan | 4 | 4.0 | Middle Eastern | 0 | 0.0 |
| White (Not Hispanic) | 5 | 5.0 | Haitian-Creole | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 8 | 7.9 | Other | 5 | 5.0 |
| | | | | | |
| **After-School Participation** | | | **Years at current day school** | | |
| 1 day/week or less | 3 | 3.1 | 0 (First year at school) | 30 | 30.3 |
| 2 days/week | 11 | 11.2 | 1 year | 10 | 10.1 |
| 3 days/week | 76 | 77.6 | 2 years | 24 | 24.2 |
| 4 days/week | 3 | 3.1 | 3 years or more | 35 | 35.4 |
| 5 days/week | 5 | 5.1 | | | |

## Family and Neighborhood Characteristics of Participants

Participants were also surveyed about various characteristics of their families and neighborhoods. For example, participants were asked if and how often their parents help them with their homework and if they see people in their neighborhood help each other. See Figures 1 and 2 for more. This more detailed information about participants' family and neighborhood circumstances can help you think about how to best serve the students in your program.

Throughout this report we provide a comparison to other TASC evaluation sites that serve the same grade levels, referred to as "Similar Programs." (The findings from TASC-evaluated sites are fairly representative of other 21st CCLC programs throughout New York City and can be used as a benchmark with which to compare results of your program.) The group of similar programs serving middle or high school students is comprised of 18 after-school programs with 874 students' responses on surveys.

### Key Findings

- Participants were just as likely as those from other programs to talk to their parents about after-school.
- Students were less likely to say their parents come to after-school events or talk to after-school teachers.
- Youth reported being more likely to have positive neighborhood experiences than negative ones.

Figure 1: Summary of Participants' Family Relationships

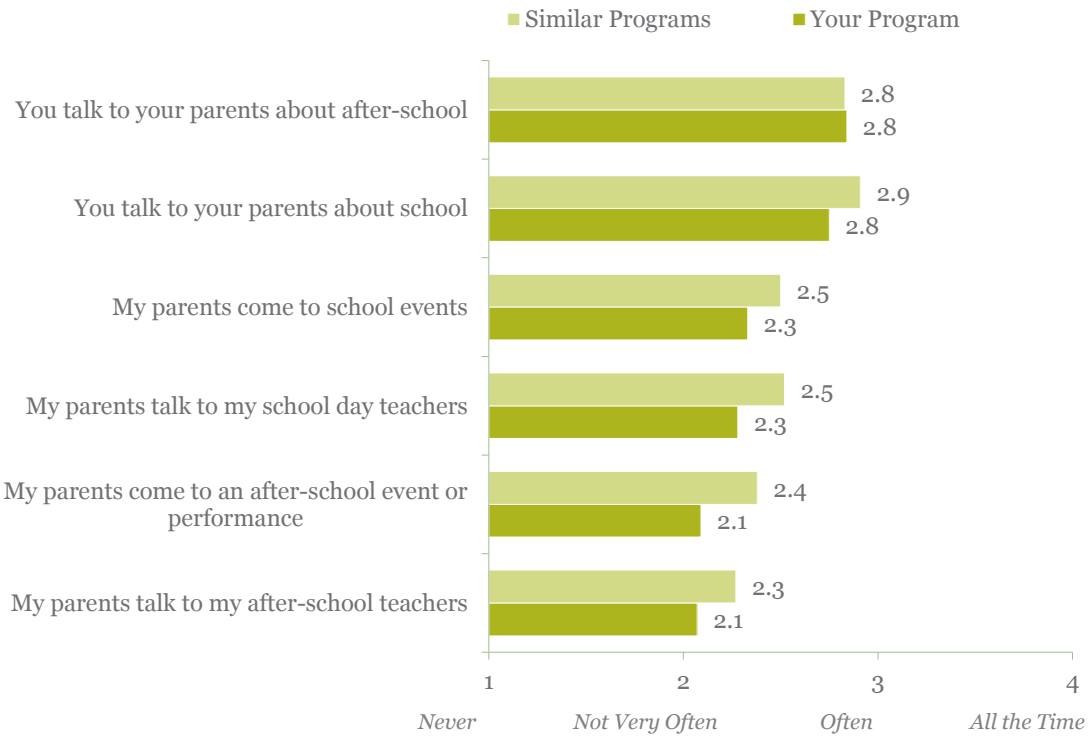
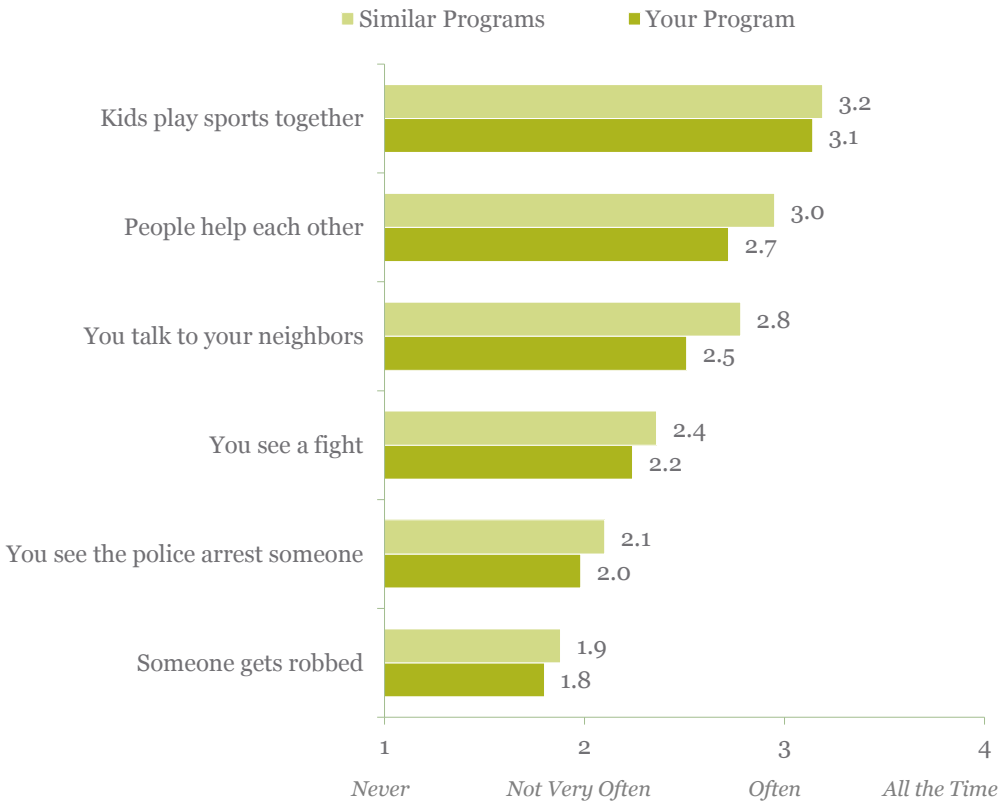


