

21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

2017–18 Evaluation Report

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List of Acronyms

21st CCLC	21st Century Community Learning Centers
AIR	American Institutes for Research
ANOVA	analysis of variance
APT-O	Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Observation Tool
CTE	career and technical education
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EL	English learners
ES	Executive Summary
EOC	end-of-course
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a second language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
HSE	High school equivalency
HLM	hierarchical linear modeling
KPI	key performance indicator
LEAG	Local Evaluation Advisory Group
LESI	Local Evaluation Support Initiative
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NIOST	National Institute on Out-of-School Time
NYSAN	New York State Association of Neuropsychology
PD	professional development
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
PQA	program quality assessment
PSM	propensity score matching
RFA	Request for Applications
SAYO	Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes
SACERS	School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale
SAPQA	School-Age Program Quality Assessment
STAAR	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TAPR	Texas Academic Performance Report
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code
Texas ACE	Texas Afterschool Centers on Education
Tx21st	Texas 21st Student Tracking System
YPQA	Youth Program Quality Assessment

Executive Summary

Since 2002, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has provided funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to support the provision of afterschool and summer learning opportunities in low-income communities. The program is funded by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as renewed by the Every Student Succeeds Act, which provides grant funding to states to support “academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools” (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2018). Since the grant program launched in Texas in 2003–04, hundreds of grantees and thousands of community learning centers, also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), across Texas have been funded.¹ This evaluation report presents statewide program evaluation findings pertaining to Texas ACE programs funded as part of grant Cycles 8–9. It focuses on the program’s operation and impact on student outcomes for the 2017–18 programming period. TEA typically awards 21st CCLC grants for a 5-year period. In any given year, two cycles are in operation at different years of their grants. This report focuses primarily on the final year of Cycle 8 and the second year of Cycle 9. In addition, one chapter also explains work done on a local evaluation initiative in 2018–19 for Cycles 9 and 10 grantees (Table Executive Summary [ES].1).

Table ES.1. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycles 8–10 Grantees, by Grant Years Represented in This Evaluation Report

Grant year	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Cycle 10	Notes
2013–14	Year 1	—	—	
2014–15	Year 2	—	—	
2015–16	Year 3	—	—	
2016–17	Year 4	Year 1	—	
2017–18	Year 5	Year 2		Extant and site visit data covered in report
2018–19	—	Year 3	Year 1	Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI) period covered in report
2019–20	—	Year 4	Year 2	
2020–21	—	Year 5	Year 3	

Note. The period covered in this report includes the following: Cycle 8: Year 5, Cycle 9: Years 2 and 3, and Cycle 10: Year 1 (for the LESI only).

The American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with the Gibson Consulting Group and the Diehl Consulting Group, undertook the Texas ACE evaluation for the years described. The design of the evaluation of the Texas 21st CCLC program was meant to address six objectives:²

¹ “The term “community learning center” means an entity that—

(A) assists students to meet the challenging State academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities (such as programs and activities described in subsection (a)(2)) during nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess) that—

(i) reinforce and complement the regular academic programs of the schools attended by the students served; and
(ii) are targeted to the students’ academic needs and aligned with the instruction students receive during the school day; and

(B) offers families of students served by such center opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development” (ED, 2015, p. 234).

² These six objectives summarize those specified in TEA’s Request for Proposals: Evaluation of the Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (released in 2016).

- **Objective 1.** *Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the Texas ACE program statewide.* This part of the evaluation involved providing a descriptive profile of Texas ACE program implementation based on administrative data captured in the state’s tracking system (i.e., Texas 21st Student Tracking System [Tx21st]) and information on program design and delivery obtained from site visits conducted at a sample of programs.
- **Objective 2.** *Conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Texas ACE program on a series of school-related outcomes.* This part of the evaluation involved using a quasi-experimental design to explore how youth participating in Texas ACE at various levels of attendance performed on key outcomes relative to similar youth not participating in Texas ACE programming. This objective included an analysis of how different center characteristics and practices may relate to the achievement of different youth outcomes.
- **Objectives 3–5.** *Explore how the impact of the Texas ACE program may relate to different approaches to design and delivery and synthesize that information to identify potential best practices to share with the Texas ACE community more broadly.*³ To address these objectives, administrative and youth survey data were analyzed data from a sample of Cycle 9 Texas ACE that were sorted into higher and lower implementing centers according to a set of key performance indicators (KPIs). Differences by these center designations were analyzed by engagement, motivation, and interest for youth participating in center programming. The analysis also used data obtained from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys to examine the connections between youth experiences and program quality related to positive youth development, student motivation, connections between quality programming and youth experiences, and youth program impacts and key programming experiences.
- **Objective 6.** *Provide support and assistance to Texas ACE grantees and centers on how to undertake effective and meaningful local evaluation activities.* This part of the evaluation involved the design and implementation of the LESI, which involved guiding a sample of centers through an intentional process of local evaluation design and implementation using the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit as a framework.

Analyses conducted to support each objective used the following data sources: (a) Texas ACE program characteristics from Tx21st data, (b) information about students served by the program and the schools they attend based on data collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), (c) State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR®) Reading and Mathematics for students in Grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessments for students in high school, and (d) 2014 National Center for Education Statistics locale classification boundaries. Additional information about grantees and centers was gathered from interviews, focus groups, and observations conducted during on-site data collection activities during site visits conducted by the state evaluation team in spring 2018. Additional student and activity leader surveys also were collected at these centers. The following sections highlight each chapter associated with the evaluation objectives.

Research Questions

The following research questions, organized by chapters that addressed the evaluation objectives mentioned earlier, guided the collection and analysis of data related to the findings outlined in this report:

- Chapter 2: What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?
- Chapter 3: Based on site visit data, how do higher and lower implementing centers vary in terms of key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?
- Chapter 4

³ Objective 5 specifically refers to best practice briefs based on various data gathered during data collection and from information gleaned while working with Texas ACE programs through the LESI. The briefs are stand-alone, separate handouts not part of the current evaluation report but are cited in this report summary to emphasize their role as part of a broad strategy to inform centers of lessons learned during the evaluation years in question.

- To what extent are students participating in Texas ACE programs having experiences that are associated with positive youth development?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to their motivation to attend programming?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to measures of program quality?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to how students report benefitting from participation in programming?
- Chapter 5
 - What effect does the program have on students attending regularly during the school year relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
 - What effect does the program have on students attending regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
 - What center-level characteristics are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among students participating in the program?⁴
- Chapter 6
 - What is the status of efforts to support the local evaluation efforts of Texas ACE grantees?
 - What was learned by developing and deploying local evaluation tools and processes?
 - What steps are being taken to help codify local evaluation tools and processes?

Chapter 6 also discusses the approach taken to implement a local evaluation approach with a set of 31 centers in 2018–19 from Cycles 9 and 10, as well the process used to update the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guidelines and Toolkit.

The following summary highlights the analyses for each chapter and subsequent research question(s).

Summary Evaluation Findings

Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics

This chapter's objective was to provide a descriptive overview of youth who participated in Texas ACE in 2017–18 in Cycles 8 and 9. Topics examined included grantee and center reported programming objectives, an analysis of grant cycles by grantee and center, grant management, youth served by Texas ACE, an examination of student participation in Texas ACE program activities during the school year and summer programming periods, and an understanding of staffing patterns at the centers.

Programming Objectives. Site visits at 20 centers operated by Texas ACE indicated that the primary program objectives are to address students' academic needs through tutoring and homework help, provide engaging enrichment opportunities, facilitate family and parent involvement, and build student social and emotional knowledge and skills.

Texas ACE Operations. The analysis found that 460 unique centers provided various programs in the 2017–18 programming period (see Table ES.2). The 34 Cycle 8 grantees managed 209 centers, whereas 32 grantees supported by the Cycle 9 grant managed 251 centers.

⁴ In this report, the word *significant* refers to statistical significance when the null hypothesis (i.e., the chance explanation) can be rejected so that no relationship exists between variables, and any observed relationship is only a function of chance (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, 2010). The level of significance, or the probability that a Type I error (i.e., rejecting a true null hypothesis) will occur, used in this report is typically reported at the .05 and .01 levels.

Table ES.2. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees and Centers by Cycle, 2017–18 Programming Period

Grant cycle	Number of grantees	Number of centers
Cycle 8	34	209
Cycle 9	32	251
Both cycles	56	460

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st) data for 2017–18.

Note. These numbers only reflect grantees with attendance data in the Tx21st. Grantees in each cycle do not sum to the total because some grantees received grants in both cycles for different sets of centers.

Grant Management. Grantees funded in Cycles 8 and 9 differed substantially in terms of the number of centers funded through each Texas ACE grant. Approximately 41% of the Cycle 8 grantees operated between one and five centers compared with just 25% of the Cycle 9 grantees. In contrast, 59% of the Cycle 8 grantees ran six or more centers compared with 75% of the Cycle 9 grantees.

A wide variety of organizations are eligible to apply for and receive Texas ACE grants. However, the vast majority of grants associated with the 2017–18 programming period were awarded to districts and regional educational entities (88% for both Cycles 8 and 9 grantees).⁵ This category of Texas ACE grantees includes districts, charter schools, regional education agencies, and other city or county government entities.

Youth Served by Texas ACE. The number of students served through Texas ACE was analyzed for the 2017–18 programming period, with almost 114,000 students served by Texas ACE. Approximately 50% of the students served in Texas ACE programs in 2017–18 were in elementary school, 32% of the students were in middle school, and 18% of the students were in high school. English learners (ELs) comprised 23% of the participants, nearly two thirds of the students were identified as at risk for dropping out of school (62%), and 64% of the students were categorized as economically disadvantaged. Eight percent of the students attending Texas ACE programs were identified to receive special education services. Hispanic students comprised the largest share of students served by Texas ACE (67%) in 2017–18, followed by Black students (16%), White students (14%), and other racial/ethnic groups (3%). Most Texas ACE students who took the Algebra I EOC examination achieved a passing standard (86%) compared with slightly more than half of the students who passed the English I EOC examination (57%).

More than half of the students who participated in Cycle 8 and more than one third of the students who participated in Cycle 9 during the 2017–18 programming period attended the program for less than 45 days, whereas less than one third of the students from either cycle attended between 45 and 90 days. A higher proportion of students participating in Cycle 9 centers (21%) attended for 120 days or more compared with Cycle 8 students (12%).

Approximately eight of every 10 students who participated in Texas ACE during the 2017–18 programming period attended the regular school year (fall and spring) program only. Less than one third of Texas ACE students in both Cycles 8 and 9 participated in programming during the summer, and those who attended summer programming attended for an average of 14 days for both Cycles 8 and 9.

⁵ Texas has 20 regional education service centers in the state that support local districts to attain and fulfill the mission, goals, and objectives set forth by TEA (n.d.). Texas Education Code (TEC) [§2.8002](#) states that: “Regional education service centers shall:

- (1) assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system;
- (2) enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and
- (3) implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner” (TEC, 2020).

Youth Programs and Activities. During the 2017–18 programming period, students participating in Texas ACE spent most of their time in one of three activities: academic enrichment (29%), recreation (26%), or homework help (22%). In examining the subject areas that youth spent their time in, 63% was spent attending reading-related activities, and 58% was dedicated to mathematics-related activities. Students also spent substantial amounts of time in activities classified as science or STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), 50% and 49%, respectively. Tx21st data for summer participation in programming also was analyzed and compared with the school year, revealing a similar pattern. Differences also emerged by grade levels on time spent in activities and subject areas while participating in Texas ACE. These differences often emerged between elementary to middle and high school programs.

Across Cycles 8 and 9 grantees, the majority of centers relied on the use of school-day teachers (44% and 38%, respectively). Centers across both cycles also relied on other staff (18% and 19%, respectively), college and high school students (13% in both cycles), center administrators (8% and 9%, respectively), youth development workers (4% and 7%, respectively), volunteers from the community (2% and 3%, respectively), or other employees (8% and 13%, respectively) to provide Texas ACE programming.

Chapter 3: Texas ACE Program Implementation

The primary goal of Chapter 3 was to explore which center characteristics and approaches to program design and delivery were associated with positive student outcomes. This task was done by analyzing interview, focus group, survey, and observation data from a sample of centers funded in Cycle 9 visited by members of the statewide evaluation team in spring 2018 to support the identification of promising approaches and practices.

AIR selected the sample in a way to highlight both higher implementing and lower implementing centers. The goal was to maximize the contrast between these two categories of centers to more easily identify practices and approaches found in the higher implementing centers that may be lacking or absent in the lower implementing centers. Twenty centers were selected and visited in spring 2018: 10 higher implementing centers and 10 lower implementing centers. The sample included 12 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools.

A key attribute of higher implementing centers was setting a goal for increasing student interest in and comfort with learning. None of the lower implementing centers identified this as a goal. In addition, a larger percentage of higher implementing centers (60%) had providing a safe learning environment as a goal compared with lower implementing centers (30%).

Higher implementing centers also displayed a more central focus on parental involvement and family engagement, particularly in providing parents and adult family members with opportunities to participate in personally beneficial learning opportunities, such English as a second language (ESL) and High school equivalency (HSE) classes.

- Ninety percent of the higher implementing centers offered ESL classes to parents and family members compared with just 20% of the lower implementing centers. Interviewees at higher implementing centers shared that ESL classes helped create a stronger bond between parents and the school and improved wage-earning capacity by building English skills.
- Fifty percent of the higher implementing centers offered parents and family members HSE classes, but only 10% of other centers did so. HSE classes are typically offered through partnerships with community partners.

Advisory board members also played a more prominent role in providing general guidance and feedback (70% vs. 40%), operations (90% vs. 70%), planning and organization (60% vs. 40%), and programming (80% vs. 60%) at higher implementing centers compared with their peers at lower implementing centers:

- Forms of operational assistance provided by advisory boards noted at both higher and lower implementing centers included being involved in the review of program data (50% vs. 30%) and coordinating program spending (50% vs. 20%). Twenty percent of the higher implementing center

advisory boards also provided support by discussing alignment of programming with the regular school day.

- At higher implementing centers, advisory board members tended to be more involved in planning and organization by building community awareness of Texas ACE (60%) compared with their counterparts at lower implementing centers (30%).
- Advisory boards at higher implementing centers provided more guidance and feedback on programming, resources, and/or policies (70% vs. 60%) and reviewing and monitoring program goals and status (60% vs. 10%) compared with advisory boards in lower implementing centers.

Higher implementing centers also were more apt to use various forms of data to support program improvement efforts, including findings from local evaluation efforts. When program leaders were asked to share what they saw as features of a high-quality Texas ACE program, leaders at 80% of the higher implementing centers discussed how the periodic review of program data (e.g., program evaluation data, observational data collected from walk-throughs of afterschool sessions) was a key element of high-quality afterschool programs. Only 50% of the leaders at lower implementing centers shared that this is a feature of high-quality programs. These leaders focused more on effective communication between staff as a high-quality feature.

In addition, although 90% of the centers across both implementation levels used observational and walk-through data to monitor performance, twice as many higher implementing centers used external evaluators (40% vs. 20%), and higher implementing centers were more likely to use research-based program quality assessments or observational rubrics (40% vs. 10%) than lower implementing centers.

Chapter 4: Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Programming

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the extent to which students reported having experiences while participating in Texas ACE that past research has shown are associated with positive youth development. Based on responses to the youth experience and end-of-session surveys, students described most commonly experiencing positive relationships with activity leaders, engagement in programming, and feelings of positive affect when participating in programming. In addition, feelings that what they were doing in programming was relevant and that they were learning something or getting better at something also were relatively common experiences among students participating in Texas ACE. However, students were less apt to report having opportunities to experience a sense of agency through voice and choice; positive perceptions of other youth in the program; and experiencing challenge while participating in Texas ACE activities. Each experience could be an area where Texas ACE programs could potentially improve in further providing participating students with programmatic experiences linked to positive youth development.

This chapter also examined the relationship between quality criteria outlined in the program quality assessment (PQA) and portions of the Assessment of Program Practices Observation (APT-O) Tool, which are two common quality assessment tools used in the field of afterschool, and youth experiences in programming. Students attending centers with the highest PQA scores were more likely to report having more frequent opportunities for agency, having better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and experiencing more engagement and challenge while participating in programming compared with students in centers scoring lower on the PQA. In addition, the relationships between PQA scores and positive youth experiences in programming seemed to be stronger in programs serving middle school students.

Students attending centers that adopted more practices described on the verbal communication scale of the APT-O (e.g., staff encourage youth to verbally elaborate on their ideas; staff encourage all youth to participate in conversations/discussions) demonstrated more positive results on all the youth experience constructs examined. The practices described on this scale may warrant closer examination to see if additional steps would help centers better implement these types of practices in their own programs.

Moreover, certain types of youth experiences were associated with certain ways in which students indicated benefitting from program participation. More opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves. Students also were more apt to indicate that they had learned things that will be important for their future when they reported more agency opportunities and better relationships with their Texas ACE activity leaders.

Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth Outcomes

Funding for Texas ACE programs supports the academic development of participating students and promotes behaviors that will contribute to school-day success. It was hypothesized that the more students participate in programming as measured by days of attendance, the more likely they will benefit from their participation in programming. This hypothesis was tested in a series of effectiveness analyses conducted to assess how student participation in Texas ACE at different levels (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days) during the 2017–18 programming period was related to youth improvement on a series of school-related outcomes relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. Results from these analyses were generally mixed.

The hypothesized relationship between program attendance and student outcomes seemed to be most supported by evidence of a consistent, positive relationship between participation in Texas ACE, school-day attendance, and the earning of career and technical education (CTE) credits. However, the differences observed between students participating in Texas ACE and similar students not participating in the program were rather small. For example, in terms of school-day attendance, Texas ACE participants attended between .54 and 3.42 more school days compared with similar youth in the comparison group.

For both disciplinary incidents and student performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment, lower levels of participation in Texas ACE were first associated with a significant, undesirable effect (i.e., more disciplinary incidents and lower STAAR Mathematics scores among Texas ACE participants) when compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. However, this result changed as participation in Texas ACE increased, ultimately resulting in a significant and desirable association between higher levels of program participation and performance on these outcomes. This was particularly the case for students participating in Texas ACE for 120 days or more, who had a disciplinary incident rate that was 21% lower than for similar nonparticipating youth.

In terms of academic achievement, mostly a negative relationship occurred between participation in Texas ACE and STAAR Mathematics and Reading assessment scores, although most differences between students participating in Texas ACE and those students who did not enroll in programming were relatively small. However, participation in Texas ACE had a statistically significant positive association with STAAR Mathematics achievement when students participated in programming for 120 days or more. Students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored 4 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment.

Finally, a notable difference was observed between results from the single-year effectiveness analysis and those associated with students who participated in Texas ACE for 60 days or more across two programming years (2016–17 and 2017–18) on the grade-level promotion outcome. When examining pooled effect estimates related to different program attendance bands for 1 year of program participation, no significant differences were found between students participating in Texas ACE and similar students not enrolled in the program. However, when participation in Texas ACE was considered across two programming years at the 60 days or more threshold, students participating in Texas ACE had a nearly 42% higher chance of promotion to the next grade level relative to nonparticipating youth. Some important grade-level differences were noted here as well, with negative effects on grade-level promotion associated with students in elementary grade levels and positive effects associated with students in middle and high school.

Generally, it is not clear exactly how useful this set of analyses was in helping the program discover actionable results pertaining to the relationship between different levels of attendance in the program and the associated effect on the domain of school-related outcomes under consideration. When positive effects were consistently found, which was the case with school-day attendance and the earning of CTE credits, the effects were rather small. The same was true about the positive effects observed in relation to STAAR Mathematics when students reached the threshold of participating in the program for 120 days or more or even the consistent negative effects associated with STAAR Reading results. As such, TEA may want to evaluate the underlying benefit of examining program effects across several attendance bands relative to the cost in undertaking those analyses in the future.

In terms of a positive association between participating in Texas ACE and student outcomes, more promise appears to be associated with students participating in for 60 days or more across two programming years. Thus, two types of analyses may warrant replication in the future.

The first pertains to identifying centers with a positive effect on student outcomes when calculating center-level effect estimates. In this sense, steps were taken to examine program effects specifically in centers found to have a positive effect on student outcomes. When the effects in this subset of centers were examined specifically, the average effect size increased when examining students who participated in programming for 60 days or more in just the 2017–18 programming period compared with students who participated in programming at this threshold in the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. For the latter group, students participating in Texas ACE across the 2 years at this level scored an average of 29 scale score points higher on the STAAR Mathematics assessment and 25 scale score points higher on the STAAR Reading assessment than matched students not participating in Texas ACE. After 1 year of participation in programming at the 60 days or more threshold, these average differences were approximately 10 scale score points for each assessment in centers found to have a positive association between Texas ACE attendance and STAAR assessment scores. In this sense, these results may suggest that students participating in centers shown to have a positive effect on STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores demonstrate more growth on these assessments the more they participate in Texas ACE.

A similar trend also was found in relation to disciplinary incidents, where students attending Texas ACE programming for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period in centers demonstrating fewer disciplinary incidents averaged an 11% lower chance of incurring an incident relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. When examining 2 years of Texas ACE program participation at the 60 days or more threshold, this chance declined further to a 17% lower chance of an incident occurring.

This type of potential growth in a positive program effect across multiple years of sustained program participation represents the type of outcome one would hope to see when participating in the program. These findings likely warrant additional exploration in preparation of a subsequent report to further unpack what may be happening in these centers specifically that may be supporting the achievement of these outcomes.

In addition, many center characteristics were related to positive student outcomes when examining students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods, including the following:

- Centers that demonstrated high average program attendance
- Centers largely staffed by school-day teachers
- Centers providing more frequent opportunities for participants to experience a sense of agency
- Centers with a greater proportion of participants indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence
- Centers classified as higher implementing based on KPI data

- Centers with greater adoption of mathematics and verbal communication practices described on the APT-O

Based on these results, it is recommended that analyses undertaken in the next report focus on further exploring if these relationships hold true more broadly across multiple samples. The goal in undertaking these analyses would be to assess how each characteristic may be related to the types of approaches to Texas ACE program design and delivery highlighted in Chapters 3 and 4. For example, in Chapter 4, steps were taken to describe how students who reported more opportunities to experience a sense of agency and better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program were more apt to indicate that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves, both of which were connected to the school-related outcomes examined in this section of the report. In this sense, there may be an opportunity to further describe a sequence of practices, youth experiences, and school-related outcomes when conducting analyses for the next report that builds from this set of findings.

Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

One of the guiding objectives of the statewide evaluation of the Texas 21st CCLC program is to provide support and assistance to Texas ACE grantees and centers on how to engage in effective and meaningful local evaluation activities. To accomplish this objective, the statewide evaluation team began work in the first 2 years of the evaluation to develop and refine resources and guidelines to assist grantees in engaging in local evaluation efforts for continuous improvement.

Local Program Evaluation Concept. In 2018–19, AIR and the Diehl Consulting Group continued the work started in the 2017–18 evaluation year to reimagine the local evaluation support that TEA provides for Texas ACE. In 2017–18, a new Local Evaluation Guide and accompanying Local Evaluation Toolkit, which replaced the original Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, were produced. The guide walks centers step-by-step through how to plan and conduct an evaluation, while also providing a toolkit of templates, tools, and measures to support implementation of the new guide. A goal for Year 2 of the local evaluation work included updating the Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit to reflect additional input from Texas ACE and stakeholders after having had time to absorb and implement concepts and tools from both resources. To aid the updating process, the statewide evaluation team reengaged a Local Evaluation Advisory Group consisting of key Texas ACE stakeholders that served as a platform for obtaining stakeholder input for the development of the guide and the creation of the toolkit in the first year of the initiative. In addition, the initiative convened 31 centers from 19 grantees represented in the LESI to work directly with AIR in applying the newly developed tools and share feedback to further refine the tools and plan for future statewide requirements related to local program evaluation.

Meaningful Local Evaluation Key Principles. The purpose of this local evaluation effort is to support centers' capacity to engage in and conduct relevant, meaningful local evaluations that direct program improvement and support sustainability in a tangible way. The vision for this work was based on several key principles that drove the development and use of meaningful local evaluations:

- Collaborative processes
- Intentional program design
- Assessment of implementation
- Locally informed and accessible measures
- Focus on center capacity

Local Evaluation Support Initiative. LESI was conceptualized as an opportunity to test new local evaluation approaches that could support further development before statewide rollout to grantees. In the first year of the pilot, only Cycle 9 centers were invited to participate (a maximum of 32 centers) if they met the requirements related to the capacity to participate in the process and met all expectations. For the second year of implementation, LESI participation was open to a maximum of 32 centers that also

met a similar set of criteria for Cycles 9 and 10 centers. Nineteen grantees and 31 centers agreed to participate and complete the entire process.

A benefit of participating in the LESI is that centers could receive feedback related to components of the Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit that they were implementing by the statewide evaluation team. The feedback was to assist centers to improve the quality, detail, and relevance for each evaluation component.

Perspectives and feedback were gathered both formally and informally from LESI participants through a reflection survey and e-mail communications. Six themes emerged from the participants about the success or challenges of the initiative:

- **Collaboration.** Participants expressed finding success and seeing great value in the amount of collaboration occurring as part of the local evaluation and quality assessment processes.
- **Logic Models.** Participants commonly mentioned both success and challenges related to developing and implementing logic models. Feedback from the participants suggested a need for additional training on logic models.
- **Time.** Another common theme was the challenge of finding sufficient time for centers to engage with quality in the required LESI activities.
- **New Centers/Staff Challenges.** New programs or newly staffed sites mentioned the challenge of having to both establish Texas ACE programming and absorb the concepts of local evaluation.
- **Webinars.** Several participants offered feedback connected to webinar content and delivery. Survey respondents indicated that the webinars were helpful in improving local evaluation planning and understanding the quality assessment process by going through examples. Areas of improvement include breaking up the content and shorter webinars.
- **Value.** Perhaps some of the most emphasized parts about the value of the process was expressed in two parts: seeing the big picture and resources.

The statewide evaluation team used a different approach to LESI for the 2019–20 academic year. The idea was to work with fewer centers but more frequently, using more of a coaching approach to test whether a more intensive coaching approach resulted in deeper understanding and implementation by centers. Another change in the 2019–20 academic year was to produce short tutorial training videos related to key concepts from the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit. The evaluation tutorials were designed to be made available to centers statewide as a companion to the guide and toolkit, not just the LESI participants. This approach allows for centers to engage in asynchronous professional development related to local evaluation, hopefully drawing in a broader set of centers to engage with the evaluation key principles as part of their continuous improvement process.

Chapter 7: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A key theme represented in most chapters in this report was an effort to identify characteristics, approaches, and practices employed by Texas ACE that related to both positive youth experiences while participating in programming and the domain of school-related outcomes. Overall, the findings outlined in the report suggest three primary conclusions.

Sustained attendance in Texas ACE is especially important in terms of supporting desired student outcomes, particularly across multiple programming years. In this report, the issue of attendance in Texas ACE was examined in three primary ways. First, the association between program attendance and student outcomes was examined by exploring how different levels of Texas ACE attendance during the 2017–18 programming period were related to student outcomes when comparing Texas ACE participants with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. The Texas ACE attendance bands were as follows: less than 45 days, 45–59 days, 60–89 days, 90–119 days, and 120 days or more. The goal of these analyses was to identify key attendance thresholds that may be important for participating students to reach if a desired school-related outcome is more likely to be achieved.

This set of analyses focused on average effects across all students enrolled in programming in 2017–18 meeting these attendance thresholds. Results from these analyses were generally mixed, as described in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Thus, the evaluation team then took steps to isolate those centers found to have a positive effect on student outcomes, both for students attending 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period and those attending 60 days or more during the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. Key findings from these analyses are as follows:

- The percentage of centers found to have a positive effect on student outcomes varied considerably from one outcome to the next, ranging from only 39% of the centers with a positive effect on STAAR Reading scores to 96% of the centers having a positive effect on school-day attendance.
- When examining centers with a positive effect on a given student outcome, there were some instances where performance on a given outcome appeared to continue to improve across multiple years of participation in the program. These results may suggest that students may continue to derive benefits from sustained participation in the program in select centers. This was the case in relation to the STAAR assessment scores and disciplinary incidents.

These findings related to the STAAR assessments and disciplinary incidents are important and suggest two hypotheses that likely warrant further consideration in the future.

- There is potentially a subset of centers designing and delivering programming in a way that supports the achievement of desired outcome, and more can be learned about effective practices by studying these centers specifically.
- There are certain student outcomes where sustained enrollment in Texas ACE may be cumulative in the sense that students benefit the more they participate in programming across programming years.

Exploring each hypothesis would seem especially valuable to learn more about how positive outcomes can be achieved and the role sustained participation in programming plays in this process.

There appears to be a pathway from select program practices to key youth experiences in programming to positive youth outcomes. In the past 15 years, the afterschool field has come to rely on quality improvement processes anchored in formal quality assessment tools (e.g., the PQA, the APT-O) to help afterschool programs better understand the practices and approaches that result in developmentally appropriate learning environments for participating youth. When conducting visits to the 20 higher and lower implementing centers selected for inclusion in the site visit sample, Texas ACE programming was observed and scored using the PQA and the APT-O to provide a measure of how well programs were implementing research-supported practices.

As highlighted in Chapter 4, steps were taken to explore how quality scores derived from the PQA and APT-O related to student-reported experiences in programming that have been connected with positive student outcomes in other studies. Key findings emerging from these analyses included the following:

- Students attending centers with the highest PQA scores were more likely to report having more frequent opportunities for agency, having better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and experiencing more engagement and challenge while participating in programming. In addition, the relationship between PQA scores and youth experiences in programming seemed to be stronger in programs serving middle school students, where higher PQA scores also were associated with greater perceptions of what they were doing was relevant, higher scores pertaining to positive affect, and a greater expression on the part of students that they had learned something or gotten better at something as a result of participating in programming.
- Even more consistent associations were found between scales from the APT-O and student experiences in programming. This was particularly the case in relation to the verbal communication scale, which was positively associated with each youth experiences scale examined. Each practice appearing on the verbal communications scale reflects the social dimension of learning and the

importance of creating environments characterized by the space needed for these types of interactions to take place in a meaningful and substantive way. The social environment associated with learning activities plays a critical role in shaping students' academic, behavioral, and motivational outcomes (Allen & Bowles, 2013; Patrick, Anderman, & Ryan, 2002; Wentzel, 2002). Similar but not quite as consistent results were found in relation to the written communication scale of the APT-O.

Certain types of youth experiences also were associated with certain ways in which students indicated benefitting from program participation. More opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and to feel better about themselves.

These are rather important findings because each of the ways that students indicated benefitting from programming were positively related to center-level effect sizes calculated in relation to a series of school-related outcomes described in greater detail in Chapter 5. More specifically, centers with a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence were positively associated with STAAR Mathematics assessment scores, STAAR Reading scores, fewer disciplinary incidents, and greater school-day attendance.

Based on this sequence of results, there is some evidence of a pathway from select program practices to key youth experiences in programming to positive youth outcomes that looks akin to the following:

- Higher PQA and APT-O scores were associated with better youth-reported experiences in programming.
- Certain types of youth experiences in programming, notably more opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves.
- When a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicated that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence, centers were more apt to demonstrate larger effect sizes in relation to STAAR Mathematics and Reading assessment scores, fewer disciplinary incidents, and greater school-day attendance.

This sequence of significant relationships connecting program quality to positive youth experiences in programming to larger effects related to school-related outcomes should be considered of particular interest to program stakeholders. If anything, this sequence of events may provide an initial template to guide the formation of the evaluation plan for the next report, where these relationships can be examined in greater detail across multiple samples.

Some additional practices adopted by higher implementing centers warrant further examination in the future. A key part of this report was identifying those characteristics, practices, and approaches that seem to distinguish the higher implementing centers included the site visit sample from the lower implementing centers. As described in Chapter 3, most of these differences pertained to

- demonstrating a more central focus on cultivating youth engagement, motivation, and interest in learning;
- parental involvement and family engagement;
- advisory boards that played a more active role in supporting various aspects of program implementation; and
- using various forms of data to support program improvement efforts, including findings from local evaluation efforts.

There is a need to further understand how these distinguishing attributes associated with higher implementing centers potentially influence how centers design and deliver developmentally appropriate and impactful programming.

In addition, the LESI was designed to better support the ability of centers to collect and use data to support program improvement efforts as part of their local evaluation efforts. Activities undertaken by the evaluation team during the 2018-19 school year involved refinement of the local evaluation guide, development and rollout of the local evaluation toolkit, and engaging a subset of centers through a process of designing and conducting local evaluation activities to maximize the collection and use of data relevant to supporting local program improvement efforts. Efforts in the 2019-20 school year will serve to develop a series of training and support materials that can be used after the end of the evaluation to allow for the adoption of practices described through LESI across the Texas ACE community more broadly.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, funded by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as renewed by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides grant funding to states to support “academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools” (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2018). By means of state-level subgrant competitions, states allocate this funding to schools, community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, and other agencies to provide this programming in their communities. Community learning centers are meant to “offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs, technology education programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy programs, mathematics, science, career and technical programs, internship or apprenticeship programs, and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students” (ED, 2015, p. 233).⁶

Since 2002, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has provided 21st CCLC funding to hundreds of grantees and supported thousands of community learning centers, also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education[®] (Texas ACE[®]), across the state. This report presents statewide program evaluation findings pertaining to Texas ACE programs funded as part of grant Cycles 8 and 9. The evaluation report particularly focuses on the program’s operation and effect on student outcomes for the 2017–18 programming period.⁷ TEA typically awards 21st CCLC grants for a 5-year period. In any given year, two cycles are in operation at different years of their grants. This report focuses on the final year of Cycle 8 and the second year of Cycle 9. In addition, one chapter of this report also explains work done on a local evaluation initiative in 2018–19 for Cycle 9 and 10 grantees (Table 1.1).

⁶ “The term ‘community learning center’ means an entity that—

(A) assists students to meet the challenging State academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities (such as programs and activities described in subsection (a)(2)) during nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess) that—

(i) reinforce and complement the regular academic programs of the schools attended by the students served; and
(ii) are targeted to the students’ academic needs and aligned with the instruction students receive during the school day; and
(B) offers families of students served by such center opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development” (ED, 2015, p. 234).

⁷ For this report, a federal definition of a programming year (summer, fall, and spring) was used to analyze Texas extant data sources. This approach differs from the state’s programming definition (fall, spring, and summer).

Table 1.1. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycles 8–10 Grantees, by Grant Years Represented in This Evaluation Report

Grant year	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Cycle 10	Notes
2013–14	Year 1	—		
2014–15	Year 2	—		
2015–16	Year 3	—		
2016–17	Year 4	Year 1		
2017–18	Year 5	Year 2		Extant and site visit data covered in report
2018–19	—	Year 3	Year 1	Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI) period covered in report
2019–20	—	Year 4	Year 2	
2020–21	—	Year 5	Year 3	

Note. The period covered in this report includes the following: Cycle 8: Year 5, Cycle 9: Years 2 and 3, and Cycle 10: Year 1 (for the LESI only).

The American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with the Gibson Consulting Group and the Diehl Consulting Group, undertook the Texas ACE evaluation for the years described. The evaluation of the Texas 21st CCLC program is designed to address the following six objectives:⁸

- **Objective 1.** *Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the Texas ACE program statewide.* This part of the evaluation involved providing a descriptive profile of Texas ACE program implementation based on administrative data captured in the state’s tracking system (i.e., TX21st Student Tracking System [TX21st]) and information on program design and delivery obtained from site visits conducted at a sample of programs.
- **Objective 2.** *Conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Texas ACE program on a series of school-related outcomes.* This part of the evaluation involved a quasi-experimental design to explore how youth participating in Texas ACE at various levels of attendance performed on key outcomes relative to similar youth not participating in Texas ACE. This objective included an analysis of how different center characteristics and practices may relate to the achievement of different youth outcomes.
- **Objectives 3–5.** *Explore how the impact of the Texas ACE program may relate to different approaches to design and delivery and synthesize that information to identify potential best practices to share with the Texas ACE community more broadly.*⁹
- **Objective 6.** *Provide support and assistance to Texas ACE grantees and centers on how to undertake effective and meaningful local evaluation activities.* This part of the evaluation involved the design and implementation of the LESI, which involved guiding a sample of centers through an intentional process of local evaluation design and implementation.

Table 1.2 shows how the evaluation objectives align with the report chapters.

⁸ These six objectives summarize those specified in TEA’s Request for Proposals: Evaluation of the Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (released in 2016).

⁹ Objective 5 specifically refers to best practice briefs based on various data gathered during data collection and from information gleaned while working with Texas ACE programs through the Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI). The briefs are stand-alone, separate handouts that are not part of the current evaluation report but are cited in this report summary to emphasize their role as part of a broad strategy to inform centers of lessons learned during the evaluation years in question.

Table 1.2. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Evaluation Objectives Aligned With the Evaluation Report Chapters and Best Practice Briefs

Objective	Report chapter(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 1: Evaluation of the implementation of the 21st CCLC program statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 2: Evaluation of the impact of the 21st CCLC program statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5: The Impact of the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education [Texas ACE] Program on Youth Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 3: Evaluation of the implementation of the 21st CCLC program for a sample of centers Objective 4: Evaluation of the impact of the 21st CCLC program for a sample of centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program Implementation Chapter 4: Youth Experiences in Programming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 5: Analysis of best practices from the evaluation of the implementation and impact of the 21st CCLC program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best Practices Briefs (separate documents not in report)^a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 6: Annual local evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

^aThe briefs highlight specific practices identified through the evaluation that were conducive to the effective implementation of Texas ACE programming and designed to better convey this information to Texas ACE grantees and centers. The Texas Education Agency will disseminate the briefs to the Texas ACE community.

Research Questions

The collection and analysis of data related to the findings outlined in this report were guided by the following set of research questions, organized by chapters that addressed the evaluation objectives mentioned in Table 1.2.

Chapter 2

- What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?

To address this research question, the analysis describes Texas ACE grantees and centers and profiles the youth who attended Texas ACE programs in 2017–18 in Cycles 8 and 9. The chapter also describes the program activities that youth participated in while attending Texas ACE during the academic and summer programming periods and also examines the staffing patterns at the centers.

Chapter 3

- Based on site visit data, how do higher and lower implementing centers vary in terms of key program elements associated with ACE implementation?

This chapter analyzes data from a sample of Cycle 9 centers in spring 2018, as well as administrative and youth survey data to identify a sample of Cycle 9 centers as being higher or lower implementing across a set of key performance indicators (KPIs). The analysis examines differentiation in practices across higher and lower implementing centers, as well as any potential differences across engagement, motivation, and interest for youth participating in center programming.

Chapter 4

- To what extent are students participating in Texas ACE programs having experiences that are associated with positive youth development?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to their motivation to attend programming?

- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to measures of program quality?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to how students report benefitting from participation in programming?

This chapter focuses on the experiences of students participating in Texas ACE based on data obtained from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys administered in spring 2018, as well as measures of program quality. The analysis of youth experiences and program quality examined the following four areas: (a) key experiences of programming related to positive youth development, (b) student motivation to attend Texas ACE, (c) understanding connections between programming quality and youth experiences, and (d) youth reported program impacts found to be key experiences in programming.

Chapter 5

- What effect does the program have on students attending regularly during the school year relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
- What effect does the program have on students attending regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
- What center-level characteristics are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among students participating in the program?

The objective of this chapter is to understand what set of program characteristics and youth experiences in programming are positively associated with student outcomes that the program is designed to achieve. The first set of analyses focused on what participation in Texas ACE had on school-related outcomes for the 2017–18 programming period. The analysis also examined where positive, negative, or no effects were associated with participating in Texas ACE, including where outcomes moved from an undesirable to a desirable outcome related to Texas ACE participation. Finally, center-level effect sizes for each center active during the 2017–18 programming period were calculated. The results explore how different types of center characteristics may be related to how students may benefit from participation in programming.

Chapter 6

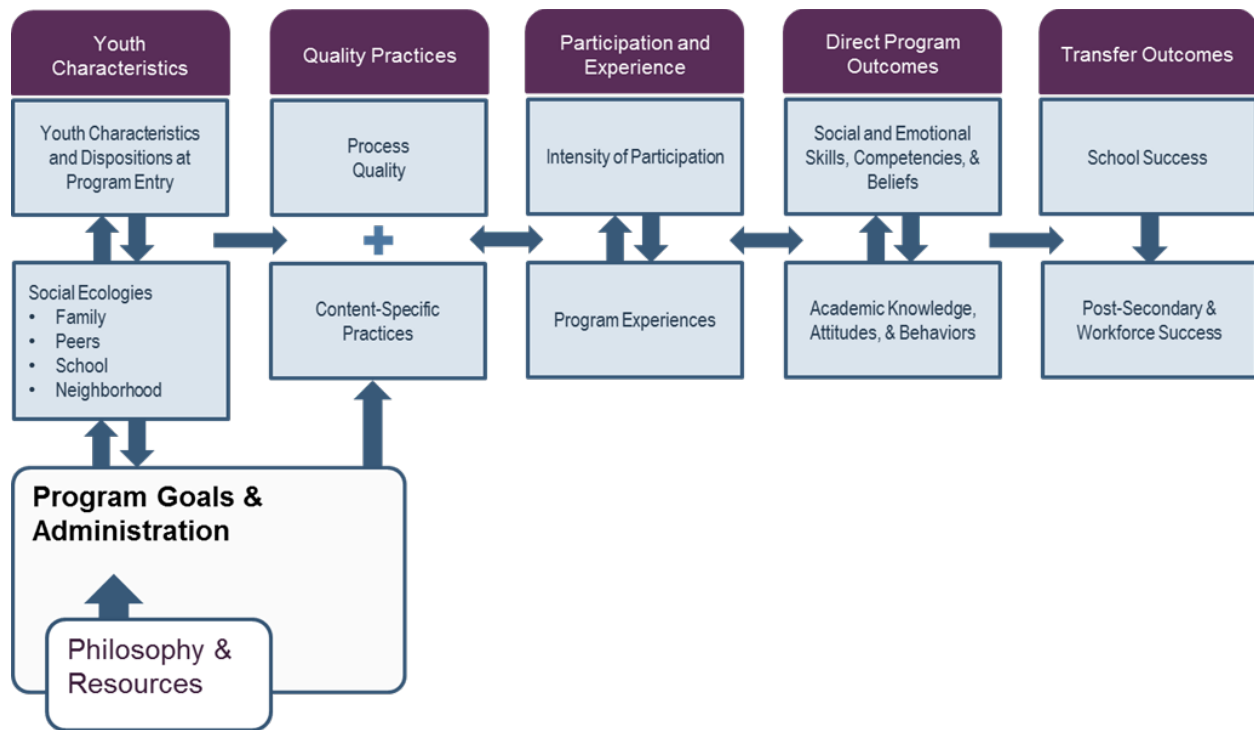
- What is the status of efforts to support the local evaluation efforts of Texas ACE grantees?
- What has been learned through the development and deployment of local evaluation tools and processes?
- What steps are being taken to help codify local evaluation tools and processes?

This chapter discusses the approach taken to implement a local evaluation approach with a set of 31 centers in 2018–19 from Cycles 9 and 10, as well the process used to update the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guidelines and Toolkit.

Connection to a 21st CCLC Conceptual Framework

Many of the methods and approaches that the evaluation team employed to undertake the Texas ACE evaluation were informed by a conceptual framework—developed by AIR—regarding how youth benefit from participation in afterschool programming. As shown in Figure 1.1, the framework begins with youth themselves and how they are influenced and supported by the environments in which they live and go to school. The framework then shows how program quality, sustained participation, and key programmatic experiences lead to the development of positive outcomes for participating youth.

Figure 1.1. A Conceptual Framework for How Afterschool Programs Can Have an Impact on Youth Participants



In addition to the conceptual framework, the evaluation team relied on the Texas ACE Blueprint to guide the approach to undertaking the evaluation. The blueprint is a comprehensive set of guidelines and tools that focuses on four components: (a) vision, mission, and goals; (b) school community engagement; (c) continuous quality improvement; and (d) operations. These components integrate ESSA’s Title IV, Part B requirements related to 21st CCLCs with Texas’ priorities for each grant cycle, evidence-based research, and best practices within the four components. When implemented with fidelity, Texas ACE programs should deliver programming that supports TEA’s mission to ensure that every child is prepared for success in college, a career, or the military. Together, these resources informed how the evaluation constructed and used data collection measures to address the core evaluation questions. These approaches included interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observations, all of which will be discussed in each chapter of this report.