Figure 2: Summary of Participants' Neighborhood Experiences




## Discussion/Recommendations

The information provided regarding participants' family and neighborhood characteristics may help you to plan activities and events to meet their unique needs. Consider ways to incorporate after-school staff into parent-teacher meetings or other school-day events so they can reach out and discuss students' progress in the after-school program. Program staff might also consider holding parent forums or events during the year that focus on specific issues of interest or import to parents.

# Academic Outcomes

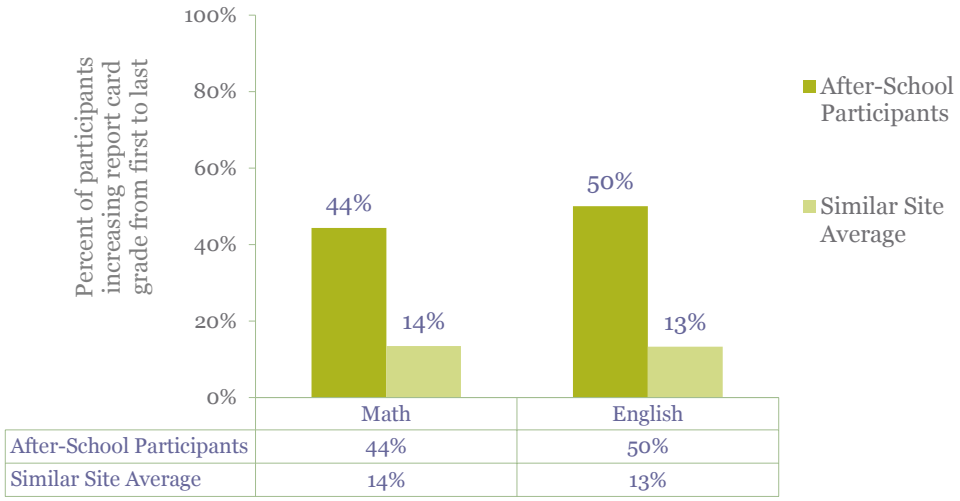
The purpose of this section is to share school performance data, specifically report card grades, collected for the 2013-14 reporting period. Here, TASC compares regular attendees' first marking period grades with final marking period grades in mathematics and reading/language arts. Since data on attendees' level of proficiency on state assessments administered during the 2013-14 reporting period is not available until September, we cannot include it here. Please refer to your forthcoming 2013-14 Annual Performance Report (APR) for information on performance on state math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students in each program that either increased their math and English report card scores from the first to last marking period, or could not improve because they started out with the highest possible grade. This is compared to similar sites evaluated by TASC. In subsequent years, we will display how this program fared relative to the previous year.

## Key Findings

- The proportion of students improving their math and ELA scores over the academic year was much higher than those in similar programs.

Figure 3: Math and English Report Card Score Changes




| | Math | English |
|---|---|---|
| After-School Participants | 44% | 50% |
| Similar Site Average | 14% | 13% |

## Discussion/Recommendations

Build on students' improved academic performance by adding math games to existing activities and incorporating vocabulary drills to help increase comprehension and literacy skills. Remember to consistently praise academic achievement in order to promote continued classroom success and self-confidence.