Organization of the Report

This report has seven chapters and appendices as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides an overview of the evaluation objectives and organization of the report.
- Chapter 2 reviews Texas ACE grantee and center characteristics.
- Chapter 3 captures the characteristics of Texas ACE program implementation.
- Chapter 4 examines youth experiences in programming.
- Chapter 5 describes the impacts of Texas ACE on youth outcomes.
- Chapter 6 summarizes a LESI conducted with a set of centers operated by Texas ACE.
- Chapter 7 briefly summarizes the findings and recommendations.
- Appendixes A, B, D, and E contain additional data tables and figures for Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- Appendixes C, F, G, and I contain a comprehensive description of evaluation methods for the report, including statistical methodology, data sources, site visit description and methodology, and interview protocols and surveys instruments.
- Appendix H contains additional documents and artifacts from the LESI.

Chapter 2. Grantee and Center Characteristics

Objective 1.

What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?

Introduction

Texas ACE programs are designed to promote the academic and social-emotional development of students living in high-poverty communities by providing academic enrichment and related programming primarily after school and during the summer. Texas ACE programs are funded by 21st CCLC funds in grant competitions held periodically by TEA, which typically provide funding for one to 10 centers, per grant, for a period of up to 5 years. Each center serves students from one or more schools in a high-poverty community and designs and delivers programming that is meant to address student needs and support the positive development of participating students.

Texas ACE programs are typically operational for 2–3 hours each day after school, with time most often set aside for snack; homework help or academic tutoring; enrichment activities with an academic focus in reading and mathematics; and a wide array of other enrichment offerings, including sports, art, music, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)–related activities. Elementary school programs are more apt to be characterized by grade-level groupings, with most youth participating in a similar set of activities on a given programming day. Middle and high school programs are more likely to be club based, where youth choose to participate in the activities they are interested in, which may be offered only once or twice a week during a given programming session. Programs also will commonly run different sessions throughout the school year, changing offerings between sessions to provide youth with new and varied learning opportunities.

Given the variety of communities served by the Texas ACE program, and the flexibility that programs have in using grant funds, programs often are characterized by a range of program delivery, staffing, and operational models; student populations; and types of organizations involved in providing programming. This chapter provides an overview of Texas ACE grantees and centers and describes students who attend the programming.

To answer Objective 1, descriptive analyses were conducted of data concerning Texas ACE program delivery during the 2017–18 programming period. Data sourced from systems housed at TEA included (a) Texas ACE program characteristics from the Tx21st; (b) information about students served by the program and the schools they attend based on data collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS); (c) State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading and mathematics scores for students in Grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessments for students in high school; and (d) National Center for Education Statistics locale classification area data. Information collected through interviews with project directors, site coordinators, campus principals, youth activity leaders, family engagement specialists, and advisory board members during the spring 2018 site visits also are reported in this chapter.



Section 1. Overview of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees and Centers

This section contains information on key grantee and center characteristics. First, site visit data set the context for understanding Texas ACE programming objectives broadly, as well as target populations served through the program. Next, Tx21st data provide an overall summary of grantees, centers, and students served in Cycles 8 and 9. In this report, the term *grantee* refers to the organization that serves as the fiduciary agent of the Texas ACE grant in question, and the term *center* refers to the physical location where Texas ACE–

The term *center* refers to the physical location where ACE-funded services and activities take place.

funded services and activities occur. Federal 21st CCLC regulations allow for a variety of organizations to receive 21st CCLC grants, including but not limited to districts, community-based organizations, private schools, colleges and universities, and other units of local government. Grantees are ultimately responsible for administering grant funds at the program level.

Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Objectives

At the federal level, the primary goal of 21st CCLC programming is to support school-related outcomes (e.g., academic performance, positive academic-related behaviors) among participating students. Historically, programs receiving 21st CCLC funding include purposeful design elements to support the development of academic-related behaviors that impact school-related outcomes. Interviews with grant program directors, center-level staff, and campus principals from 20 centers visited in spring 2018 helped shed light on how Texas ACE programs are aligning activities to meet stated objectives. Twelve major programming objectives emerged from the interview and site visit data. (See Figure 2.1 and Tables A2.1 and A2.2 for a description of student target populations by school level served.)

Figure 2.1. Major Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Objectives Reported by 20 Centers in Spring 2018

- Address students' academic needs through tutoring and homework help (all 20 centers)
- Promote college and career readiness (18 of 20 centers)
- Provide creative enrichment opportunities with embedded academic content (15 of 20 centers)
- Facilitate family and parent involvement (15 of 20 centers)
- Build social and emotional learning skills among participating students (14 of 20 centers)
- Provide a safe learning environment (9 of 20 centers)
- Sustain attendance in programming (9 of 20 centers)
- Address behavioral issues among attending students (7 of 20 centers)
- Improve grade-level promotion and high school graduation rates (6 of 20 centers)
- Provide learning opportunities students would not otherwise have (4 of 20 centers)
- Get students interested in and comfortable with learning (4 of 20 centers)
- Close the achievement gap for students who are educationally disadvantaged (3 of 20 centers)

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple Texas ACE goals.

The majority of staff at the 20 centers visited in spring 2018 cited program objectives related to addressing the academic needs of students through tutoring and homework help (100%), promoting college and career readiness (90%), providing creative enrichment opportunities with embedded academic content (75%), facilitating family and parent involvement (75%), and improving students' social and emotional learning skills (70%).

Program Objectives

Program Objectives

Leaders and staff at the 20 Texas ACE programs visited in spring 2018 emphasized the desire to address the academic needs of students through tutoring and homework help, and staff at 15 centers discussed the importance of providing enrichment opportunities with embedded academic content. Leaders at 18 centers also indicated having adopted program objectives related to promoting college and career readiness.

Staff from slightly less than half of the 20 centers (45%) shared that providing a safe learning environment and promoting sustained attendance were program objectives. Four of the 20 centers (20%) visited had leaders and staff who discussed the following program goals: (a) getting students interested in and

comfortable with learning and (b) providing students with opportunities to which they would not otherwise have access.

Many goals were common across elementary, middle, and high school centers. However, some objectives identified by program staff were more specifically aligned to the age of the students in the program. For example, facilitating parent and family involvement (83% vs. 63%) and providing creative enrichment activities with embedded academic content (83% vs. 63%) were more relevant to programs serving elementary students than they were to programs serving secondary students. Staff from programs serving middle and high school students were more inclined to discuss objectives related to improving the social and emotional learning skills of students (88% of the eight centers serving students in middle and high school) vs. 63% of the 12 elementary school centers visited in spring 2018). Staff at all centers visited serving students in middle school and high school (eight centers) and 83% of the 12 elementary school centers discussed college and career readiness as a key program objective (see Appendix Table A2.1).

Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Operations—Cycles 8 and 9

The subsequent sections in Chapter 2 describe Texas ACE characteristics statewide across Cycles 8 and 9, as reported in Tx21st data, in terms of the number of grantees, locale type, and grantee organization type. Each Texas ACE grantee has at least one center and can have up to 10 centers per grant.¹⁰ Texas ACE grantees active during the 2017–18 programming period were funded by two different Texas ACE grants: (a) Cycle 8 (5-year awards starting in August 2013 with additional awards made in June 2014 and January 2015) and (b) Cycle 9 (5-year awards starting in August 2016).¹¹

A total of 460 unique centers provided Texas ACE programming in the 2017–18 programming period (see Table 2.1). The 34 Cycle 8 grantees managed 209 centers, whereas 32 grantees supported by the Cycle 9 grant managed 251 centers.

Table 2.1. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees and Centers by Cycle, 2017–18 Programming Period

Grant cycle	Number of grantees	Number of centers
Cycle 8	34	209
Cycle 9	32	251
Both cycles	56	460

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st) data for 2017–18.

Note. These numbers reflect only those grantees with attendance data in the Tx21st. Grantees in each cycle do not sum to the total because some grantees received grants in both cycles for different sets of centers.

As Table 2.2 shows, grantees funded in Cycles 8 and 9 differed substantially in terms of the number of centers funded through each Texas ACE grant. Approximately 41% of the Cycle 8 grantees operated between one and five centers compared with just 25% of the Cycle 9 grantee organizations. In contrast, 59% of Cycle 8 grantee organizations ran six or more centers compared with 75% of the Cycle 9 grantees.

Table 2.2. Number of Centers Managed by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees in Cycles 8 and 9

Number of centers	Cycle 8 (N = 34)	Cycle 9 (N = 32)
1–5 centers	41% (14)	25% (8)
6–10 centers	59% (20)	75% (24)

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

¹⁰ Per the 2016–2017 Texas 21st CCLC, Cycle 9, Year 1 guidelines.

¹¹ Most Cycle 9 grants originated as 3-year contracts that eventually were extended to 5-year contracts.

Note. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Grantee Organization Type

A wide variety of organizations are eligible to apply for and receive Texas ACE grants. However, the vast majority of grants associated with the 2017–18 programming period were awarded to districts and regional educational entities that served public school districts (88% for both Cycles 8 and 9 grantees).¹² This category of Texas ACE grantees can include districts, charter schools, and regional education agencies, and other city or county government entities. Nationally affiliated nonprofit agencies (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs and Communities in Schools) accounted for about 9% of the grantees funded by Cycle 8 and 13% of the grantees funded by Cycle 9. One institution of higher education was funded in Cycle 8, but no colleges or universities were funded in Cycle 9 (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees by Organization Type Across Cycles 8 and 9

Grantee type	Cycle 8 (N = 34)	Cycle 9 (N = 32)
Districts and regional educational entities	88% (30)	88% (28)
Nonprofit organizations	9% (3)	13% (4)
College or university	3% (1)	0% (0)

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Districts and regional educational entities include districts, charter schools, regional education agencies, and other city or county government entities. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

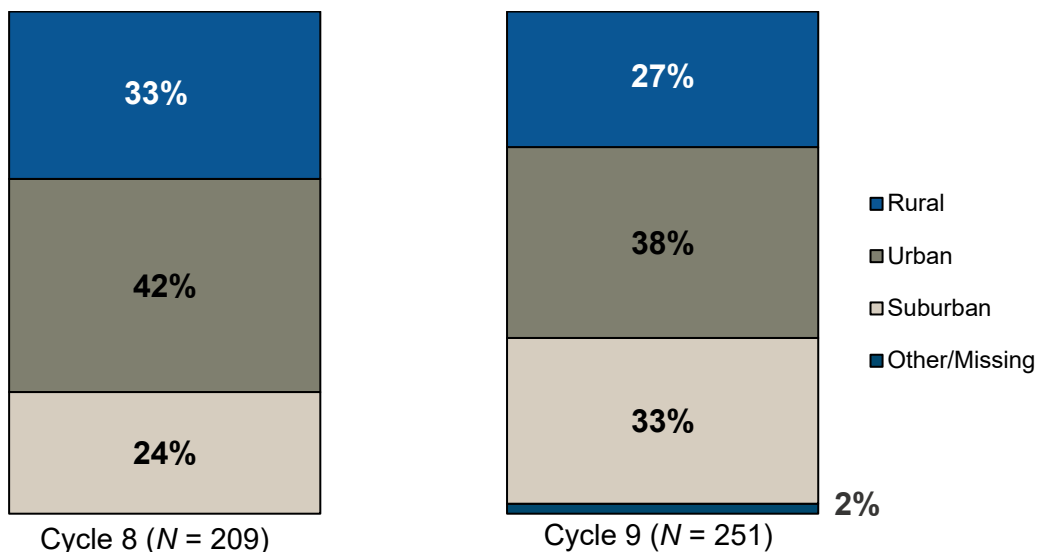
As shown in Figure 2.2, it was most common for centers active during the 2017–18 programming period to be in urban areas (42% of the Cycle 8 centers and 38% of the Cycle 9 centers), with a larger percentage of Cycle 8 centers versus Cycle 9 centers in urban areas. There also were a larger percentage of rural centers in Cycle 8 (33%) than in Cycle 9 (27%). The proportion of centers in suburban communities was nine percentage points higher in Cycle 9 (33%) than for Cycle 8 (24%).

¹² Texas has 20 regional education service centers in the state that exist to support local districts to attain and fulfill the mission, goals, and objectives set forth by the Texas Education Code (TEC; 2020). TEC [§2.8002](#) states that “Regional education service centers shall:

- (1) assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system;
- (2) enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and
- (3) implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner.”

Figure 2.2. Distribution of Texas Afterschool Centers of Education (Texas ACE) Across Locale Types in Cycles 8 and 9

The largest share of Texas ACE centers were in urban areas, but in Cycle 9 there was a movement toward more centers in suburban areas.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System in 2017–18 and National Center for Education Statistics data in 2016–17 (most recent year with geography data).

Note. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Section 2. Youth Attending Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

Students and Schools Served by Centers

The number of students served through Texas ACE was analyzed for the 2017–18 programming period, with almost 114,000 students served by Texas ACE. Of those students whose Tx21st records could be matched to PEIMS (103,387), approximately 50% of the students served in Texas ACE programs were in elementary school (Grades PK–5), 32% of the students were in middle school (Grades 6–8), and 18% of the students were in high school (Grades 9–12). Most students participating in the Texas ACE program attended schools eligible for Title I funds (94%). (See Appendix Table A2.3.)

Approximately 62% of students served in the Texas ACE programs in 2017–18 were enrolled in Grades 3–8.

Student Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of students and schools served by Texas ACE during the 2017–18 programming period were examined and are summarized in this section of the chapter. A full accounting of the demographic characteristics of Texas ACE participants is in Appendix Table A2.3.

English learners (ELs) comprised 23% of the Texas ACE participants. Nearly two thirds of the students were identified as at risk for dropping out of school (62%), and 64% of the students were categorized as economically disadvantaged. Eight percent of the students attending Texas ACE programs in 2017–18

were identified as receiving special education services.¹³

The racial/ethnic composition of students in Texas ACE mirrored the demographics of the schools served by Texas ACE programs. Hispanic students comprised the largest share of students (67%) served by Texas ACE in 2017–18, followed by African American students (16%), White students (14%), and other racial/ethnic groups (3%).

School Outcomes

Student performance on STAAR (reading and mathematics) and EOC examinations was examined for students participating in Texas ACE. Approximately 64% of the Texas ACE students achieved the passing standard on the STAAR Reading examination, and 71% of the students achieved the passing standard on the STAAR Mathematics examination in 2017–18.¹⁴ Fifty-seven percent of the Texas ACE students achieved the STAAR passing standard on the English I EOC, whereas 86% achieved the STAAR passing standard on the Algebra I EOC (see Appendix Table A2.4).

Approximately two thirds of Texas ACE students in Grades 3–8 achieved the STAAR passing standard in mathematics (71%) and reading (64%).

A much higher percentage of Texas ACE students met the passing standard on the Algebra I EOC examination (86%) than did on the English I EOC examination (57%).

Students participating in Texas ACE averaged seven school-day absences for the year and less than one disciplinary referral annually (see Appendix Table A2.5).

Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

Program attendance is an outcome indicator that reflects the potential breadth and depth of exposure to afterschool programming. Attendance can be considered in terms of the frequency (e.g., days per week) and intensity (e.g., hours per session) with which students attended programming when offered, including the degree of participation across multiple programming periods and the types of activities in which students participated.

The federal definition for regular participation in 21st CCLC is 30 days or more during a given programming period. In the Cycle 9 ACE Blueprint, programs are instructed to target 45 days of participation in Texas ACE programming.

Student attendance in Texas ACE programs was examined across five discrete categories that ranged from fewer than 45 days up through 120 days or more during the academic year.¹⁵ Substantive differences in Texas ACE program attendance were observed across the Cycles 8 and 9 centers. More than half of Texas ACE students (54%) at Cycle 8 centers attended fewer than 45 days, compared with just 36% of the students at Cycle 9 centers. Conversely, 34% of the students at Cycle 9 centers attended 90 or more days of Texas ACE programming versus 24% of the students at

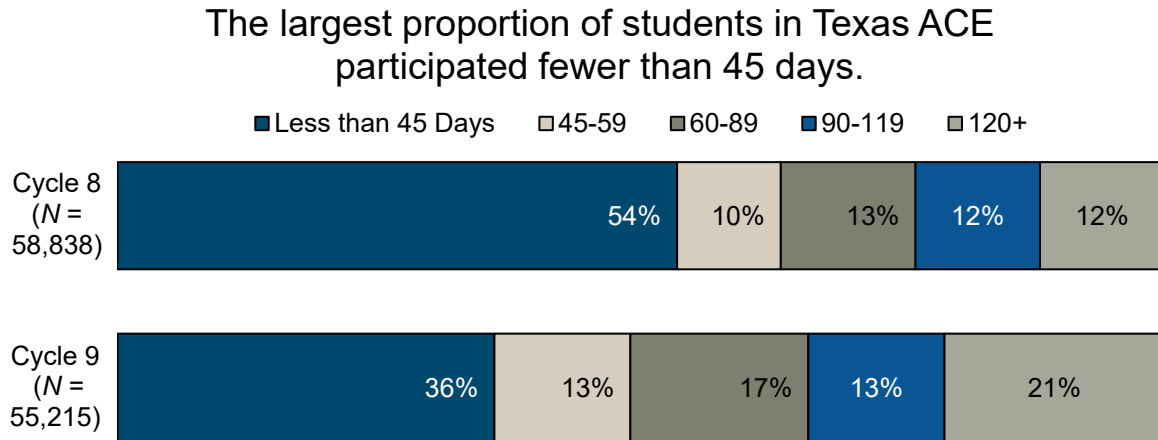
Cycle 8 centers. Students attending Cycle 9 centers also were more likely to attend more than 120 days during the 2017–18 programming period compared with students attending Cycle 8 centers (21% vs. 12%). (See Figure 2.3.)

¹³ At-risk status is defined by the [TEC \(§ 29.081\)](#) and specified in PEIMS under criteria for identification (TEA, n.d.).

¹⁴ In 2016–17, the STAAR terminology for the passing standard changed from Level II Satisfactory to Approaches Grade Level. For the purposes of this report, the minimum passing standard in 2017–18 is considered as achieving the STAAR passing standard.

¹⁵ Differences in attendance figures may exist between this report and other Tx21st public reports. For this report, attendance was calculated using the federal definition of a programming year (summer, fall, and spring), which differs from the state's definition (fall, spring, and summer). In addition, TEA Tx21st reports on Texas ACE attendance vary because of differences in grant cycle requirements. For Cycle 8, students were regular attenders if they attended 30 days or more. For Cycle 9, students were regular attenders if they attended 45 days or more.

Figure 2.3. Percentage of Students Participating in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) in 2017–18, by Number of Days Attended



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. The definition of the 2017–18 program year in this report is based on the federal definition of summer and fall 2017 and spring 2018. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding. Students who attended a center in both cycles were counted in each cycle.

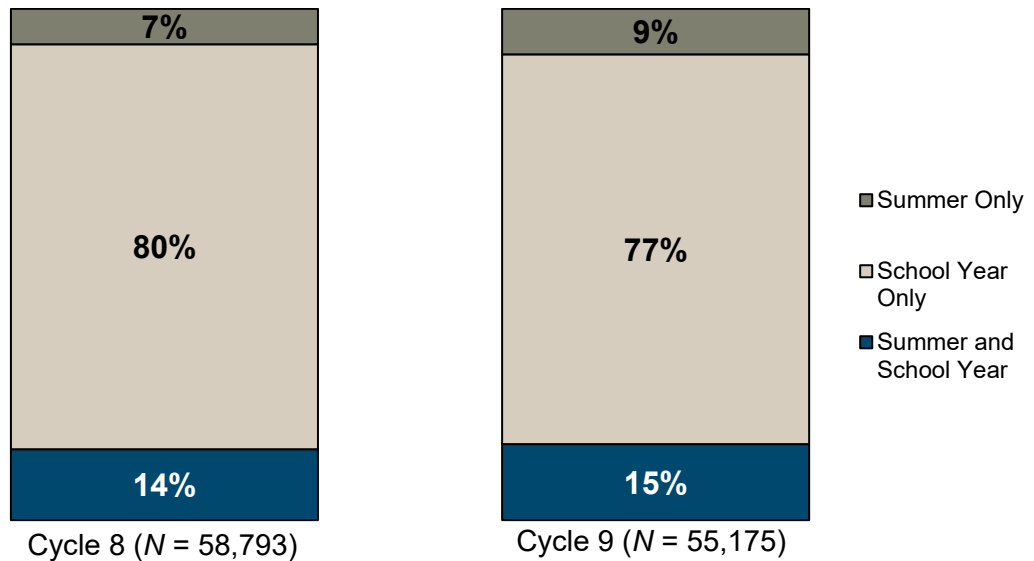
As Figure 2.4 illustrates, most Texas ACE students (77% to 80%, depending on the cycle examined) participated in the program only during the regular school year (i.e., fall and spring semesters). Between 14% and 15% of the students participated in Texas ACE during the regular school year and the summer session. Relatively few students (7% to 9%) did not participate in the Texas ACE program during the regular school year but did attend the program during the summer session.

Most students participating in the Texas ACE program did so only during the regular school year (77% to 80%). Slightly less than 25% of the Texas ACE participants also attended the program during the summer or were summer-only attendees.

The average number of summer Texas ACE programming days for Cycles 8 and 9 centers was 14 days in 2017–18. The average number of hours of summer programming was slightly higher for Cycle 9 centers (72 hours) than it was for Cycle 8 centers (63 hours). (See Appendix Table A2.6.)

Figure 2.4. Percentage of Students Participating in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) During the Summer and Regular School Year, 2017–18

Approximately eight of 10 Texas ACE students participated in the program only during the regular school year.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding. Figure includes students from summer and fall of 2017 and spring 2018.

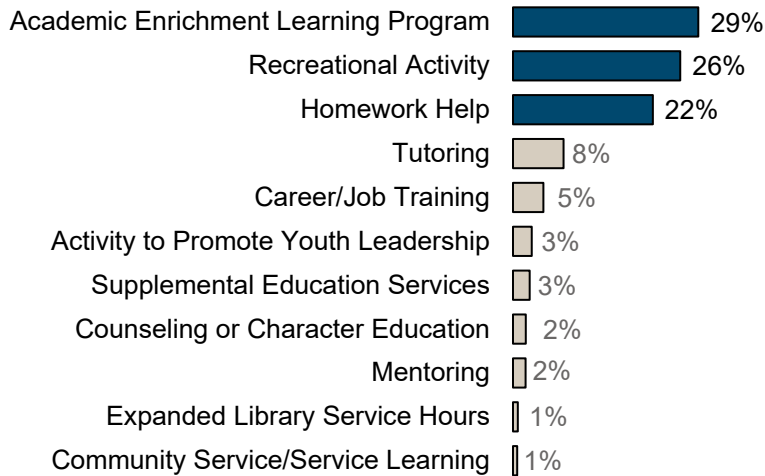
Section 3. Program Activities and Staffing

Program Activities

Analysis of Tx21st data found that centers made concerted efforts to address both the academic and enrichment needs of students. As illustrated in Figure 2.5, students participating in Texas ACE during the 2017–18 programming period split their time relatively evenly between academic enrichment (29%), recreation (26%), and homework help (22%) activities. These three activities accounted for 77% of the time that students spend in Texas ACE programs. Tutoring (8%) and career/job training (5%) activities accounted for the next largest amounts of students' time in 2017–18 Texas ACE programs. Very little time was devoted to offering activities to promote youth leadership, supplemental education services, counseling or character education, mentoring, expanded library service hours, or community service/service learning.

Figure 2.5. Percentage of Participants' Time (Hours) in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) by Activity Type During Fall and Spring, 2017–18

Three quarters of Texas ACE student time was spent in academic enrichment, recreation, or homework help.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

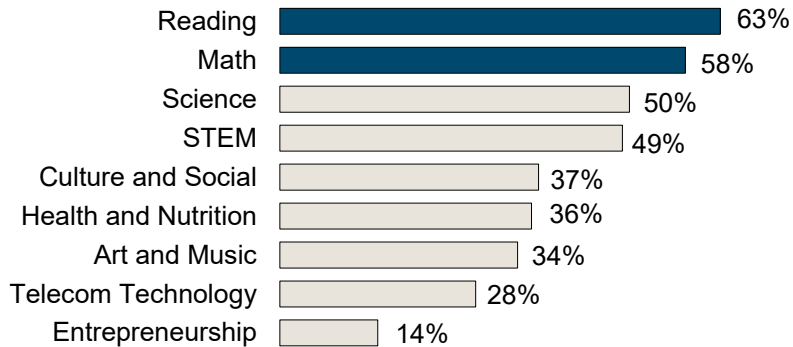
Note. Drug/substance abuse prevention, promotion of parental involvement, violence prevention, promotion of family literacy, and other activities combined to less than 1% of the time spent, so they were excluded from the figure. The figure is based on 13,680,865 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only in the summer term were excluded. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Another way of understanding student participation in Texas ACE activities is to examine the subject areas addressed in activities that students attended.¹⁶ Figure 2.6 shows that youth spent 63% of their time attending reading-related activities and 58% of their time in mathematics-related activities during 2017–18. Students spent approximately half of their time in science-specific activities (50%) or STEM activities (49%). Students also spent a substantive minority of their time in activities related to culture and social studies (37%), health and nutrition (36%), art and music (34%), telecom technology (28%), and entrepreneurship (14%).

¹⁶ An individual activity could be categorized as addressing more than one subject area, so the percentages may not sum to 100%.

Figure 2.6. Percentage of Participants’ Time (Hours) in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Spent on Various Content Areas During Fall and Spring, 2017–18

Students in Texas ACE spent the most time in reading and mathematics activities during 2017–18.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

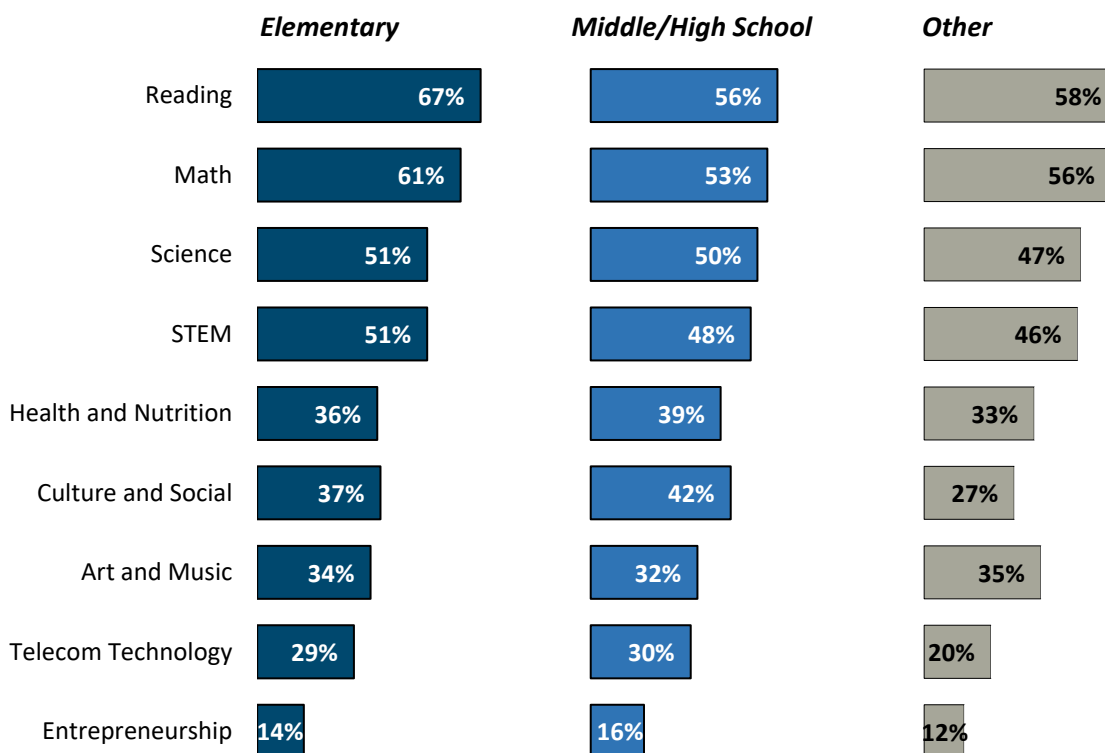
Note. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Based on 13,680,865 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only in the summer term were excluded. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the percentages may not sum to 100%.

As Figure 2.7 illustrates, elementary school students enrolled in Texas ACE programs spent a larger percentage of their time on reading (67% vs. 56%) and mathematics (61% vs. 53%) activities than did their counterparts in middle school and high school enrolled in Texas ACE programs. Elementary school students (51%) and secondary students (50%) spent comparable proportions of Texas ACE program time on science activities. Elementary students also spent more of their time participating in STEM activities (51% vs. 48%) than did students in middle school and high school programs.

Meanwhile, students enrolled in Texas ACE programs at centers serving secondary school students spent a larger percentage of time on cultural and social studies activities (42% vs. 37%) and health and nutrition activities (39% vs. 36%) than did their counterparts at centers serving elementary school programs. Regardless of school level, approximately the same amount of time (within 2 percentage points) was spent on science (50% vs. 51%), art and music (32% vs. 34%), telecom technology (29% vs. 30%), and entrepreneurial (14% vs. 16%) activities (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. Percentage of Time Spent by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Participants on Various Program Activities During Fall and Spring, 2017–18, by Campus Grades Served

Elementary school students spent a larger percentage of Texas ACE time on academic topics such as reading and mathematics than do secondary school students.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Based on 13,680,865 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only in the summer term were excluded. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the percentages may not sum to 100%. The category “other” represents schools that serve both elementary and middle school students, or schools that serve all (or extended) grade ranges.

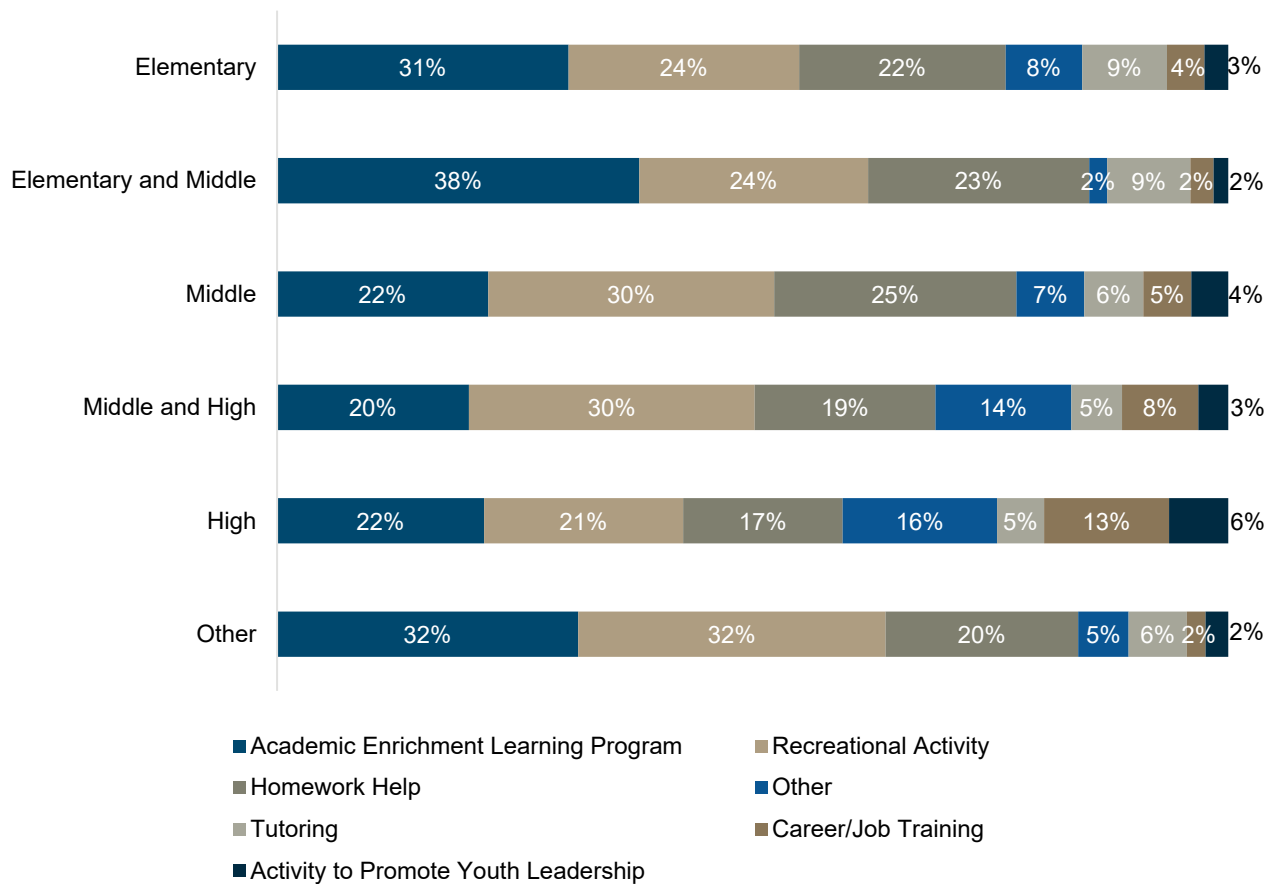
As Figure 2.8 shows, students enrolled in Texas ACE programs serving elementary schools (31%) and combined elementary and middle school grades (38%) spent more time engaged in academic enrichment activities than students at centers serving middle school grades only (22%), combined middle and high school grades (20%), and high school grades only (22%).

Students enrolled in Texas ACE programs serving middle school grades and combined middle and high school grades spent a higher proportion of their afterschool programming time in recreational activities (30%) than did either elementary school (24%) or high school (21%) students. This may be the result of allowing students in middle school Texas ACE programs more voice in determining the types of activities offered through the program—and more freedom to choose their activities—to improve student attendance in the afterschool program. High school students spent more of their time in the Texas ACE program on activities related to career exploration and job training activities (13%) than programs serving other grade ranges. Students at programs serving high school grades (17%) and combined middle and high school grades (19%) also spent less of their time in the Texas ACE program on homework help than

did students at centers serving middle school grades (25%), combined elementary and middle school grades (23%), and elementary school grades (22%).

Figure 2.8. Percentage of Time Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Participants Spent on Activities During Fall and Spring, 2017–18, by Campus Grades Served

Students at centers serving elementary and middle school students spent more of their time engaged in academic enrichment programming than did high school students.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Community service/service learning, drug/substance abuse prevention, expanded library service hours, mentoring, promotion of family literacy, promotion of parental involvement, supplemental education services, and violence prevention made up no more than 5% of the time spent in any campus group and were included in the “other” category. The figure is based on 13,680,865 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only in the summer term were excluded. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding. The category “other” represents schools that serve both elementary and middle school students or schools that serve all (or extended) grade ranges.

Students spent a larger percentage of Texas ACE programming time at centers serving high school grades (16%) or combined middle and high school grades (14%) in activities categorized as “other activities” (compared with 7% to 8% for elementary and middle school students, respectively). These older students are engaged in a more diverse group of activities designed to keep them engaged in afterschool program participation. Community service/service learning, drug/substance abuse prevention, expanded library service hours, mentoring, promotion of family literacy, promotion of parental involvement, supplemental education services, and violence prevention are included the “other” category. Regardless of the center level, students spent very little time (2% to 6%) on activities designed to promote youth leadership. This was most common at the high school level, where 6% of students’ time was spent on these types of activities (see Figure 2.8).

Summer Activities

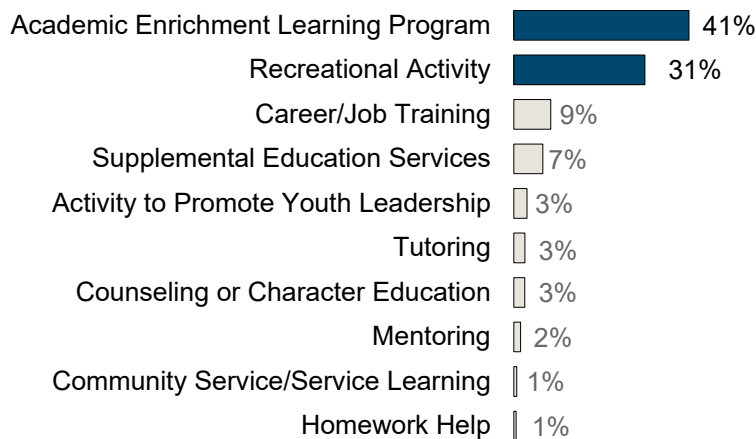
During the Texas ACE summer session of the 2017–18 programming year, academic enrichment and recreational activities accounted for 72% of students’ time in the program.

Summer programming provides students access to ongoing learning opportunities when school is not in session. Tx21st data for the summer were analyzed and compared with the school year to see how it is similar or different in the offerings for students. Results from 2017–18 indicate a similar distribution of activities among academic

year and summer offerings. On average, students spent most of their programming time in Texas ACE summer programs in two activities: academic enrichment (41%) and recreational activities (31%). The exception to the similarity between academic year and summer programs was related to homework help, which was one of the three most prominent activities during the regular school year but accounted for only 1% of students’ Texas ACE time during the summer (see Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9. Proportion of Time That Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Participants Spent on Summer Activities in 2017–18

Three quarters of students' time in summer Texas ACE programs was spent in academic enrichment and recreation.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Drug/substance abuse prevention, expanded library hours, promotion of parental involvement, violence prevention, promotion of family literacy, and other combined to less than 1% of the time spent, so they were excluded from the figure. The figure is based on 1,676,199 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only during the school year were excluded. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

In examining student participation in summer activities by subject area, on average, youth spent more than 50% of their time in Texas ACE attending activities related to reading or mathematics during 2017–18 (55% and 52%, respectively). Students spent slightly more time during the summer term participating

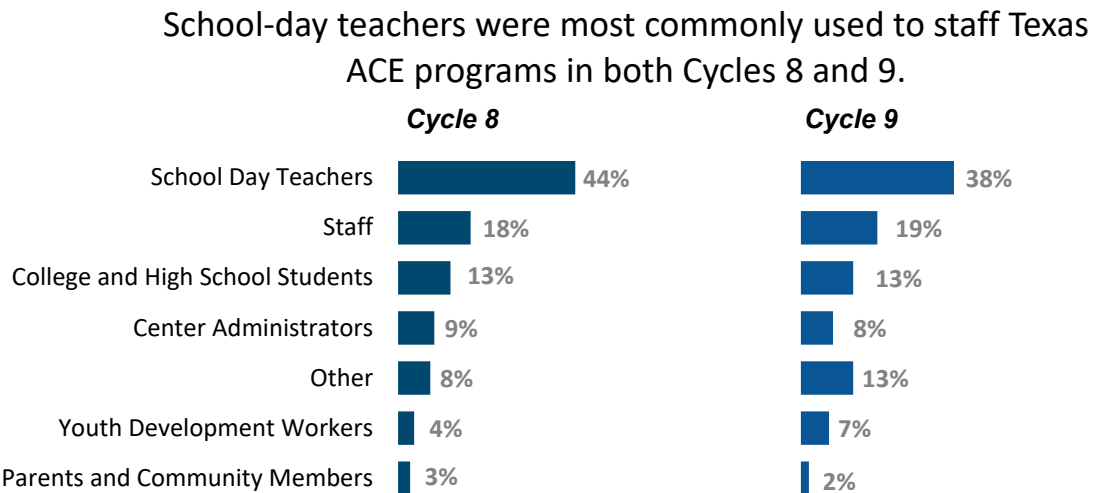
in activities related to health and nutrition, art and music, culture and social studies, telecom technology, and entrepreneurship than during the school year (see Appendix Figure A2.1).

Staffing

Analysis of the Tx21st data during the 2017–18 programming period also focused on the composition of Texas ACE staff. Paid staff in Texas ACE programs was classified as being associated with one of seven categories: (a) school-day teachers, (b) paid staff, (c) college and high school students, (d) center administrators, (e) youth development workers, (f) parents and community members, and (g) other (not otherwise classified).

As Figure 2.10 shows, across both Cycles 8 and 9, the majority of centers relied on school-day teachers (44% and 38%, respectively). Centers across both cycles relied on other staff (18% and 19%, respectively), college and high school students (13% in both cycles), center administrators (9% and 8%, respectively), youth development workers (4% and 7%, respectively), volunteers from the community (3% and 2%, respectively), or other employees (8% and 13%, respectively).

Figure 2.10. Percentage of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education School Staff During 2017–18 Programming Year, by Position Type



Source. American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Results are based on 4,267 staff in 209 Cycle 8 centers and 4,612 staff in 251 Cycle 9 centers.

Conclusion

Overview of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees and Centers

This chapter described Texas ACE grants awarded in Cycles 8 and 9, including characteristics of the students who participated in Texas ACE and the schools served during the 2017–18 programming period. There were 460 centers across 56 grantees funded as part of Cycles 8 and 9. During the 2017–18 programming period, approximately 114,000 students participated in Texas ACE. Most Texas ACE grants associated with the 2017–18 programming period were awarded to districts and regional educational entities that served public school districts (88% for both Cycles 8 and 9 grantees).

Tx21st data provided a broad overview of Texas ACE program characteristics statewide. One area studied was management of Texas ACE. Results indicate that districts and regional educational entities managed most of the Texas ACE grants during the 2017–18 programming period, followed by nonprofit organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, and a small number of grants managed by colleges or

universities all of which partnered with public school districts. On average, Texas ACE grantees managed between six and 10 centers.

Interview data from 20 centers collected in spring 2018 were examined to gauge whether centers had adopted local goals and objectives consistent with 21st CCLC program guidelines in Texas (TEA, 2016). The majority of centers (70% or more) attempted to address the following program objectives: (a) to address academic needs; (b) to promote college and career readiness; (c) to provide enrichment activities with academic content embedded; (d) to facilitate parent involvement and family engagement in the program; and (e) to build social and emotional learning skills. Other program goals mentioned, to a lesser degree, included those specifically related to the types of programming provided and goals related to providing a safe learning environment, getting students comfortable with learning, and providing learning opportunities that students might not otherwise be able to access.

In 2017–18, it was most common for centers to be in urban areas—42% of the Cycle 8 centers and 38% of the Cycle 9 centers. Cycle 8 centers (33%) were more likely to be in rural areas than Cycle 9 centers (27%); however, the proportion of centers in suburban communities was higher in Cycle 9 centers (34%) than for Cycle 8 centers (24%).

Description of Students Attending Programs

Analysis of Tx21st data about the students and schools served by Texas ACE during the 2017–18 programming period revealed the following:

- Approximately 50% of the students served in Texas ACE programs in 2017–18 were in elementary school, 32% of the students were in middle school, and 18% of the students were in high school.
- ELs comprised 23% of the Texas ACE participants. Nearly two thirds of the students were identified as at risk for dropping out of school (62%), and 64% of the students were categorized as economically disadvantaged.
- Eight percent of the students attending Texas ACE programs were identified as receiving special education services.
- Hispanic students comprised the largest share of students (67%) served by Texas ACE in 2017–18, followed by Black students (16%), White students (14%), and other racial/ethnic groups (3%).
- Most Texas ACE students who took the Algebra I EOC exam achieved a passing standard (86%) compared with a slightly more than half of the students who passed the English I EOC (57%).

More than one half of the students who participated in Cycle 8 centers and more than one third of students who participated in Cycle 9 centers during the 2017–18 programming period attended the program for less than 45 days, whereas less than one third of the students from either cycle attended between 45 and 90 days. A higher proportion of students participating in Cycle 9 centers (21%) attended for 120 days or more compared with Cycle 8 centers (12%).

Approximately eight of every 10 students who participated in Texas ACE during 2017–18 attended the regular school year (fall and spring) program only. Less than one third of the Texas ACE students in both Cycles 8 and 9 participated in programming during the summer, and those who attended summer programming attended for an average of 14 days for both Cycles 8 and 9.