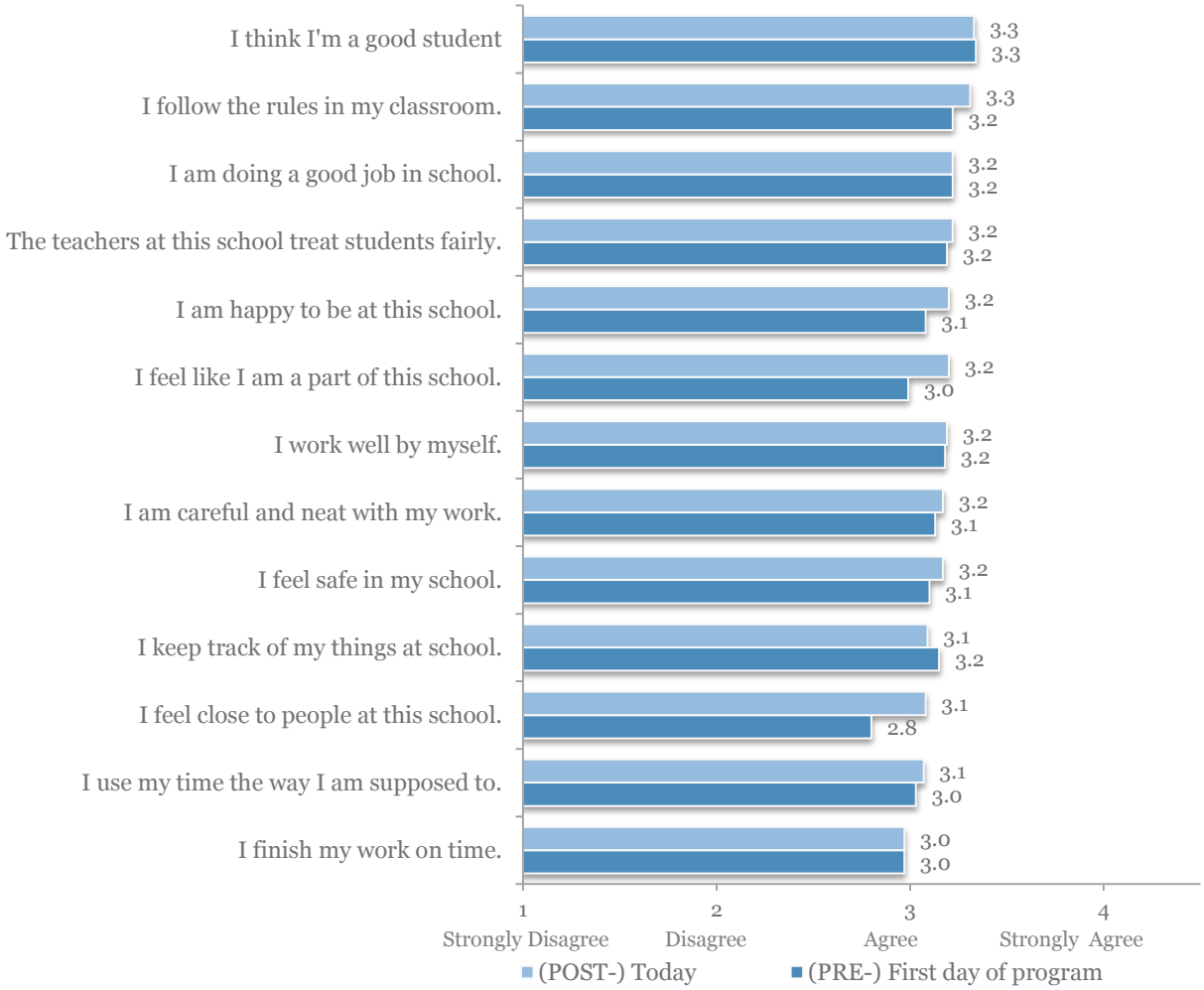
## Participant In-School Experiences

Before taking a closer look at students' experiences in their after-school programs, students were asked a subset of questions regarding how they felt about their regular school day. We surveyed students in the spring using a retrospective pre- and post-format whereby students were asked to reflect first on how they felt back on the first day of school followed by how they felt today (in the spring). Responses are detailed in Figure 4.

### Key Findings

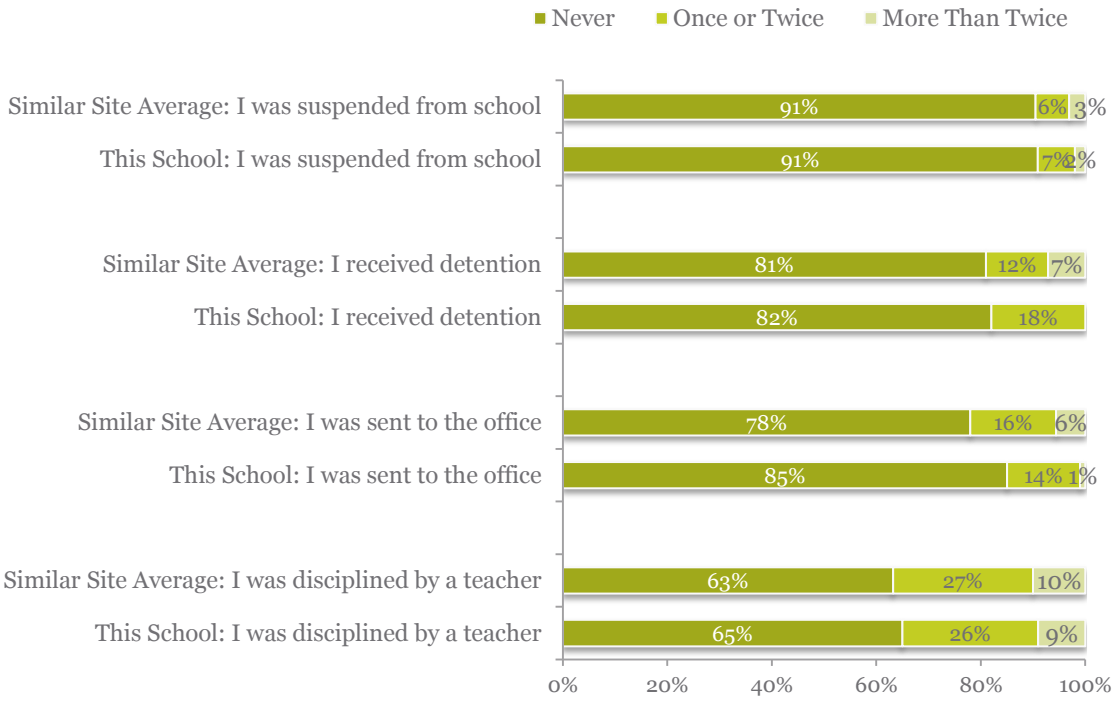
- Participants reported relatively positive feelings about school, particularly that they believe they are good students.
- The biggest positive change seen over the course of the year was the degree to which youth felt close to others at school.