Program Activities and Staffing

During the 2017–18 school year, students participating in Texas ACE spent most of their time in one of three activities: academic enrichment (29%), recreation (26%), or homework help (22%). Career/job training activities accounted for 5% of students' time in Texas ACE, and supplemental education services accounted for 3% of their time. In examining the subject areas in which youth spent their time, 63% was spent attending reading-related activities, and 58% was dedicated to mathematics-related activities. Students also spent substantial amounts of time in activities classified as science or STEM, 50% and 49%, respectively.

Tx21st data for summer participation in programming also was analyzed and compared with the school year, revealing a similar pattern. Students spent most of their time in Texas ACE summer programs in academic enrichment (41%) and recreation activities (31%). Student participation in summer activities by subject area also closely mirrored participation during the school year, with youth spending more than half of their programming time attending activities related to reading or mathematics (55% and 52%, respectively).

Students at centers serving elementary school students spent a larger percentage of their Texas ACE programming time on reading (67% vs. 56%) and mathematics (61% vs. 53%) activities than did their counterparts at centers serving middle school and high school programs. Students enrolled in Texas ACE programs serving elementary schools (31%) and combined elementary and middle school grades (38%) spent more time engaged in academic enrichment activities than did students at centers serving middle school grades only (22%), combined middle and high school grades (20%), and high school grades only (22%).

Students enrolled in Texas ACE programs serving middle school grades and combined middle and high school grades spent a higher proportion of their afterschool programming time in recreational activities (30%) than either elementary school (24%) or high school (21%) students. High school students also spent more of their Texas ACE programming time on activities related to career exploration and job training activities (13%) than programs serving other grade ranges.

Across Cycles 8 and 9 Texas ACE grantees, the majority of centers relied on the use of school-day teachers (44% and 38%, respectively). Centers across both cycles also relied on other staff (18% and 19%, respectively), college and high school students (13% in both cycles), center administrators (8% and 9%, respectively), youth development workers (4% and 7%, respectively), volunteers from the community (2% and 3%, respectively), or other employees (8% and 13%, respectively) to provide Texas ACE programming.

The next chapter will explore key implementation components of Texas ACE in greater detail, largely relying on information collected during the site visits in spring 2018 in a series of higher and lower implementing centers. The goal of these analyses was to better understand approaches to programming design and delivery that may distinguish higher and lower implementing centers.

Chapter 3. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program Implementation

Objectives 3 and 4

Based on site visit data, how do higher and lower implementing centers vary in terms of key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?

Introduction

A primary goal of the statewide evaluation is to explore what center characteristics and approaches to program design and delivery are associated with positive student outcomes. This information can then be used to inform training and technical assistance efforts aimed at helping centers better adopt such approaches. To accomplish this goal, AIR selected a sample of centers funded in Cycle 9 to be visited by members of the statewide evaluation team in spring 2018 and collected interview, focus group, survey, and observation data to support the identification of promising approaches and practices. The focus on Cycle 9 centers was prescribed in the evaluation Request for Proposals issued by TEA, which outlined the scope of the project. Participants included project directors, site coordinators, youth activity leaders, family engagement specialists, school principals, and advisory board members.

AIR selected the sample in a way to highlight both higher implementing and lower implementing centers. The goal was to maximize the contrast between these two categories of centers to more easily identify practices and approaches found in the higher implementing centers that may be lacking or absent in the lower implementing centers.

Administrative and youth survey data were used to identify a sample of Cycle 9 centers as being higher or lower implementing. These data helped provide answers to the following three questions to determine whether a given center warranted identification as either a higher or lower implementing center:

- *To what extent was the center retaining youth in Texas ACE?* Ideally, students will benefit more from Texas ACE programming the more they participate. Keeping students enrolled in programming is theorized to be linked both to the underlying quality of a center's activities and ensuring that students have access to developmentally appropriate activities across time that keep them interested and engaged.
- *To what extent were students participating in Texas ACE demonstrating improvement on school-related outcomes?* The charge for Texas ACE programs is to develop and implement programming that will have a positive impact on a series of school-related outcomes. Data were examined to assess the extent to which students participating regularly in the program were improving on school-related outcomes, including fewer school-day absences and disciplinary incidents and greater academic achievement.
- *To what extent did students report positive experiences in Texas ACE?* Understanding the subjective experiences youth have while participating in programming is key to assessing if the program was successful in ensuring a "goodness of fit" between where students are and what learning supports and opportunities the program is providing.

Higher implementing centers were generally more successful in retaining students in Texas ACE. They were characterized by students who demonstrated improvement on key academic and behavioral outcomes and reported having positive experiences in programming. (See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion on these differences.)

Data in all three areas were organized into a series of KPIs to drive a two-stage process of selecting higher and lower implementing centers. The first stage involved the calculation of a series of KPIs based on program participation and student outcome data. These KPIs were then used for the second stage to

select a preliminary sample of each category of centers that were then asked to administer a survey to a sample of students participating in Texas ACE about their experiences in the program. Results from the survey were used to identify the final sample of higher implementing centers, where students reported being motivated to attend programming and having key experiences while participating in Texas ACE activities, including having opportunities to experience a sense of agency and developing positive relationships with the activity leaders and other youth in the program. These experiences were noticeably less prevalent in centers designated as lower implementing. Appendix B has a complete description of the KPIs used to select higher and lower implementing centers, each step of the selection process, and key differences identified between higher and lower implementing centers.

Completion of this selection process ultimately resulted in the 20 centers visited in spring 2018: 10 higher implementing centers and 10 lower implementing centers. The sample included 12 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe practices and approaches that especially distinguish higher and lower implementing centers based on the interview and focus group data collected during the site visits.

Differentiation in Practices Across Higher and Lower Implementing Centers

The information on program activities and staffing at Texas ACE gleaned from Tx21st data provides a broad overview of how the afterschool and summer programs function statewide. However, to gain a better understanding of the types of organizational, operational, programmatic, and instructional practices that differentiate higher implementing from lower implementing centers selected for the site visit sample, qualitative data, collected through interviews with program and school staff, were analyzed along a number of program implementation topics. These implementation topics included a focus on the following:

- Supporting youth engagement, motivation, and interest
- Parent engagement
- Guidance and feedback provided through advisory boards
- Processes to use data to inform programming and instruction

Although the qualitative results from this small sample cannot necessarily be generalized statewide, they do provide a lens into how higher and lower implementing centers may be functioning differently and provide guidance for promising practices in place at centers that have been identified as higher implementing.

To understand the student populations identified by centers as priorities for recruitment for their Texas ACE programs, program leaders and campus principals were asked if there was a specific group of students that they targeted for participating in their afterschool programs. As Table 3.1 shows, centers identified as higher implementing were more inclined to target students who were either academically at risk (70% vs. 40%) or generally at risk of dropping out of school (60% vs. 30%) than lower implementing centers visited in spring 2018.¹⁷ Higher implementing centers were somewhat less likely to target students with disciplinary or behavioral issues or social emotional needs (30% vs. 50%).

¹⁷ Students generally at risk of dropping out of school refer to instances where the interviewee indicated students who were at risk were targeted but did not specify why they were at risk (e.g., academically, disciplinary issues, attendance issues, economically disadvantaged, ELs). At-risk status is defined by TEC § 29.081 and specified in PEIMS under criteria for identification (TEA, n.d.)

Table 3.1. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Student Target Population by Center Implementation Level

	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Students academically at risk	70%	40%	55%
Students generally at risk (no reason specified)	60%	30%	45%
Students at risk because of disciplinary or behavioral issues or social-emotional learning needs	30%	50%	40%
Students who are economically disadvantaged	20%	20%	20%
English learner students	17%	25%	20%
Students at risk because of school attendance issues	0%	20%	10%
Centers have no defined student target population	0%	20%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple student populations targeted. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

Engagement, Motivation, and Interest in the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program

Interviews with a wide range of Texas ACE staff (i.e., project directors, site coordinators, youth activity leaders, and family engagement specialists), school principals, and center advisory board members were used to gather rich, qualitative data related to the methods that centers use to engage and motivate students and keep them interested in attending their afterschool programs. By analyzing these data, the evaluation team examined staff approaches to increasing student and parent engagement, motivation, and interest in Texas ACE program participation. Further, the differences in practices at centers identified as being higher implementing were compared with those centers identified as lower implementing.

Student Engagement, Motivation, and Interest

Providing Creative Academic and Enrichment Opportunities

Regardless of the implementation level, addressing academic needs (through tutoring and homework help) and preparing students for career and college readiness were discussed by most or all campus and program leaders interviewed. However, program leadership at centers categorized as higher implementing was more likely to emphasize the need to invest additional effort into cultivating youth engagement, motivation, and interest in learning than other centers visited.

“The enrichment part, those are really student driven. They get to pick the clubs. We usually get a vote, and then they get to pick their top two favorites. That’s everything from sports, to art, engineering. I have a building club, and a maker space club, and an animal rescue club. That one’s really fun. That’s our service learning project for the year.”

—Site Coordinator

As Table 3.2 shows, providing creative enrichment opportunities with infused academics for students was a primary goal cited by 90% of the program leaders at higher implementing centers compared with just 60% of the program leaders at lower implementing centers. Although program staff at higher implementing centers discussed the importance of improving academic results, they were more inclined to

talk about the need to engage students with interesting academic content delivered in an engaging manner than respondents associated with lower implementing centers. Central to many responses was the need to “support academics but make it fun and not drill and kill” and ensure that enrichment choices are “student driven” and designed in a way so that “students have every possibility [to participate in activities] that they cannot get outside of school.” Student choice and voice were a common theme across the principal and site coordinator interviews at higher implementing programs, where they described the need to offer a wide array of clubs, such as robotics, arts and crafts, service learning clubs, interactive computer-based reading and mathematics programs, sports, music, and book clubs, among others. One site coordinator shared that “I do stress, and so does my principal, the importance of hands-on, the importance of continuing the hands-on activities for these students.”

Table 3.2. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Goals Reported, by Center Implementation Level

Program goals	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Address academic needs (including tutoring, homework help)	100%	100%	100%
Prepare for career and college readiness (exposure to colleges and high school graduation rate)	90%	90%	90%
Provide (academic and creative) enrichment opportunities	90%	60%	75%
Facilitate parental involvement (family engagement)	90%	60%	75%
Build social and emotional learning skills	70%	70%	70%
Provide a safe learning environment	60%	30%	45%
Promote sustained attendance	50%	40%	45%
Address behavioral issues	50%	20%	35%
Improve grade-level promotion and graduation rates	40%	20%	30%
Provide learning opportunities students would not otherwise have	20%	20%	20%
Get students interested in and comfortable with learning	40%	0%	20%
Close achievement gap for students who are educationally disadvantaged	0%	30%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple Texas ACE goals. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing 21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

Getting Students Interested in and Comfortable With Learning

“I would like for my students to want to feel comfortable learning. I want them to be able to not be scared if they have a question; they’re afraid because they’re not comfortable. I want them to be able to be comfortable, that’s one thing that I try to establish in my classroom.”

—Youth Activity Leader

Another key attribute of higher implementing centers is setting a goal for increasing student interest in and comfort with learning. As Table 3.2 shows, interviewees from four of the 10 higher implementing centers indicated that enhancing interest in and comfort with learning is a primary goal of their afterschool program. Meanwhile, none of the program or campus leaders at lower implementing centers shared that this was a goal of their program.

Interviewees at the higher implementing centers shared that this is vitally important because many students in the Texas ACE program may struggle academically and socially during the regular school day, so providing a safe environment for them to learn is critical.

More higher implementing centers placed a greater emphasis on creating a safe learning environment (60%) than did lower implementing centers (30%). One principal at a higher implementing center discussed a desire for the Texas ACE program to be “an extension of the regular school day, but with more hands-on activities” and “be more flexible than the regular school day.” Youth activity leaders, who daily work directly with students at higher implementing centers, shared that they want to make sure students are comfortable during activities and work to create an environment where students feel free to ask questions and explore new and interesting content.

Youth activity leaders at higher implementing centers also discussed how small-group and hands-on activities are an effective method for tapping into student motivations to learn new content or better understand material that they may have struggled with when it was taught using more conventional instructional approaches. One focus group participant at a higher implementing center talked about wanting to have their students “tap into their curiosity and ask more questions,” whereas another talked about exploring a variety of instructional modalities (e.g., projectors, smart boards, iPads, clickers to respond to game questions), and soliciting student feedback, such as “How do you like this style? Do you feel more or less comfortable with it? Do you feel intimidated by technology?”

Advisory board members at higher implementing Texas ACE programs discussed how they see the afterschool program as a way to increase student confidence and take ownership of their learning, which translates into students wanting to be at school during the day because they want to be in the afterschool program “to do cool things.”

“I think the primary goals that I see at the program itself are that we keep the kids interested in school, and we keep them eager to learn, because, sometimes, the kids that will come to the program are not some of our best learners. And so, I think by providing them some things that they are excited about, they’re wanting to stay.”

—Advisory Board Member

One advisory board member discussed how the Texas ACE program gives students an opportunity to “focus on their academics and plan out things that they want to do with their lives.” A principal at one of the higher implementing centers elaborated about how students in the Texas ACE program are afforded greater flexibility to engage in activities in which they can

succeed: “Students look forward to coming to the [Texas ACE] classes, and it has really given them an opportunity to shine in other areas besides academics.”

Parent Engagement, Motivation, and Interest

Facilitation of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement

“As far as family engagement, that’s been a huge push for us on our campus because we’re trying to get our families, and we’re trying to get our parents more involved, and trying to get their feedback as far as what they want to see on campus . . . and just give a different outlet to get these parents involved on campus.”

—Advisory Board Member

Texas ACE program leaders and campus principals at higher implementing centers were more likely to focus their efforts on engaging parents and families in Texas ACE activities than those from lower implementing centers. At 90% of the higher implementing centers, facilitating parent involvement and family engagement in their afterschool program was a central goal compared with 60% of

the lower implementing centers. Many interviewees at higher implementing centers generally mentioned that parental involvement or engagement is one of their goals. Those who spoke in more detail indicated that they wanted to provide more opportunities for parents to be involved and provide feedback, to increase family literacy, or to provide opportunities for parents to learn about working with their children or other life challenges. One advisory board member from a higher implementing center discussed a more general goal of getting parents involved with the campus through a different outlet outside the regular school-day channels (i.e., the Texas ACE program). Another project director at a higher implementing center shared that they wanted to “increase school bonding with families” and “increase opportunities for working families to participate in high-quality out-of-school-time events.”

Other advisory board members, project directors, and site coordinators working at higher implementing centers shared that their primary methods for getting parents involved in the Texas ACE program is by providing classes, information-sharing events, and social events for parents and family members of students enrolled in the program. These activities include presentations facilitated by local financial institutions related to loans and financial literacy, discussions of the difficulty in raising children using the Love and Logic framework, English as a second language (ESL) and literacy classes, and presentations about the STAAR test presented in a way that is understandable to parents and families.

As Table 3.3 illustrates, higher implementing centers were more likely to provide ESL and high school equivalency (HSE) classes for parents and family members of students attending the afterschool program than were lower implementing centers. Ninety percent of the higher implementing centers offered ESL classes to parents and family members compared with just 20% of the lower implementing centers. Similarly, one half of the higher implementing centers offered HSE classes compared with only 10% of the lower implementing centers. Lower implementing centers tended to focus parent classes on workshops sponsored by community partners, financial planning and literacy workshops, and college and career planning events.

Table 3.3. Family Engagement Activities, by Center Implementation Level

Activities	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Programming for parent and family member life skills and career development	100%	80%	90%
English as a second language classes	90%	20%	55%
High school equivalency (HSE) classes	50%	10%	30%
Community partners events and workshops	20%	40%	30%
Financial planning and literacy workshops	20%	40%	30%
Enrichment activities	20%	20%	20%
College and career planning events	0%	20%	10%
Programming to help parents support student development	70%	80%	75%
Sessions on how to help students with academics	70%	60%	65%
Hands-on activities with students	30%	50%	40%
Community partners events and workshops	30%	30%	30%
Parenting classes	20%	30%	25%
Information sessions on bullying	10%	20%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple types of activities. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing 21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

Texas ACE program staff discussed how ESL and HSE programming has helped develop a positive relationship between the program and adult family members by promoting the development of parents and adult family members in addition to students participating in the afterschool program. Family engagement specialists, in coordination with site coordinators and project directors, most commonly led the efforts by centers to be responsive to the needs of the community and the families served through the program. Program staff at higher implementing centers consistently shared that support for and interest in ESL classes was overwhelming in their communities, and parent/family member participation in these courses helps create a stronger bond between parents and the school and improves the wage-earning capacity of attendees by improving their English skills.

“ESL program has been successful. It’s been really successful because, the parents have welcomed this. The schools have welcomed the parents to come to their building. By then doing that, it has been successful because we had, mainly because our ESL parents were afraid to come to the schools.”

—Project Director

Interviewees at higher implementing centers, when they elaborated on HSE offerings, mentioned that these courses are offered based on parent need, such as vocational or other observed areas of need, or working with a partner to offer the courses. HSE courses are commonly offered through partnerships with community partners. One family engagement specialist shared that they “have partnered with [a community college], and they will offer [their] parents free of cost HSE classes.”

Role and Utilization of Advisory Boards

Among the sites visited, variation existed in the composition of Texas ACE advisory boards and the role they play in helping guide the activities of their centers. Beginning with Cycle 9, grantees were required to engage an advisory board to advise on “community needs for the program over time and coordinate local resources for the continued success of students and families enrolled in the program” (TEA, 2016, p. 24).¹⁸ Interviews with project directors, site coordinators, and advisory board members revealed that advisory boards at higher implementing Texas ACE programs tended to play a more prominent role in providing general guidance and feedback (70% vs. 40%), operations (90% vs. 70%), planning and organization (60% vs. 40%), and programming (80% vs. 60%) to the afterschool programs they serve than advisory boards in place at lower implementing centers (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Advisory Board Decision-Making Roles in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), by Center Implementation Level

Types of involvement	Higher implementing programs (N=10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
General guidance and feedback	70%	40%	55%
Operational	90%	70%	80%
Review program data	50%	30%	40%
Coordinate program spending	50%	20%	35%
Act as community or district liaison	30%	20%	25%
Determine student, parent, and/or community needs	30%	20%	25%
Discuss alignment of programming with school day	20%	0%	10%
Planning/organization	60%	40%	50%
Build community awareness of Texas ACE	60%	30%	45%
Identify students in need of Texas ACE programming	10%	10%	10%
Promote Texas ACE among families, teachers, and students	10%	10%	10%
Programming	80%	60%	70%
Provide guidance and feedback on programming, resources, and/or policies	70%	60%	65%
Review and monitor program goals and status	60%	10%	35%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Advisory board roles support design and delivery for programs as well as sustainability. Respondents often cited multiple types of involvement. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

Regarding operational feedback, advisory boards at higher implementing centers tended to be more involved in reviewing program data (50% vs. 30%), coordinating program spending (50% vs. 20%), and discussing the alignment of programming with the regular school day (20% vs. 0%) than advisory boards at lower implementing centers. Interviewees described various ways in which they engage with center leadership to (a) ensure that programming is meeting the needs of students and families, (b) ensure that program funds are being spent according to grant guidelines, (c) help identify alternative funding sources

¹⁸ The 2016–17 Texas 21st CCLC guidelines for advisory boards describe the level of involvement as follows: “It is expected that a variety of community members will be involved in meetings and activities related to areas such as creating program awareness, program implementation, evaluating program effectiveness, and sustainability” (TEA, 2016, p. 24).

to improve the quality of the program, and (d) plan for the sustainability of the afterschool program after grant funding is no longer available.

At higher implementing centers, advisory board members tended to be more involved in helping build community awareness of the Texas ACE program (60%) than their lower implementing counterparts (30%). Advisory board members at higher implementing centers indicated that they “invite a lot of different stakeholders, and from the community, people that don’t really know exactly what the program is about” and try to “educate them and tell them about the turnaround that we’ve seen . . . and some of the great benefits of having the program on campuses.” A site coordinator at a higher implementing center discussed the importance of having advisory board members with varied contacts to help the center: “I think by having the board members from different agencies, it gave you more insight of additional resources that can assist your program.”

“I think [our role is] just kind of identifying what those needs are . . . and then coming up with ways to address those needs and try to identify resources in the community that can be brought to the school to address those needs for our students and their families after school . . . I think it’s not only to identify what the needs are, but to also ensure that, how can I put this? To also ensure that we’re meeting those needs effectively, continuously evaluating. Are the different programs that we have after school, are they meeting those needs effectively? And is there anything we need to add, anything we need to subtract? And are they helping our students meet the program’s goals?”

—Advisory Board Member

Regardless of how Texas ACE programs were categorized in terms of implementation level, the majority (70% of higher implementing and 60% of lower implementing centers) of advisory boards provide guidance and feedback on programming, resources, and/or policies. However, a higher proportion of advisory boards at centers identified as higher implementing (60%) review and monitor program goals and progress made toward achieving stated goals than advisory boards at lower implementing centers (10%). One project director at a higher implementing center shared that “the community advisory committee works on establishing a shared vision and monitoring progress towards our achievement, towards our goals.”

Use of Data and Evaluation to Support Programming Decisions

Program directors and site coordinators interviewed in spring 2018 were asked to share their perspectives on key elements of high-quality afterschool programs. The objective of this question was to determine the mindset of program leaders regarding the importance of various practices on creating effective afterschool programs. As with other sections of this chapter, the results are disaggregated by higher and lower implementing centers.

As Table 3.5 shows, program leaders at eight of 10 higher implementing centers indicated that the periodic review of program data (e.g., program evaluation data, observational data collected from walk-throughs of afterschool sessions) was a key element of higher quality afterschool programs. However, only one half of program leaders at lower performing centers shared that the periodic review of program data was a key aspect of high-quality programs—focusing instead on effective communication between staff as a key feature of effective programs. Project directors and site coordinators at higher implementing centers commonly discussed the regular use of observations followed by immediate feedback to correct identified issues.

Table 3.5. Participant Perspectives on Features of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programs, by Center Implementation Level

Features of high-quality programs	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Periodic review of program data (e.g., program evaluation data, walk-through data)	80%	50%	65%
Effective communication between staff (feeling of solidarity)	30%	60%	45%
Engaging programming	40%	50%	45%
Meaningful relationships with students	30%	40%	35%
Staff professional development	20%	20%	20%
Attentive to student need	20%	20%	20%
Engaged and positive staff	10%	20%	30%
Focus on student safety	10%	10%	10%
Effective lesson planning	20%	0%	10%
Monitor youth activity leaders workload	20%	0%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple program features. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

“We have our evaluator . . . that’s certified in the YPQA observation tool, and . . . I also do site visits at each site at least twice a month. . . . I meet with each staff weekly in a one-on-one, and we go over that observation, and then I will come back to see if those things were implemented.”