Figure 4: Summary of Students' Feelings Regarding Their School



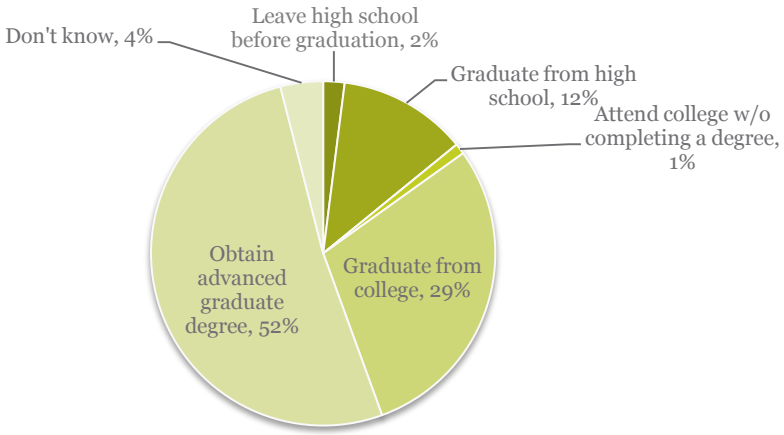
Students were also asked how often they have received a variety of disciplinary actions in the past month. As seen in Figure 5, most students indicated that they were never suspended, put in detention or sent to the office. About 35 percent reported being disciplined by a teacher at least once.

Figure 5: Student Report of Disciplinary Actions




Students were also asked how far they would like to go in school. As seen in Figure 6, the majority indicated plans to either graduate from college (29%) or obtain an advanced graduate degree (52%).

Figure 6: Students' Long-Term Educational Plans

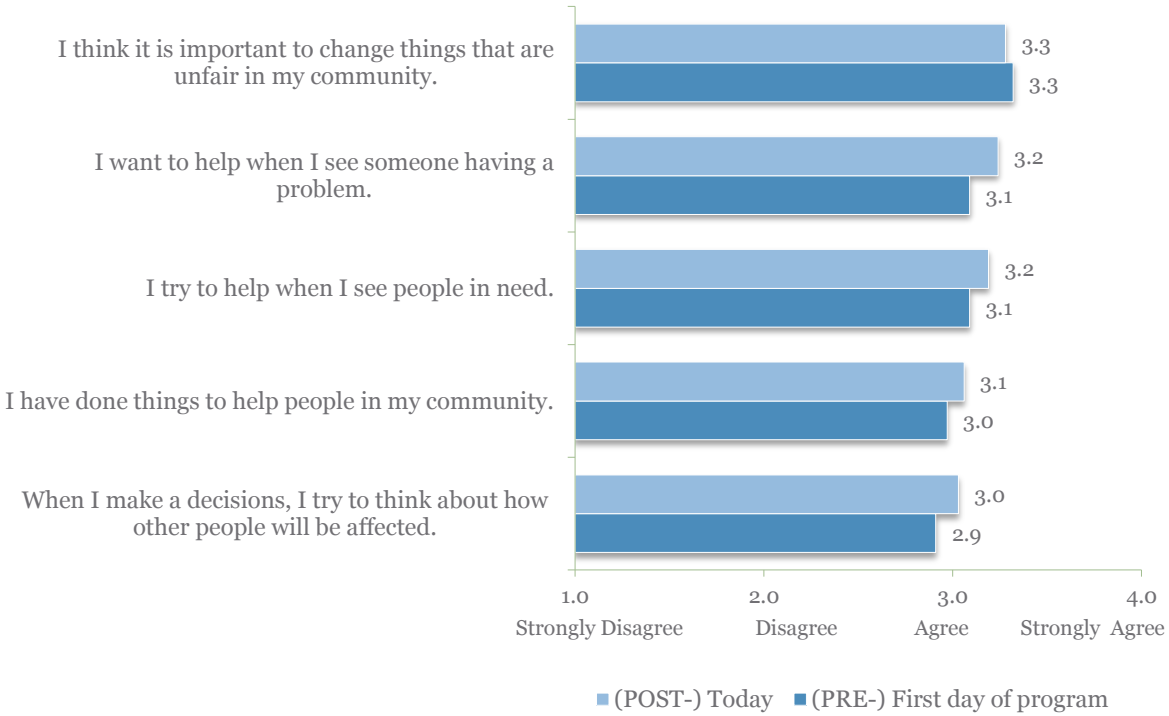


Students also reported on their general attitudes and behaviors, particularly about their community, both before attending the after-school program and afterwards. Responses are detailed in Figure 7.

## Key Findings

- Students expressed generally positive attitudes about their community, with some small change from their attitudes at the beginning of the year.
- In particular, youth agreed that it is important to change things that unfair in their community.

Figure 7: Summary of Students' General Attitudes About Their Community




## Discussion/Recommendations

Continue to encourage students' positive attitudes, and offer additional opportunities to participate in community and school improvement projects. Staff might also consider opening up discussion groups that allow youth to share thoughts about their long-term education plans. Such conversations might allow those who are unsure to concretize their ideas. Reading over college websites or brochures could help to jump-start these dialogues. Staff should also talk with students about positive classroom behavior, particularly to prepare them for the rigors of high school and college.

# Participant After-School Experiences

The following figures detail participants' opinions and attitudes about the programs they attended. The purpose of these questions was to obtain participants' opinions and attitudes about the programs they attended. These questions addressed three main areas: (1) *benefits* imparted by participants' after-school programs, (2) *participation in activities* in after-school, and (3) *connection* to peers and staff at their after-school programs. Gaining an understanding of how youth experience their programs helps to reveal compelling program elements that are successful and those that may be in need of improvement.