—Project Director

In addition to commonly mentioning external evaluations, one project director at a higher implementing center discussed how the external evaluator is Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) certified and uses that tool to provide formative feedback after observations of afterschool activities are conducted.

Twenty percent of the program leaders at higher implementing centers also mentioned that effective lesson planning and monitoring youth activity leader workloads were features of high-quality afterschool programs. None of the program leaders at lower

implementing centers discussed these as components of effective afterschool programs (Table 3.5). Nearly all Texas ACE programs (90%), regardless of implementation level, use some form of observational data to monitor center performance and instructional quality, and higher implementing centers were more likely to use a research-based program quality assessment or observation rubric (40%) than lower implementing centers (10%). Similarly, a larger proportion of higher implementing programs reported that they have an external program evaluator to assist them with program monitoring (40%) than did lower implementing centers (20%). (See Table 3.6.)

Table 3.6. Program Quality Data Used to Monitor Performance, by Center Implementation Level

Program quality data	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Observational/walk-through data	90%	90%	90%
Working with an external evaluator	40%	20%	30%
Program quality assessment and other observational rubrics	40%	10%	25%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple data sources. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Higher and lower implementing centers were determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and youth experience survey data.

Program leaders at higher implementing centers mentioned how external evaluators are involved in the collection of programmatic data to monitor Texas ACE performance. Efforts by third-party evaluators

“When our evaluator does her evaluation, we go to the recommendations page . . . and we utilize those to determine what our next year’s goals will be. I take that [evaluation] information, I take information from our testing scores off that TAPR [Texas Academic Performance Report] . . . so, we take all of that information, and I feed that into my project plan.”

—Project Director

include providing recommendations, generally performing program reviews, collecting school leader surveys, or providing input based on Texas ACE interim reports. Please refer to Appendix B for additional tables of qualitative results related to interview and focus group data collected during the spring 2018 site visits. Data are disaggregated by the implementation level of the center and the school level (i.e., elementary and secondary school programs).

Summary and Recommendations

This chapter explored how KPIs were used to identify centers that demonstrated higher levels of program implementation and what these higher implementing centers are doing differently compared with other centers that did not receive that designation.

Based on KPI data, higher implementing centers appeared to be more successful in keeping students enrolled in Texas ACE during the 2016–17 programming period and in providing the types of experiences that have been shown to promote positive development in similar types of programs than lower implementing centers. Generally, there may be some utility in finding ways to both calculate the KPIs across the full complement of Texas ACE programs active during a given programming period and making the data more widely available to programs to enhance local evaluation and program improvement efforts. Particularly, it may be possible to add KPI-related reports to the set of reports available in the Tx21st.

Although the vast majority of all centers made addressing academic needs (100%) and preparing students for career and college readiness (90%) primary goals, higher implementing centers differed from other centers by emphasizing the need to invest additional effort into cultivating youth engagement, motivation, and interest in learning. For example, 90% of the higher implementing centers chose to focus on providing creative enrichment opportunities with infused academics for students, compared with only 60% of other centers. Higher implementing centers achieved this goal through methods such as offering a wide array of clubs (e.g., robotics, arts and crafts, book clubs) to be responsive to different student interests.

Another key attribute of higher implementing centers was setting a goal for increasing student interest in and comfort with learning. None of the lower implementing centers identified this as a goal. In addition, a larger percentage of higher implementing centers (60%) had providing a safe learning environment as a goal compared with lower implementing centers (30%). Chapter 4 examines in greater detail the linkage between key practices and student motivation and engagement in programming.

Higher implementing centers also displayed a more central focus on parental involvement and family engagement, particularly related to providing parents and adult family members with opportunities to participate in personally beneficial learning opportunities, such as ESL and HSE classes. Ninety percent of the higher implementing centers shared that facilitating parent involvement and family engagement was a central goal of their center, whereas only 60% of the lower implementing centers made this a central goal. Program staff at higher implementing centers cited numerous methods for involving families in Texas ACE activities, including (a) providing more opportunities for parents to provide feedback about the program; (b) providing opportunities to participate in programming to increase family literacy; and (c) offering classes, information-sharing events, and social events for parents and family members of Texas ACE students.

- Ninety percent of the higher implementing centers offered ESL classes to parents and family members compared with just 20% of the lower implementing centers. Interviewees at higher implementing centers shared that ESL classes helped create a stronger bond between parents and the school and improved wage-earning capacity by building English skills.
- Fifty percent of the higher implementing centers offered parents and family members HSE classes, but only 10% of other centers did so. HSE classes are typically offered through partnerships with community partners.

Advisory board members also played a more prominent role in providing general guidance and feedback (70% vs. 40%), operations (90% vs. 70%), planning and organization (60% vs. 40%), and programming (80% vs. 60%) at higher implementing centers compared with their peers at lower implementing centers:

- Forms of operational assistance provided by advisory boards noted at both higher and lower implementing centers included being involved in the review of program data (50% vs. 30%) and coordinating program spending (50% vs. 20%). Twenty percent of the higher implementing center advisory boards also provided support by discussing alignment of programming with the regular school day.
- At higher implementing centers, advisory board members tended to be more involved in planning and organization by building community awareness of Texas ACE (60%) than their lower implementing counterparts at other centers (30%).
- Advisory boards at higher implementing centers provided more guidance and feedback on programming, resources, and/or policies (70% vs. 60%) and reviewing and monitoring program goals and status (60% vs. 10%) compared with advisory boards in lower implementing centers.

Finally, higher implementing centers were more apt to use various forms of data to support program improvement efforts, including findings from local evaluation efforts. When program leaders were asked to share what they saw as features of a high-quality Texas ACE program, leaders at 80% of the higher implementing centers discussed how the periodic review of program data (e.g., program evaluation data, observational data collected from walk-throughs of afterschool sessions) was a key element of high-quality afterschool programs. Only 50% of the leaders at lower implementing centers shared that this is a feature of high-quality programs. These leaders focused more on effective communication between staff as a high-quality feature.

In addition, although 90% of the centers across both implementation levels used observational and walk-through data to monitor performance, twice as many higher implementing centers used external evaluators (40% vs. 20%), and higher implementing centers were more inclined to use research-based program quality assessments or observational rubrics (40% vs. 10%) than lower implementing centers.

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Chapter 4. Youth Experiences in Programming

Objective 3

- To what extent are students participating in Texas ACE programs having experiences that are associated with positive youth development?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to their motivation to attend programming?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to measures of program quality?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to how students report benefitting from participation in programming?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the experiences of students participating in Texas ACE based on data obtained from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys administered in spring 2018. The youth experience survey was administered to students in Grades 4–12 enrolled in Texas ACE at 54 Cycle 9 centers. Questions asked on the youth experience survey focused on students' motivation to attend Texas ACE programming, the degree to which students perceived there to be opportunities to experience a sense of agency through voice and choice, and students' perceptions of how positive their relationships were with program activity leaders and other youth attending the center. Collectively, these types of experiences have been shown to be related to youth developing a sense of agency, a positive self-concept and sense of self-efficacy, confidence, and feelings of belonging and mattering that have ramifications for how they relate to school more broadly and other learning environments outside the program (Larson & Angus, 2011; Larson & Dawes, 2015; Larson, McGovern, & Orson, 2019; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018).

The end-of-session surveys were administered in the 20 higher and lower implementing centers in the site visit sample. (The survey is in Appendix I.) The end-of-session survey differed from the youth experience survey in two important ways. First, the end-of-session survey was administered at the end of a given day of programming to students in Grades 4–12 and asked about what participating students experienced in the Texas ACE program on that specific day. This approach was designed to obtain relatively immediate reactions from students about the Texas ACE programming in which they had just participated. A key advantage of this approach was that students reported on recent events and experiences, thereby enhancing the quality and authenticity of their responses given less difficulty with recall. Surveys were administered at the end of Texas ACE programming during 2 days in a given week. This process resulted in the collection of 967 surveys or an average of 48 surveys per center.

The survey asked students about a different set of experiences than what was asked on the youth experience survey. More specifically, questions on the end-of-session survey focused on five areas of youth experience:

1. **Engagement**—Engagement refers to active participation, investment, and value in learning (Naftzger, Schmidt, Beymer, Rosenberg, & Shumow, 2020). Engagement is generally a composite variable based on a set of discrete experiences happening in-the-moment for participating students. Similar studies oriented at measuring in-the-moment expressions of engagement base their conceptualization of this construct on the concept of *flow* as articulated by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Flow refers to the state when interest, concentration, and enjoyment occur simultaneously (Naftzger et al., 2018; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007; Shumow & Schmidt, 2014). The end-of-session survey measured engagement with four items: (a) *Were today's activities interesting?* (b) *Did you enjoy today's activities?* (c) *Did you have to concentrate to do today's activities?* and (d) *Do you feel you worked hard during today's activities?* This set of items was used in other studies related to engagement in out-of-school time programs (see Naftzger et al., 2018, for an example).

2. **Relevance**—Relevance occurs when students perceive an activity as having meaning, importance, or utility beyond the learning activity they are currently engaged in. Promoting relevance has been shown to be one of the best strategies for triggering and sustaining student interest and engagement in learning environments (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002). On the end-of-session survey, relevance was defined by combining responses from the following three items asked on the survey: (a) *Were today's activities important to you?* (b) *Were today's activities important to your future goals?* and (c) *Could you see yourself using what you were learning in today's activities outside this program?*
3. **Challenge**—Based on Emergent Motivation Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000), students are most apt to experience a state of engagement when there is a relative balance between the difficulty of a task and their ability in an area where they feel generally competent, putting them in a position where there is a need to focus and concentrate to undertake the task in question. When this balance is achieved, students will experience an appropriate level of challenge in the activity they are undertaking. The end-of-session survey measured challenge by asking the following question: *How challenging were today's activities?*
4. **Positive Affect**—Emotions influence student learning in a variety of ways, including how students process, store, and retrieve information. They also support student motivation to participate in a given learning task or activity given the enjoyment and joy they receive from doing so (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). On the end-of-session survey, positive affect was defined by combining responses from the following two survey items: (a) *How happy were you feeling in the program today?* and (b) *How excited were you feeling in the program today?*
5. **Learned Something**—Students participating in afterschool programs also have the opportunity to learn new content and develop and practice new skills. Participation in high-quality afterschool programming in particular has been shown to provide students with the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills that will help them better understand what they excel at, what they value, and what they would like to do more of or learn more about (Larson & Dawes, 2015; Shumow & Schmidt, 2014). This process also can be linked to their developing interests, which is a critical component of student growth and development linked to numerous motivational elements related to learning, including goal-directed behavior, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and achievement value (Renninger & Hidi, 2011). Finally, the successes that youth have while participating in skill-building activities can also support the development of a positive self-concept and enhance motivation to participate in additional learning opportunities (Larson et al., 2019). The end-of-session survey measured learning something by asking the following question: *Do you feel like you learned something or got better at something today?*

The constructs measured on both the youth experience and end-of-session surveys are important to understanding how students potentially benefit from their participation in Texas ACE programs. It also was expected that the youth experience-related constructs measured by the surveys would be associated with the observed level of program quality. A key goal of this chapter is to explore these relationships, summarizing analyses on the following four questions:

- To what extent are students participating in Texas ACE programs having experiences that are associated with positive youth development?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to their motivation to attend programming?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to measures of program quality?
- How are students' experiences in Texas ACE programs related to how students report benefitting from participation in programming?

Key Experiences Related to Positive Youth Development

Youth participating in high-quality afterschool programs can experience a sense of belonging and mattering through positive and supportive relationships, both with activity leaders and their peers in the program (Akiva, Cortina, Eccles, & Smith, 2013; Auger, Pierce, & Vandell, 2013; Durlak & Weissberg,

2007; Kauh, 2011; Larson & Dawes, 2015; Miller, 2007; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Traill, Brohawn, & Caruso, 2013). These experiences are important because youth who have positive relationships and meaningful friendships demonstrate better emotional well-being, prosocial behaviors, and better academic performance than youth lacking such relationships (Wentzel, Donlan, & Morrison, 2012).

The youth experience survey contained items that were designed to assess the degree to which youth had positive perceptions of both the adult activity leaders providing programming and other youth attending the center. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which statements expressing a positive perception of activity leaders (eight items) and other youth enrolled in the program (five items) were true. The questions appearing on these scales are in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1. Survey Items Making Up the Perceptions of Activity Leaders Scale

Now think about the adults in this afterschool program. How true are these statements for you? In this program, there is an adult here . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is interested in what I think about things?• Who I can talk to if I am upset?• Who helps me when I have a problem?• Who I enjoy being around?• Who has helped me find a special interest or talent (something I'm good at)?• Who asks me about my life and goals?• Who helps me do better in school?• Who I will miss when the program is over?

Table 4.2. Survey Items Making Up the Perceptions of Other Youth Scale

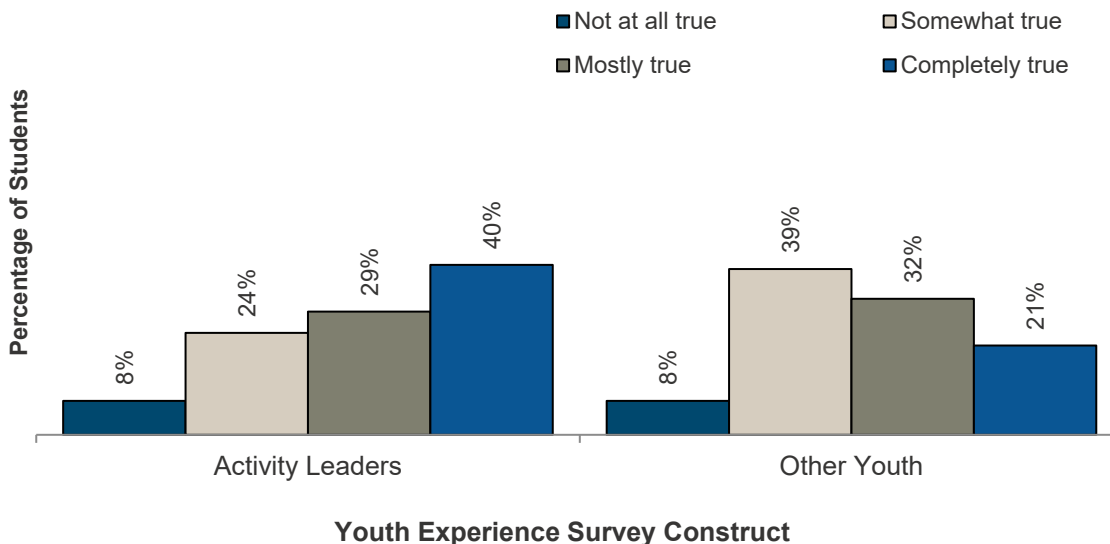
Now think about the kids in this afterschool program. How true are these statements for you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kids here are friendly with each other.• Kids here treat each other with respect.• Kids here listen to what the teachers tell them to do.• Kids here don't tease or bully others.• Kids here support and help one another.

Responses to all items for a given scale were combined into one overall scale score for each respondent using Rasch analysis techniques. (See Appendix C for how scale scores were created and Appendix I for the items appearing on the survey.) The approach used to create the overall scale score for each scale also made it possible to identify how many respondents fell within each response option category associated with the scale—*not at all true*, *somewhat true*, *mostly true*, or *completely true*. Generally, the results associated with student perception of activity leaders were more positive than results related to the perceptions of other youth in the program scale, as shown in Figure 4.1.

For example, 69% of the respondents found the positive descriptions about staff represented by the survey items to be completely true or mostly true. This finding was most commonly the case in relation to the following two items: (a) In this program, there is an adult here who I enjoy being around (75% responding completely true or mostly true) and (b) In this program, there is an adult here who helps me when I have a problem (72% responding completely true or mostly true). The item with the lowest percentage of youth responding completely true or mostly true was as follows: In this program, there is an

adult here who is interested in what I think about things (53% responding completely true or mostly true). Responses for all items are in Table D4.1 in Appendix D.

Figure 4.1. Perceptions of Activity Leaders and Other Youth Scales: Percentage of Students by Response Category



Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,205$ responses to eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scale and $N = 2,174$ responses to five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale.

However, student perceptions of other youth in the program were not quite as positive. As shown in Figure 4.1, slightly more than one half of the respondents fell into the completely true or mostly true portion of the scale. However, among the four response options associated with the scale, respondents most commonly fell in the somewhat true portion of the scale. In terms of individual items, students were most positive about the following two items: (a) Kids here support and help one another (56% responding completely true or mostly true), and (b) Kids here are friendly with each other (55% responding completely true or mostly true). The item students were least apt to find true was as follows: Kids here don't tease or bully others, with the majority of respondents finding this only somewhat true (32%) or not at all true (21%). This last finding may be of some concern because the percentage of youth responding not at all true to this last question is substantively higher than what has been observed in other samples where the evaluation team employed this scale. Responses for all items are in Table D4.2 in Appendix D.

The opportunities for agency scale explored the degree to which participating students reported having the opportunity to experience a sense of agency by allowing choice and autonomy in program offerings. As noted by Larson and Dawes (2015), this sense of agency is particularly important starting in early adolescence, enabling youth to use emerging cognitive skills, such as higher order reasoning and greater executive control of their own thought processes to more effectively solve problems and take the steps needed to achieve goals they are pursuing. This provides youth with feedback about what they can accomplish and their ability to solve problems and overcome challenges, enhancing an underlying sense of self-efficacy and competence.

The seven items making up the scale asked how often students had the opportunity to engage in various types of decision making related to the program (see Table 4.3). Rasch analysis techniques were again used to combine items on the scale into one overall scale score for each respondent. When responding to questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, respondents selected from one of four response

options—*never, rarely, sometimes, or often*. Rasch analysis techniques allowed for the identification of how many respondents fell within each response option category.

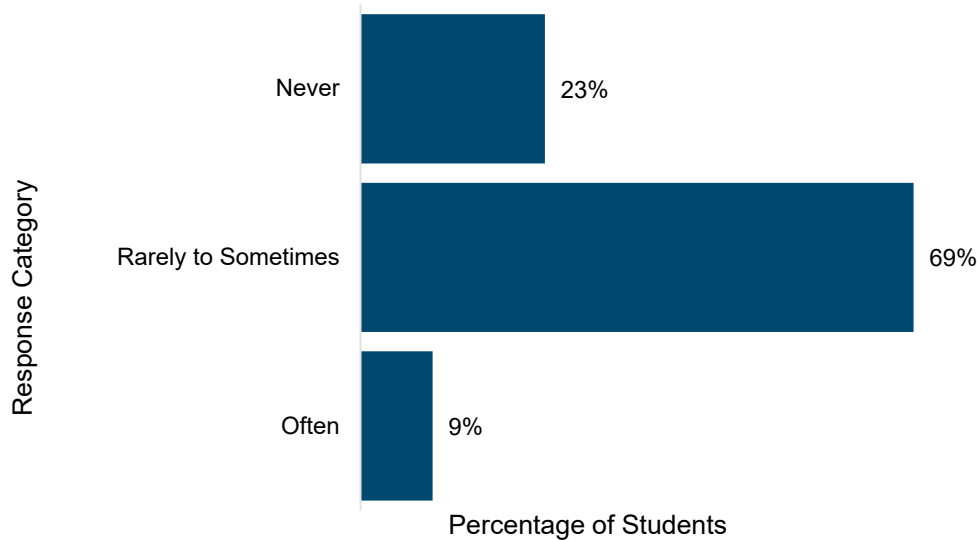
Table 4.3. Survey Items Making Up the Opportunities for Agency Scale

When you are at this program, how often . . .
• Do you get to choose how you spend your time?
• Do you get to suggest your own ideas for new activities?
• Do you get to choose which activities you do?
• Do you get to help plan activities for the program?
• Do you get the chance to lead an activity?
• Do you get to be in charge of doing something to help the program?
• Do you get to help make decisions or rules for the program?

Figure 4.2 summarizes the percentage of responses for the opportunities for agency scale. Note that the rarely and sometimes portions of the scale were combined because respondents appeared to have a difficult time distinguishing between these two options. As a result of collapsing these two categories into one, 69% of the respondents fell within the combined rarely to sometimes portion of the scale, indicating that these types of opportunities were not a common part of what they experienced in the program. Another 23% of the respondents indicated that these types of opportunities were never afforded as part of the program, leaving 9% of the respondents with a scale score that placed them in the often range of the scale.

When examining responses to individual items, students reported most frequently being able to choose which activities to do (31% responding having this option often), whereas youth were least apt to report having the opportunity to help make decisions or rules for the program (51% indicating never having this opportunity). Responses for all items are in Table D4.3 in Appendix D.

Figure 4.2. Opportunities for Agency Scale: Percentage of Students by Response Category

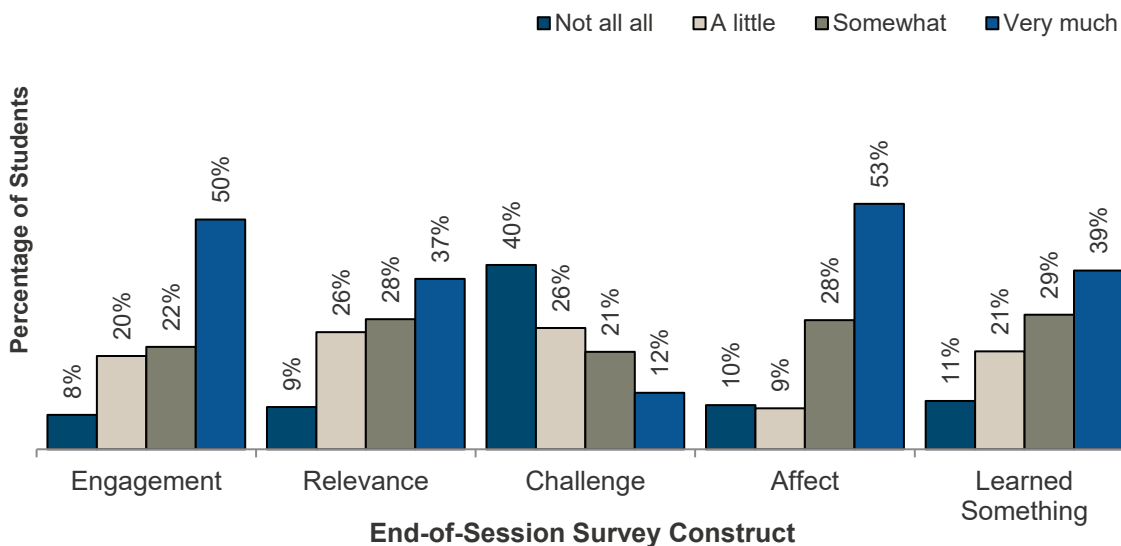


Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,204$ responses to seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale.