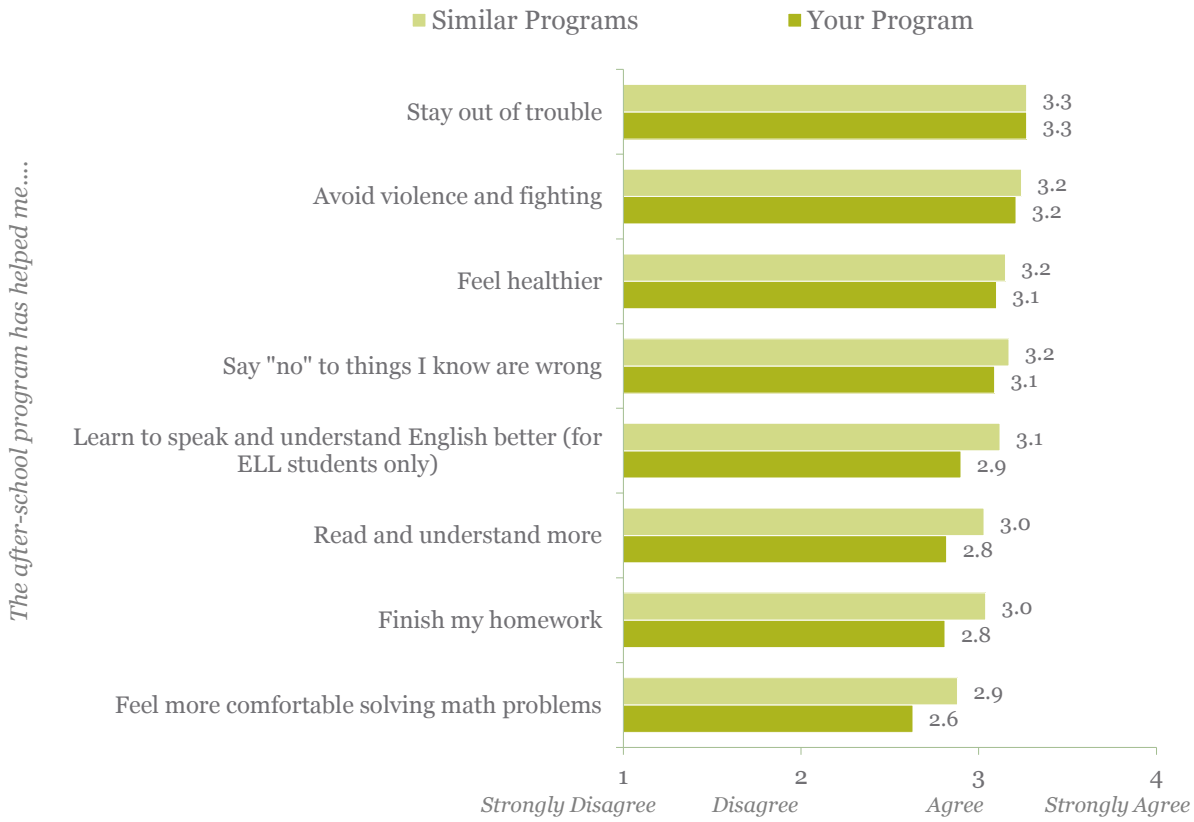
## Program Benefits

Figure 8 indicates the proportion of participants surveyed who agreed that participating in after school resulted in certain academic benefits.

### Key Findings

- Participants were just as likely as those from similar programs to say that the program helped them to stay out of trouble and avoid violence and fighting.
- Students were less likely to agree that the program helped to improve their academic performance.

Figure 8: Participants' Self-Reported Benefits from Program



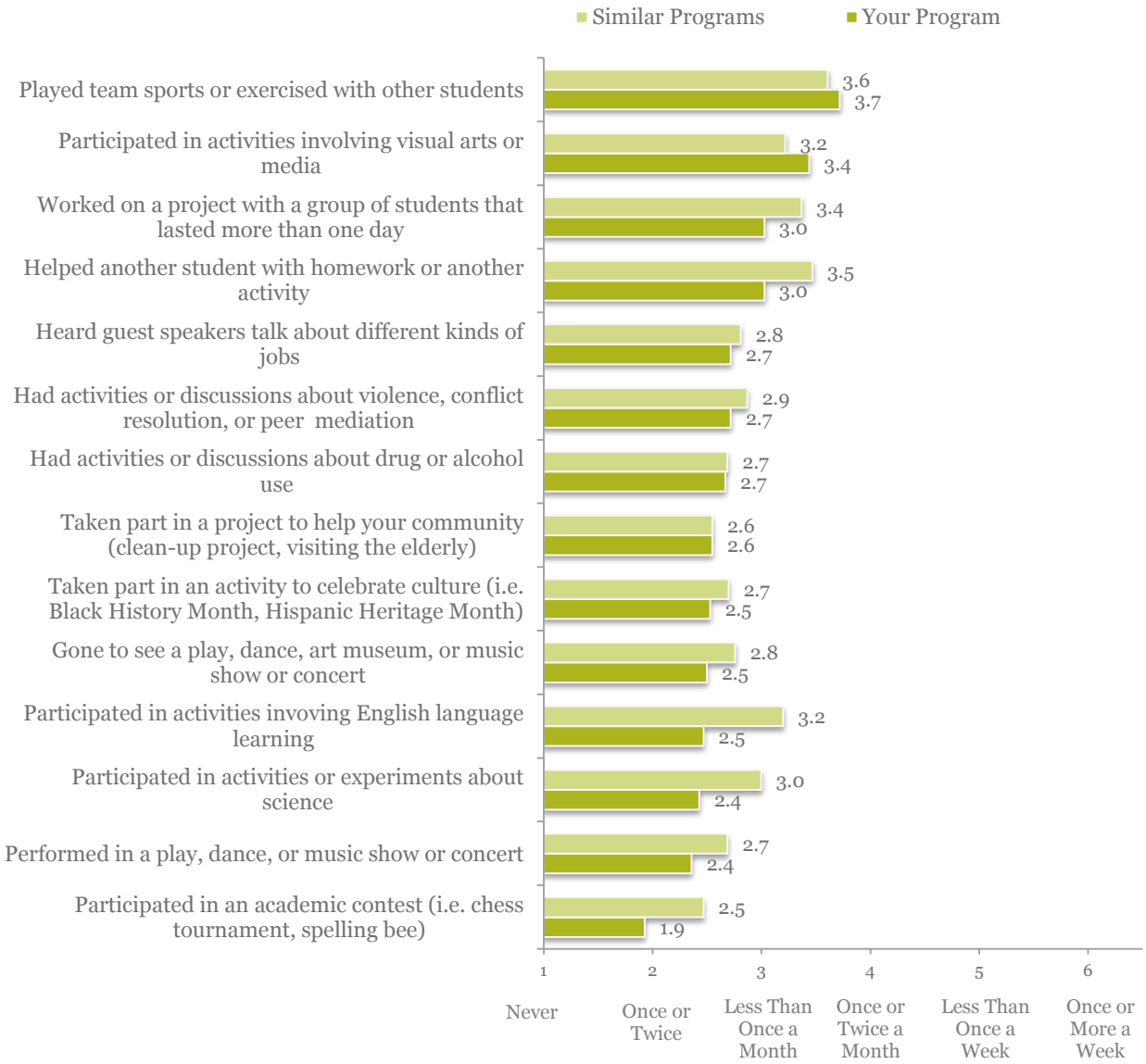
## Participant Activities in After School

The purpose of this section is to provide data on specific experiences of students during their after-school program. Figure 9 indicates the average frequency with which youth said they participated in specific activities at least once during the previous month.

### Key Findings

- Youth were more likely than those from other programs to say they had played team sports or participated in activities involving visual arts or media.
- They were less likely to report participating in academic contests or science activities.

Figure 9: Summary of Participant Activities in After School



## Connection to Peers and Staff

Participants reported how much they felt a sense of belonging at their after-school program, specifically rating the quality of their relationships with peers in after school and with the staff/teachers who work in the program.

Figure 10 details participants' ratings of how close they felt to their peers in the after-school program.

### Key Findings

- Participants generally reported liking the activities and feeling like they belong and are successful at the program.
- Students were less likely to report trusting the other kids in the program.

Figure 10: Summary of Participants' Sense of Belongingness

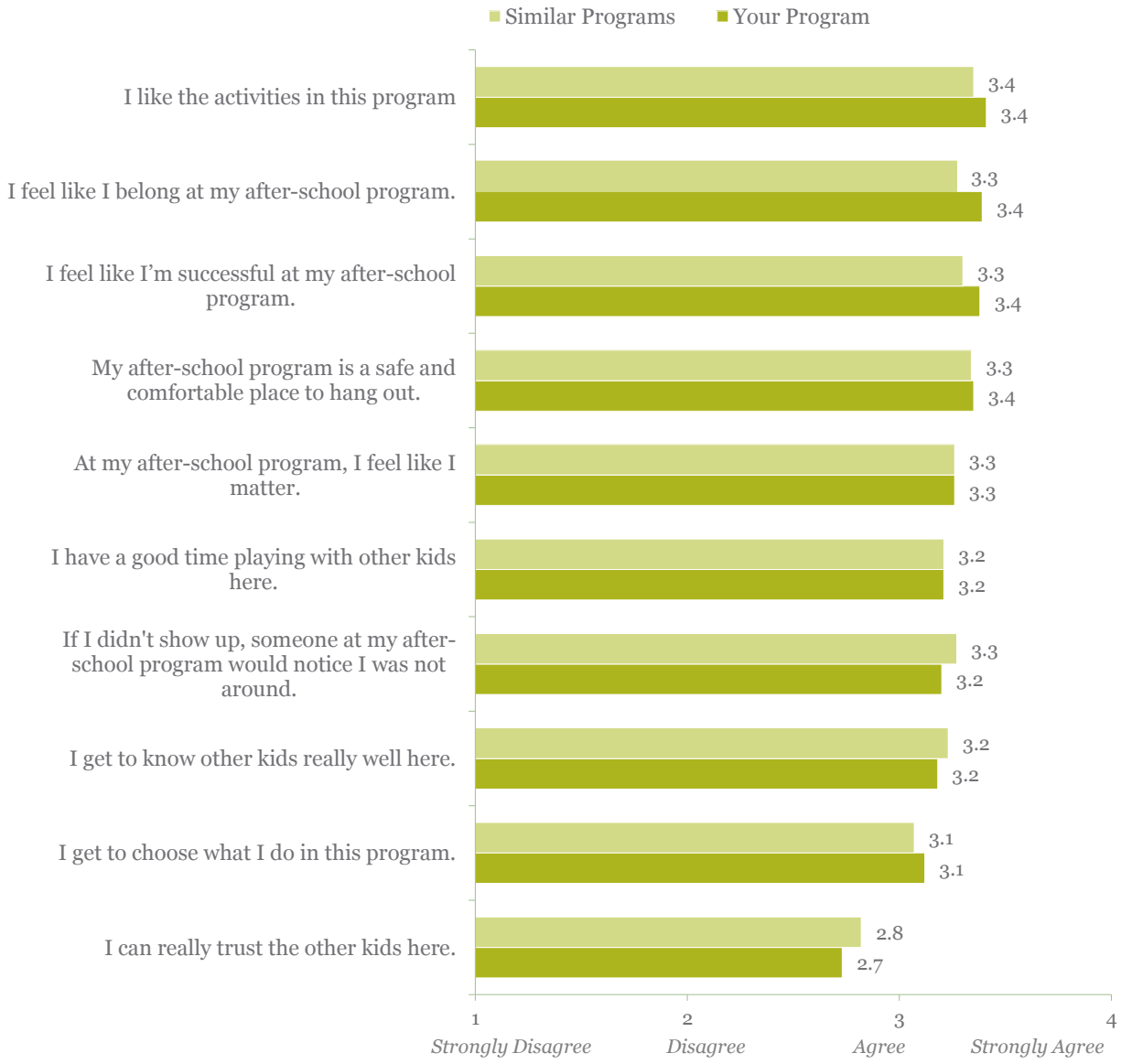
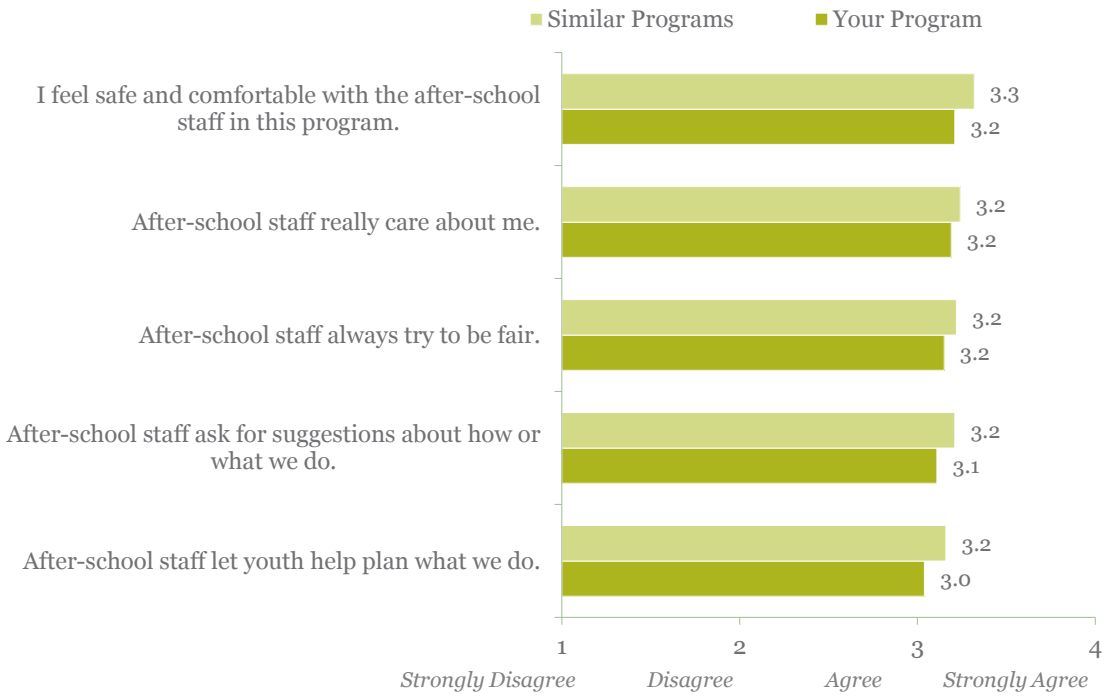