In a similar fashion, the extent to which students reported having important positive experiences while participating in Texas ACE on the day they completed the end-of-session survey also were summarized. In Figure 4.3, the percentage of scores associated with a given type of experience (i.e., engagement, relevance, challenge, positive affect, and expression of learning something or getting better at something) are outlined across all four response options used on the end-of-session survey—*not at all*, *a little*, *somewhat*, and *very much*. Key findings include the following:

- Youth demonstrated the most positive responses to questions related to positive affect, with 53% of the students having scores that put them in the very much category. In this sense, most students indicated being very happy and excited during the Texas ACE programming they participated in on the day in question.
- Results for engagement were similar, with 50% of the youth indicating being very much engaged in programming. Again, engagement here is a composite variable consisting of students being interested in what they’re doing, enjoying it, having to concentrate, and expressing having worked hard while undertaking program activities.
- Students largely did not feel very challenged by program activities, with 40% of the respondents providing responses of not at all in terms of experiencing challenge while participating in program activities. This common finding occurred when the evaluation team used this survey in other 21st CCLC-related settings.
- Responses were more varied in terms of relevance or expressed learning or getting better at something, although most responses fell in either the somewhat or very much response category for these two constructs.

Figure 4.3. Summary of Responses to Key Constructs From the End-of-Session Survey: Percentage of Students by Response Category



Source. End-of-session surveys administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 966$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, and $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale.

Next, to explore a possible relationship between the areas measured on the youth experience survey (i.e., opportunities for agency and perceptions of activity leaders and other youth in the program) and the student responses to the areas assessed on the end-of-session survey (i.e., engagement, relevance, challenge, affect, and learned something), the following steps were taken:

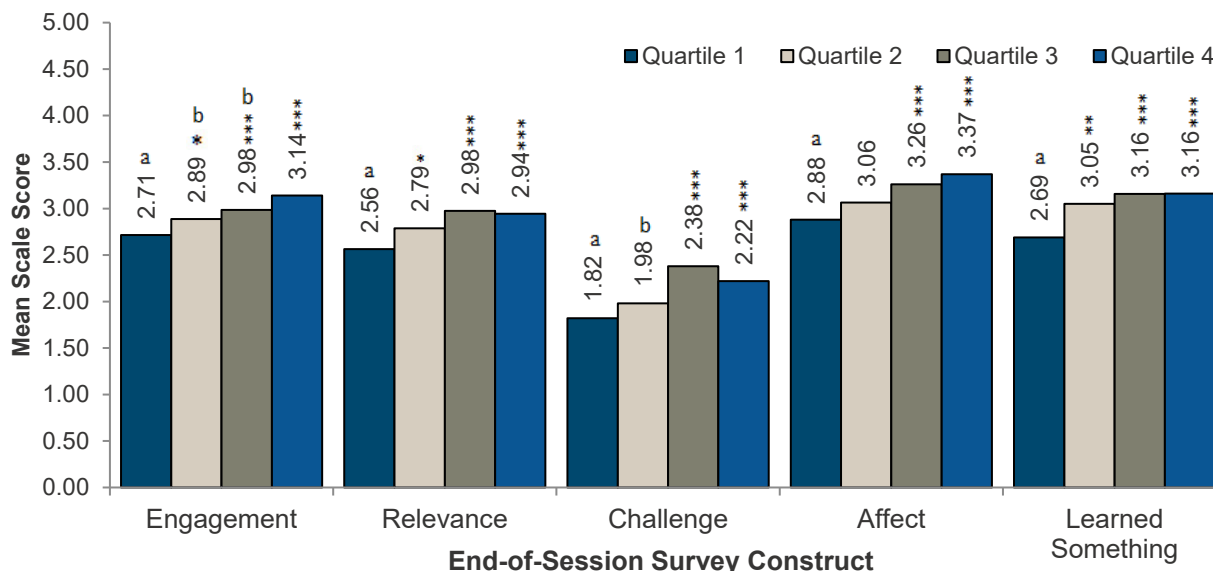
- First, an average scale score for each center represented in the youth experience survey sample on all three primary constructs measured on the survey was calculated.
- Then the mean scores were used to place centers into quartiles based on their level of performance on a given scale, with centers in Quartile 1 demonstrating the lowest level of performance and centers in Quartile 4 demonstrating the highest.
- A series of analysis of variance (ANOVAs) was then run to assess if scale means calculated from the end-of-session surveys were related to the center's performance on the youth experience survey scales examined.

The hypothesis was that scores on the end-of-session scales would increase across the quartiles because students would report more positive experiences in the areas measured on the end-of-session survey when students attending their center reported more opportunities for agency and more positive perceptions of activity leaders and other students in the program. In other words, student responses on the end-of-session survey should be more positive when they attended centers placed in Quartiles 3 and 4, indicating provision of more opportunities for agency and more positive perceptions of activity leaders and other students.

As shown in Figures 4.4 and 4.5, support for this hypothesis was most consistently found when examining scales related to student perceptions of program activity leaders and other youth in the program. For example, in Figure 4.4, the mean scores on each end-of-session survey construct generally increased as youth attending those centers reported better relationships with their activity leaders. This was particularly the case with engagement and affect. Youth attending centers in the two highest quartiles demonstrated significantly higher mean scores on each end-of-session survey construct relative to youth attending centers in the bottom quartile.¹⁹ In this sense, youth attending centers in the highest two quartiles demonstrated more engagement, feelings of relevance, challenge, positive affect, and feelings of having learned something or gotten better at something than students in centers where scores were in the bottom quartile in terms of their perceptions of program activity leaders.

¹⁹ In this report, use of the word *significant* refers to statistical significance when the null hypothesis (i.e., the chance explanation) can be rejected that no relationship exists between variables, and any observed relationship is only a function of chance (Ary et al., 2010). The level of significance, or the probability that a Type I error (i.e., rejecting a true null hypothesis) will occur, used in this report is typically reported at the .05 and .01 levels.

Figure 4.4. Mean Scores for End-of-Session Survey Constructs by Having Positive Relationships With Activity Leaders Quartile

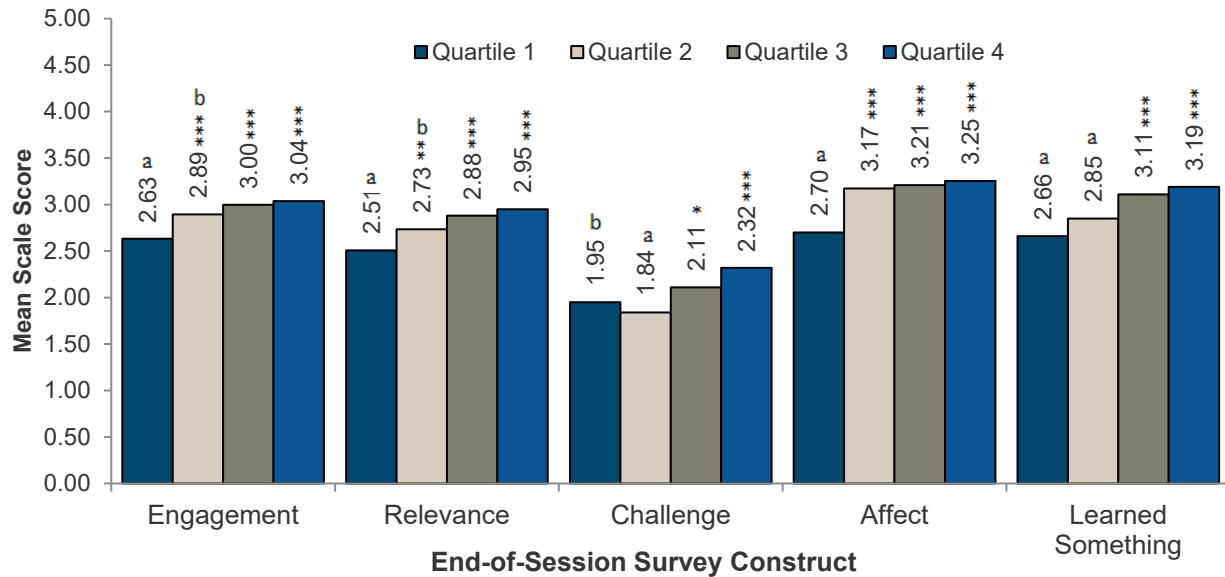


Source. End-of-session and youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 966$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scale.

Note. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$ and indicate that the mean score for the quartile was significantly higher than quartiles labels with an “a” value. A value of “b” indicates that the quartile had a mean score that was only significantly lower than the quartile with the highest mean score with a $p < .05$.

Similar results were found in Figure 4.5 when examining the relationship between student perceptions of other youth in the program and the end-of-session survey constructs. Generally, mean scores on each end-of-session survey construct increased as youth attending those centers reported better relationships with other youth in the program. There were some constructs where the difference was especially pronounced between youth attending centers in the lowest quartile relative to youth associated with centers in the remaining quartiles (see cases where Quartile 1 has a data label of a and the remaining quartiles have asterisks to signify the mean score is significantly higher than the lowest quartile). This was particularly true in relation to engagement, relevance, and affect, where students attending centers in the lowest quartile with the least positive relationships with other youth in the program demonstrating significantly lower means on these constructs than students attending centers in Quartiles 2–4, where students reported better relationships with other students in the program.

Figure 4.5. Mean Scores for End-of-Session Survey Constructs by Having Positive Relationships With Other Youth in the Program Quartile

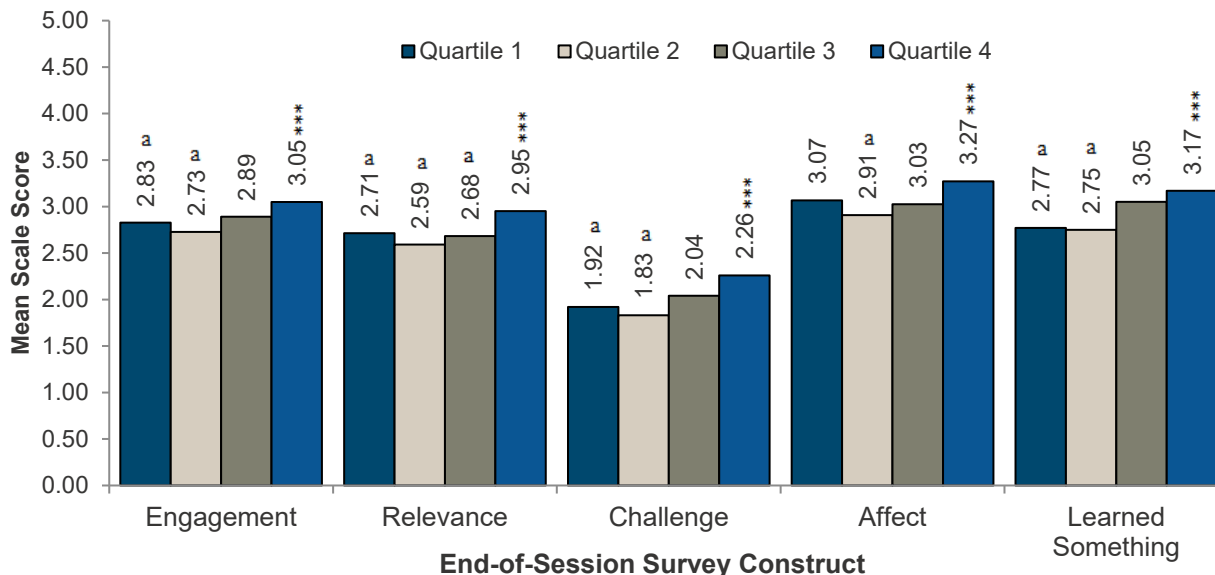


Source. End-of-session and youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 966$ responses to four questions asked on the engagement and three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale.

Note. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$ and indicate that the mean score for the quartile was significantly higher than quartiles labels with an “a” value. A value of “b” indicates that the quartile had a mean score that was only significantly lower than the quartile with the highest mean score with a $p < .05$, which in this figure is Quartile 4 for each construct.

In terms of opportunities for agency as shown in Figure 4.6, youth attending centers in the highest quartile demonstrated significantly higher mean scores on each end-of-session survey construct (as indicated by the asterisks) relative to at least some of the lower three quartiles (specified by data labels of a). This finding was most consistent in relation to students feeling that the programming they were participating in was relevant, where students attending centers in Quartile 4 demonstrated significantly higher scores on the relevance scale than students attending centers in Quartiles 1–3. Students attending centers in the highest quartile with the most frequent agency opportunities reported more engagement, feelings of relevance, challenge, positive affect, and feelings of having learned something or gotten better at something.

Figure 4.6. Mean Scores for End-of-Session Survey Constructs by Having Opportunities to Experience a Sense of Agency Quartile



Source. End-of-session and youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 966$ responses to four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale.

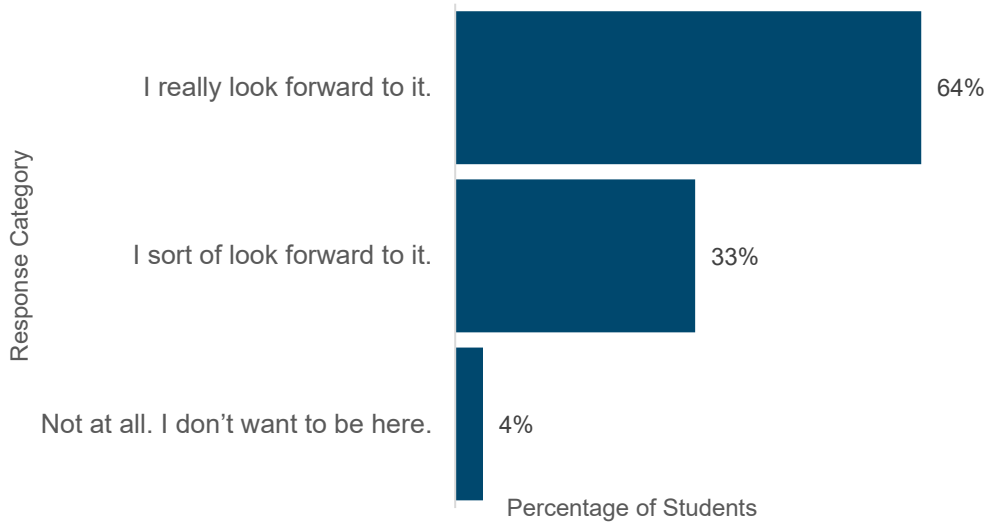
Note. $***p < .001$ and indicate that the mean score for the quartile was significantly higher than quartiles labels with an “a” value.

These findings show that centers that provided more opportunities to experience a sense of agency and supported positive relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program had youth who perceived more engagement, feelings of relevance, challenge, positive affect, and feelings of having learned something or gotten better at something as a result of the programming in which they participated. As outlined in the introduction to this section, having these experiences are important for supporting the types of outcomes that are expected to be obtained through student participation in high-quality afterschool programs.

Student Motivation to Attend

Another marker of how well a given Texas ACE program is implemented is based on the extent to which students are motivated to attend programming. On the youth experience survey, students were asked the following question: *How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?* As shown in Figure 4.7, 64% of the respondents indicated that they really look forward to it, and a third of students completing the survey indicated that they sort of look forward to it. Just 4% of the respondents indicated that they did not look forward to it at all and did not want to be there.

Figure 4.7. Student Motivation to Attend the Program



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,158$ responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?”

Note. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

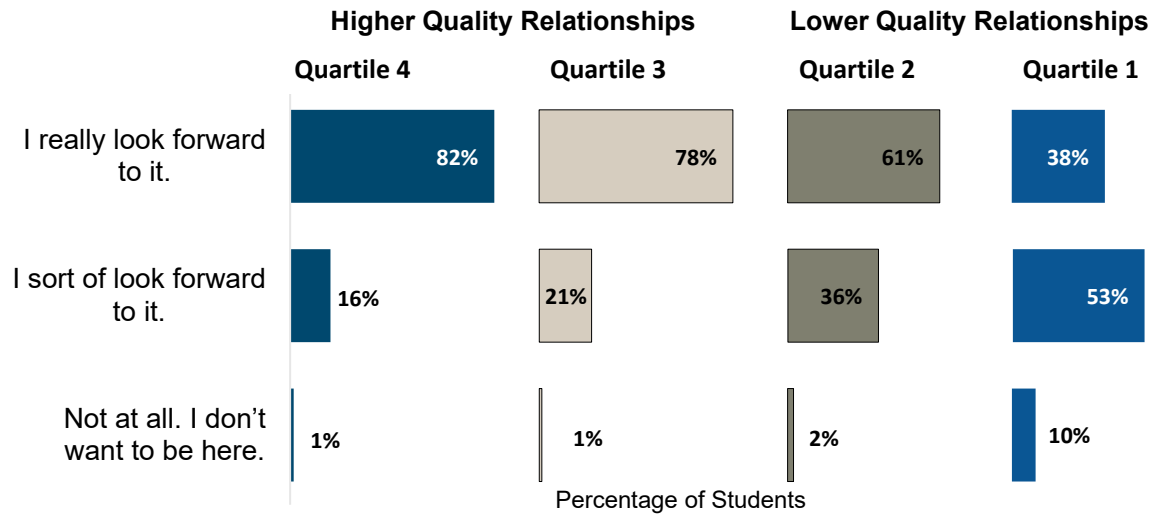
To explore whether constructs measured on the youth experience and end-of-session surveys would be positively related to how much students looked forward to attending their Texas ACE program, the following steps were taken:

- Student respondents on the youth experience survey were placed into quartiles based on their scores on scales related to opportunities for agency and perceptions of activity leaders and other youth in the program. This created four groups of students for each of the three youth experience survey scales, with Quartile 1 demonstrating the lowest average score and Quartile 4 demonstrating the highest average score on a given scale.
- A series of crosstabs was then run with chi-square statistics to assess the statistical significance of differences between students in each quartile and how much they looked forward to attending the program.

The hypothesis was that students would report looking forward to attending the program more when they indicated having more opportunities for agency and more positive relationships with activity leaders and other students attending the program.

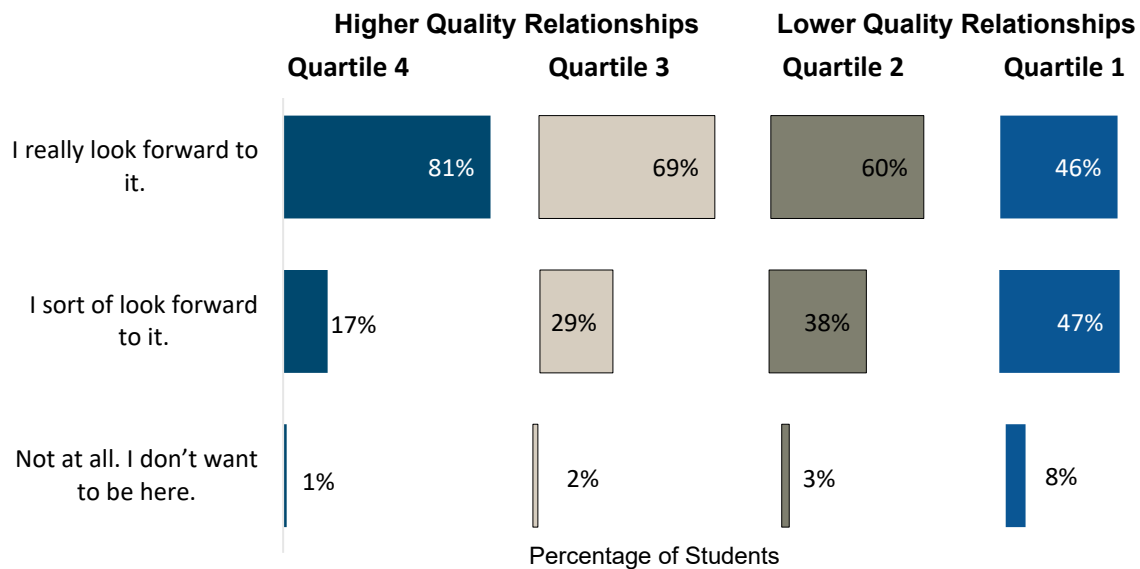
Results from these analyses are in Figures 4.8–4.10. Respondents to the youth experience survey were more likely to report really looking forward to attending the program the more they reported having a positive relationship with the program’s activity leaders, as shown in Figure 4.8. Here, 82% of the students falling in Quartile 4 (which includes the most positive perceptions of program activity leaders) indicated really looking forward to attending Texas ACE programming. In contrast, 38% of the students falling in Quartile 1 (demonstrating the least positive perceptions of program activity leaders) reported really looking forward to attending programming. Similar results were observed in relation to both the perceptions of other youth in the program and opportunities for agency scales, as shown in Figures 4.9 and 4.10.