Figure 11 details how participants described their relationships with the after-school staff/teachers at their program.

### Key Findings

- Youth were likely to express feeling safe and comfortable with program staff, and feeling that staff really care about them and always try to be fair.
- Participant attitudes about staff were about on par with students from similar programs.

Figure 11: Summary of Relationship Between Youth and After-School Staff




## Discussion/Recommendations

Consider adding opportunities for enrichment activities like academic contests and science-related activities. Trust-building exercises could be useful in improving peer-to-peer relationships. It is encouraging that students had relatively positive feelings about after-school staff, but those feelings may become even stronger if students feel they have more of a voice in the program. Think about developing a mechanism for all participants to submit suggestions or recommendations to the advisory board, and perhaps allowing a chosen group of student representatives to attend meetings regularly.

# Observation Site Visits

## The OST Observation Instrument

As outlined in your Interim Report earlier this year, with the OST Observation Instrument, our staff evaluates program elements that leading experts agree result in positive outcomes for youth. The instrument allows us to rate program activities on various indicators addressing three key program quality domains. The domains are:

- **Relationships:** This domain measures whether youth are supportive and respectful of one another and staff. It also measures how engaged youth are in the activities they attend and how positively staff interact with youth.

- **Instructional support:** This domain measures the efforts of after-school staff to support participants' learning.

- **Activity content and structure:** This domain measures whether activities are planned and well-organized, the challenge level is age-appropriate and opportunities exist for problem solving.

Observers rated each indicator on a scale from **zero** to **three**. A rating of a "zero" meant that the indicator was not evident during the observation period, and a "three" meant that the indicator was highly evident and consistent. These ratings provide a systematic method for us to quantify our observations of the elements of quality after-school activities found in your program. A score of "two" meant either the indicator was evident but inconsistent or that the desired behavior was generally present but not actively initiated and emphasized. For example, if youth were generally relaxed and enjoyed one another's company but the activity did not involve a high level of socializing, the rating would be a "two" under the domain of "youth-directed relationship building." Likewise, under staff-directed relationships, if staff treated all youth in an inclusive manner but there was no need for staff to reengage an isolated child or group because every child was comfortable and included, then the rating for "staff are equitable and inclusive" would be a "two."

## Results

TASC staff used the OST Observation Instrument to observe and rate the following activities at your program in the spring:

| Date | Activity |
|---|---|
| 5/13/14 | Running |
| | Art |
| | Dance |
| | Fun & Games |

In this report, a detailed breakdown of the indicator scores is provided. Figure 12 shows the score for each indicator, broken down by program quality domains.

### Key Findings

As shown in Figure 12, your program was rated on a number of indicators using the OST Observation Instrument (please see observation narrative reports for a discussion and more details of these highlights).

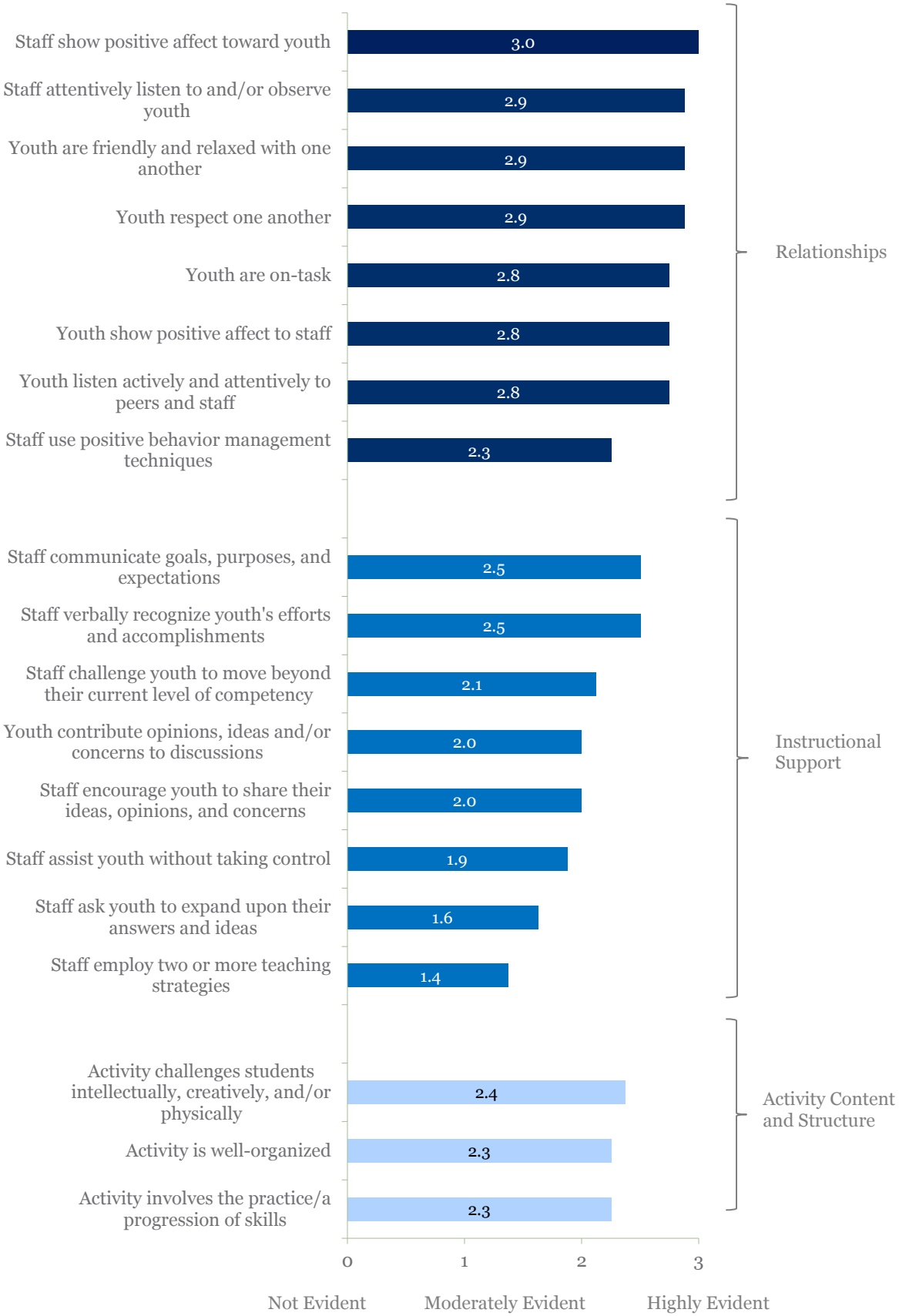
- Youth were supportive and respectful of one another and interacted with staff positively.
- Staff were adept at communicating the purpose of activities to youth and recognizing and praising youth accomplishments.
- Activities were well-organized and designed to challenge youth to develop intellectually and creatively.

## Discussion/Recommendations

We recommend that you focus your future quality improvement efforts on the following areas (please see observation narrative reports for a discussion and more details):

- Incorporate more opportunities where youth for youth to collaboratively accomplish a task, which would be extremely valuable for the development of academic and work skills.
- Employ varied teaching strategies, such as incorporating group discussion and debate so that students can get more opportunities to share and expand upon their ideas.
- Add in opportunities for analytical thinking in activities. For example, complex problem-solving can be quite valuable in asking students to experiment and think analytically.

Figure 12: Detailed Indicator Scores



## Discussion

This report, in conjunction with your Interim Report sent in March, provides the full scope of your evaluation. The information in this Final Evaluation Report comes from the results of your student surveys, program activity observations and achievement data.

Specifically, this report can help:

- Identify areas where improvements are needed;
- Improve fundraising and community outreach by incorporating evaluation results in communications and proposals; and
- Identify training and professional development opportunities that address relevant areas for improvement.

To make these findings worthwhile, we recommend taking the following steps:

- Disseminate this report to program coordinators, supervisors and other interested parties or stakeholders.
- Provide recognition to individuals and/or groups who showed positive outcomes.
- Include excerpts and specific findings in future proposals and other outreach communications (to parents, school staff, CBO staff, etc.).

The following resources may prove useful:

**New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN)** www.nysan.org
NYSAN is a public-private partnership of organizations dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool.

**Harvard Family Research Project: Out-of-School Time**
http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time
Their website includes a database of research studies and evaluations of OST programs and initiatives as well as various publications and resources.

**The SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool**
http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/resources/curriculum.html
In collaboration with subject-matter experts, they offer quality curriculum resources for programming in literacy, math, science, and technology.

We thank you for your hard work and cooperation in partnering with us over the course of your 21st CCLC grant. If you have questions about any of the information provided in this report, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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