Figure 4.8. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on Reported Relationships With Activity Leaders in the Program



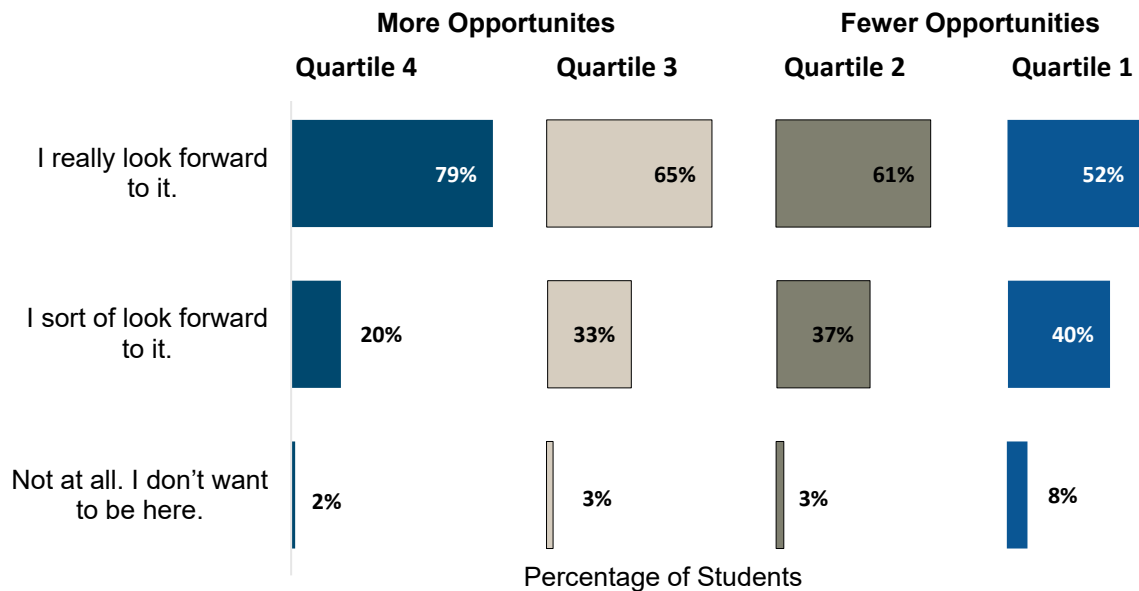
Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,158$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scale.
Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on scale scores calculated from the relationship with activity leaders scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Figure 4.9. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on Reported Relationships With Other Youth in the Program



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,128$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth in the program scale.
Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on scale scores calculated from the relationship with other youth in the program scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Figure 4.10. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on Opportunities Provided to Experience a Sense of Agency



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,157$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale.

Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the opportunities for youth agency scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

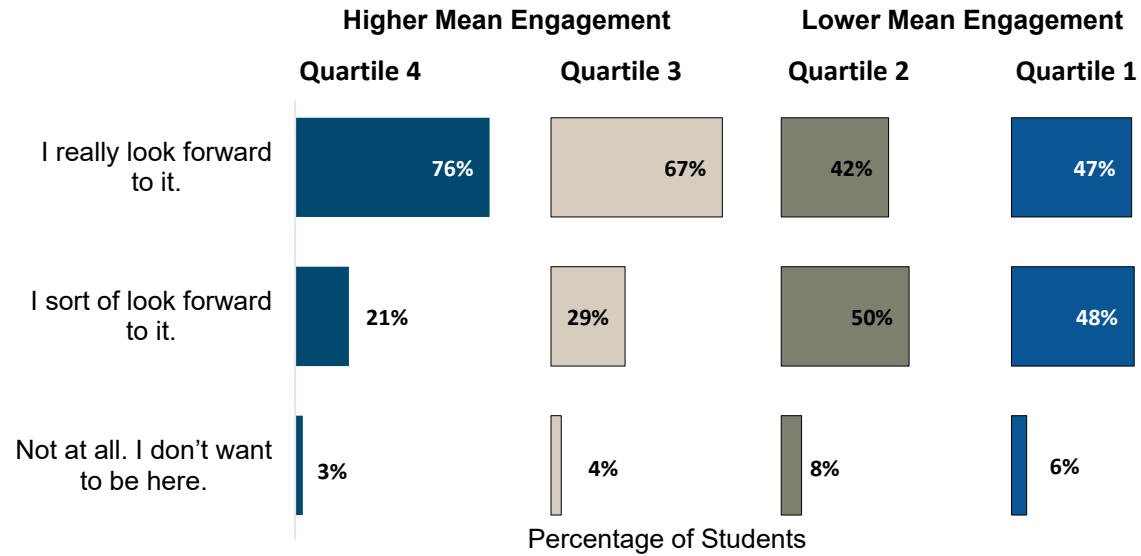
Steps also were taken to place mean scale scores for the end-of-session survey constructs based on students completing the survey for a given center into quartiles to see how these constructs related to students’ motivation to attend programming; however, in this case, centers were grouped into quartiles instead of students based on the average score for a given construct among students taking the end-of-session survey in that center.²⁰ Again, for this set of analyses, a series of crosstabs was run with chi-square statistics to assess the significance of differences between centers in each quartile and how students attending those centers indicated how much they looked forward to attending the program. Centers in Quartile 4 contained students reporting the most positive experience in programming, whereas students in centers in Quartile 1 reported the least positive experience. The hypothesis was that students would reporting looking forward to attending the program more when they indicated having more positive experiences in programming (e.g., being more engaged, experiencing greater relevance, more challenge, greater positive affect, and a greater sense that they were learning something new or getting better at something).

As shown in Figures 4.11–4.15, youth were more likely to indicate really looking forward to attending the program in centers where students experienced more engagement, relevance, challenge, positive affect, and a sense that they were learning or getting better at something. This was particularly the case in relation to student perceptions of the relevance of what they were doing while participating in Texas ACE. As shown in Figure 4.12, 81% of the students attending centers in Quartile 4 reported really looking forward to attending programming, whereas just 32% of the students attending centers in Quartile 1 reported feeling this way about their ACE program. As noted previously, promoting relevance has been

²⁰ This was done because the youth experience and end-of-session surveys were both anonymous. As a result, it was not possible to link results from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys at the student level.

shown to be one of the best strategies for triggering and sustaining student interest and engagement in learning environments (Assor et al., 2002).

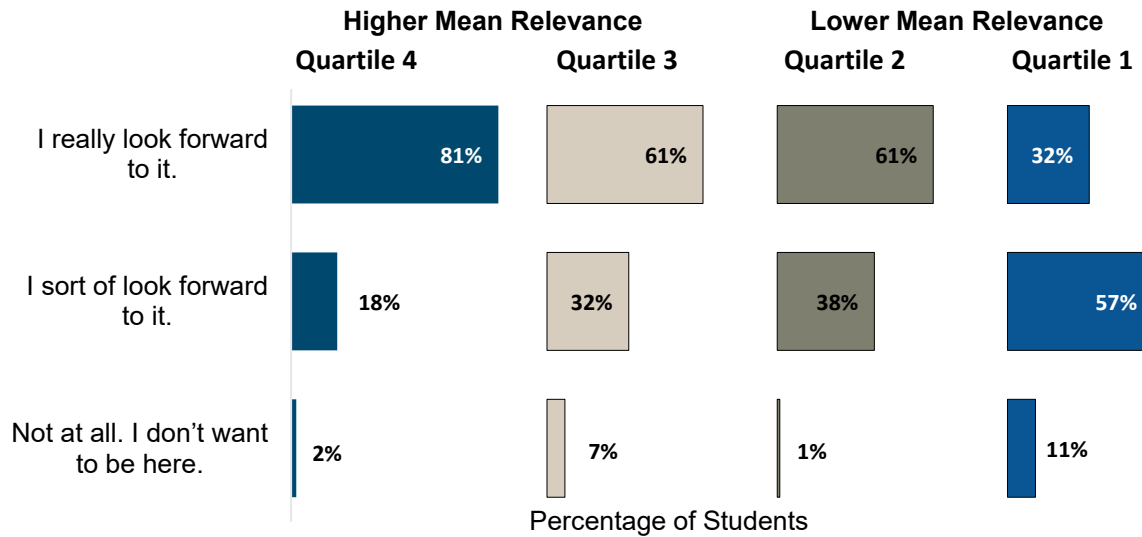
Figure 4.11. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on the Degree to Which They Experienced Engagement



Source. Youth experience and end-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 902$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the four questions asked on the engagement scale.

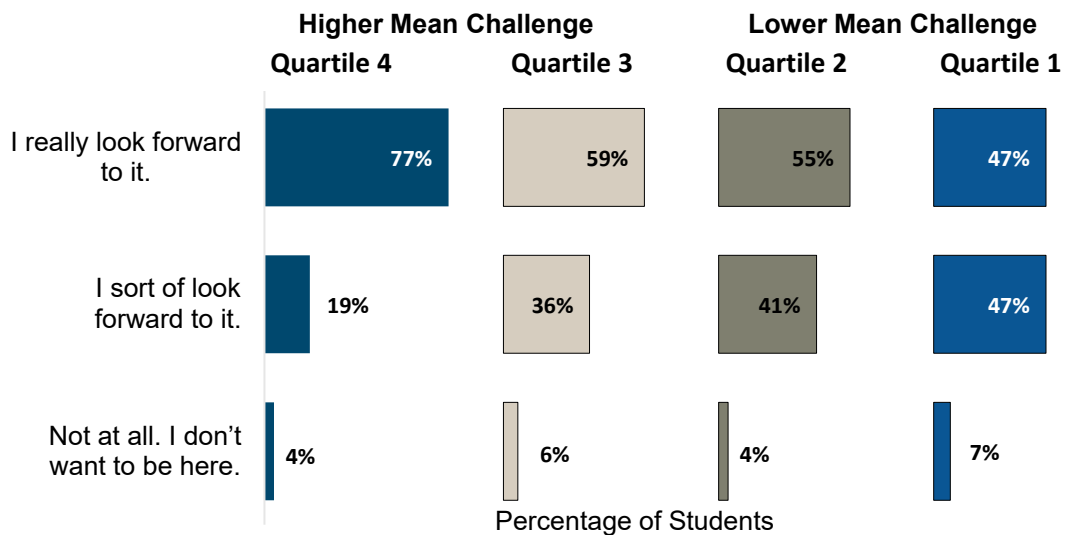
Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the engagement scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Figure 4.12. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on the Degree to Which They Experienced Relevance



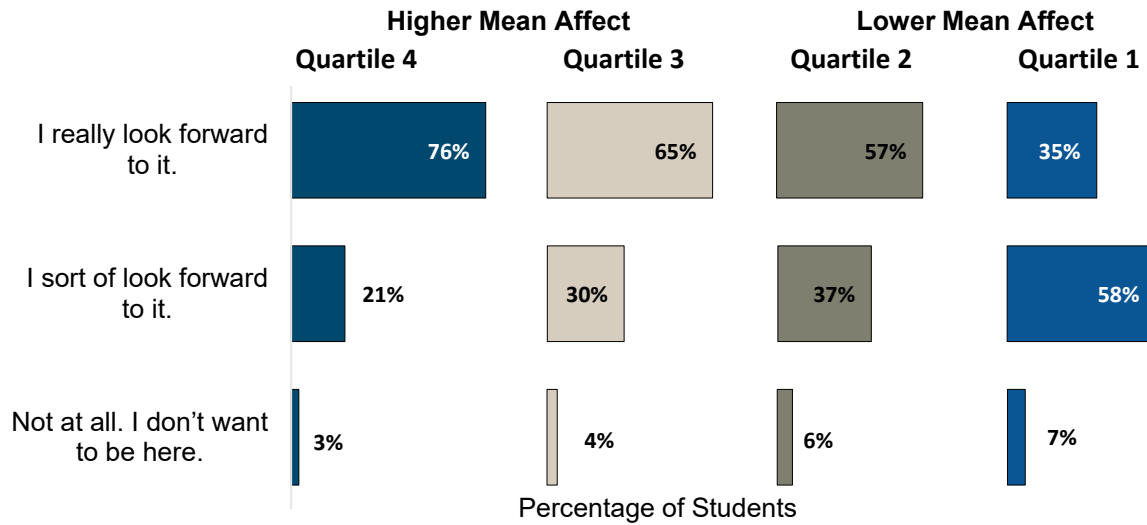
Source. Youth experience and end-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 902$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the three questions asked on the relevance scale.
Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the relevance scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Figure 4.13. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on the Degree to Which They Experienced Challenge



Source. Youth experience and end-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 902$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the one question asked on the challenge scale.
Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the challenge scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

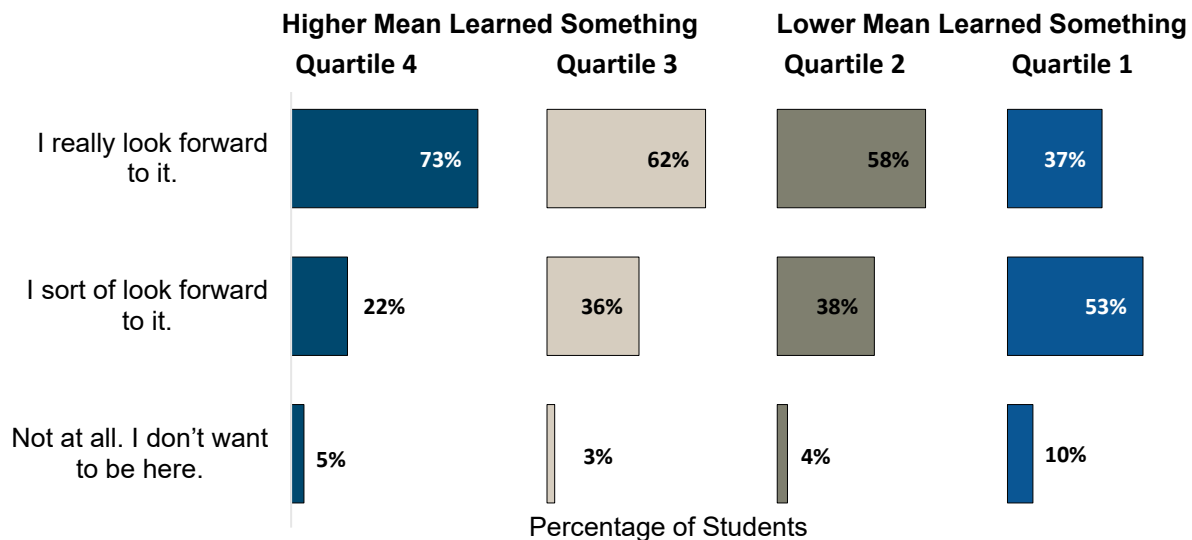
Figure 4.14. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on the Degree to Which They Experienced Positive Affect



Source. Youth experience and end-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 902$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the two questions asked on the positive affect scale.

Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the positive affect scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Figure 4.15. Degree to Which Youth Look Forward to Coming to the Program Based on the Degree to Which They Experienced a Sense of Learning or Getting Better at Something



Source. Youth experience and end-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 902$ cases with responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?” and with scale scores related to the one question asked on the learned something scale.

Note. Differences across youth quartiles based on their scale score on the learned something scale were significant with $p < .001$. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest average score on a scale, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest average score.

Keeping students motivated to attend Texas ACE programming is an important aspect of program operation given past evaluations in Texas and other states that have demonstrated a relationship between higher levels of program attendance and positive student outcomes (Naftzger et al., 2018). The results highlighted in this section of the chapter suggest a connection between key youth experiences in programming and the likelihood that students will report motivation to attend Texas ACE programming. The next section of this chapter explores whether a relationship exists between practices observed at centers (during site visits) and the types of experiences related to student motivation to attend (collected from both surveys).

Data on Observed Quality

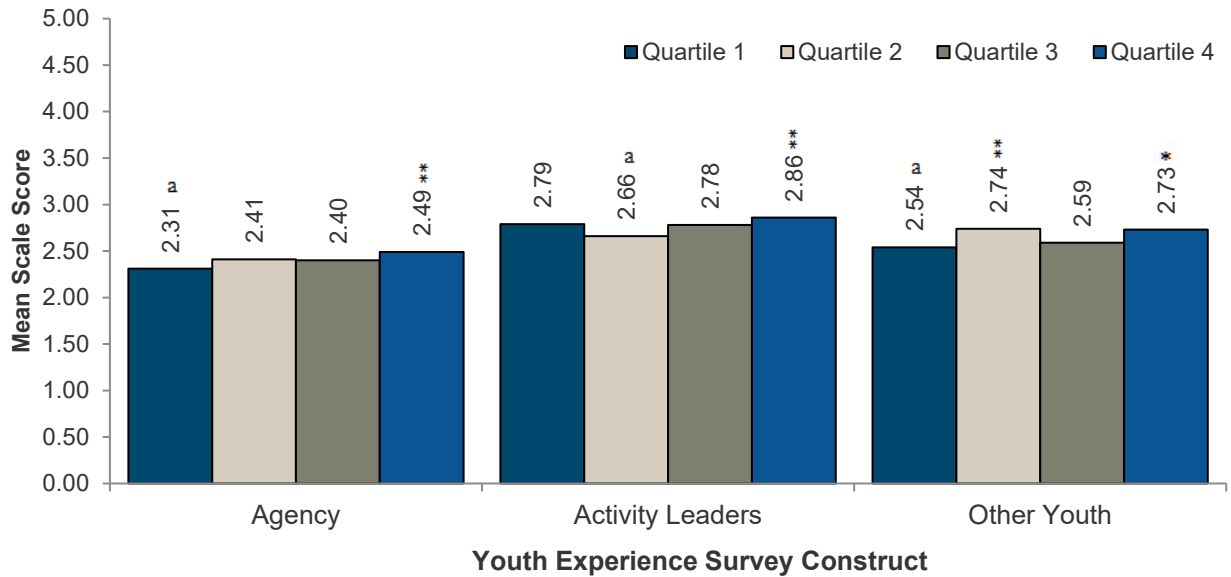
Evidence suggests that afterschool programs are more likely to have an impact if they are high quality (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Naftzger, Hallberg, & Yang, 2014). Generally, there are two categories of quality: process quality and content-specific practices. Process quality refers to the adoption of practices and approaches to service delivery that result in the creation of a developmentally appropriate setting for students, in which participants feel safe and supported and are afforded opportunities to form meaningful relationships, experience belonging, and actively participate in their own learning and development. These practices are universal because they apply to any type of youth programming, regardless of content, approach, or setting.

The most common mechanism for supporting the development and measurement of process quality is the utilization of a validated observation tool to assess the extent to which supports and opportunities are available for participating students, resulting in the creation of learning environments characterized by high process quality. Various versions of the program quality assessment (PQA) are the most commonly used observation tools in the field to support the capacity of staff to design and deliver afterschool and summer learning activities characterized by high process quality (Naftzger, Devaney, & Newman, 2015).

YPQA and School-Age Program Quality Assessment data also were collected during the site visits conducted in spring 2018. Approximately four activities were observed per center across two programming days. These data were used to create quality scores for each activity, which were then averaged to create a center-level quality score. This mean center score was then used to place centers into quartiles, with those centers in the lowest quartile (Quartile 1) demonstrating the lowest mean level of quality and those in the fourth quartile demonstrating the highest. These data were then compared with mean scores from the youth experiences and end-of-session surveys, as shown in Figures 4.16 and 4.17, using ANOVAs to assess if differences across the quality quartiles were significant. The hypothesis was that students attending centers with higher PQA scores would be more apt to report having opportunities to experience a sense of agency and maintaining positive perceptions of activity leaders and other youth (Figure 4.16) and more positive experiences in programming as measured by the end-of-session survey (Figure 4.17).

In Figure 4.16, centers with the highest PQA scores (placed in Quartile 4) had significantly higher scores on each youth experience survey construct relative to centers in Quartile 1 with the lowest mean PQA score for a given scale (signified by a data label of *a* in Figure 4.16). Centers with the highest PQA quality scores potentially afforded more opportunities to experience a sense of agency and were characterized by better relationships between activity leaders and youth and youth and their peers in the program relative to those centers with lowest PQA scores.

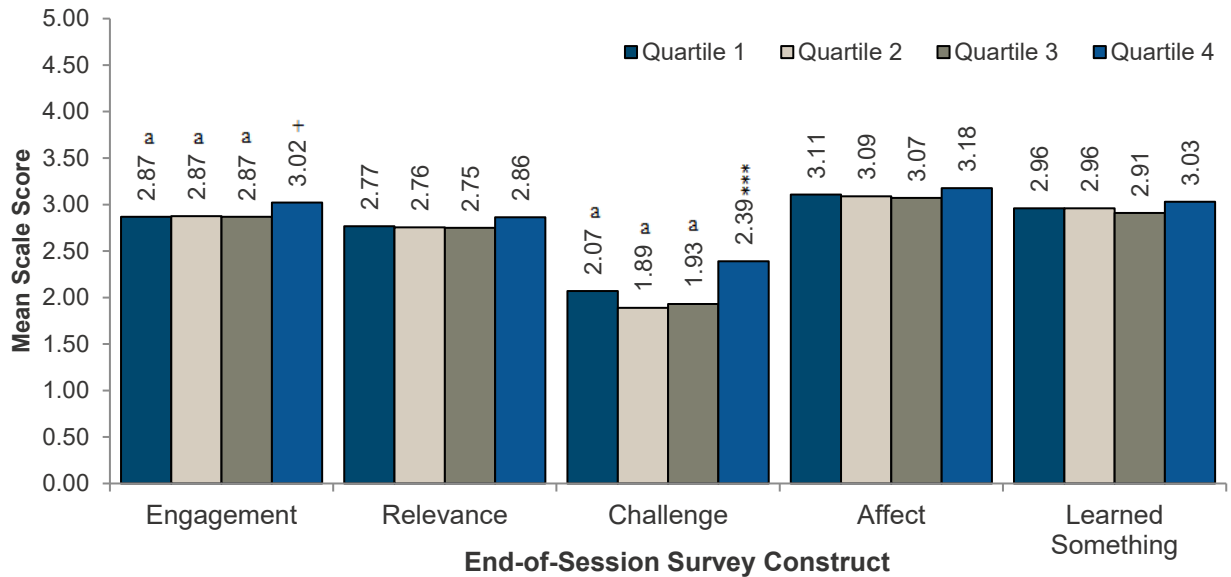
Figure 4.16. Mean Scores for Youth Experience Survey Constructs by Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Quartile



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the PQA. *Note.* $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$ and indicate that the mean score for the quartile was significantly higher than quartiles labels with an “a” value. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest PQA scores, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest PQA scores.

In terms of the areas of youth experience measured on the end-of-session survey, students attending centers with the highest PQA scores (Quartile 4) reported significantly greater challenge and more engagement (moderately significant) than youth attending other centers in the site visit sample (see Figure 4.17). No significant differences were found across different levels of PQA performance in relation to students’ reports of relevance, affect, or perceptions of learning or getting better at something.

Figure 4.17. Mean Scores for End-of-Session Survey Constructs by Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Quartile



Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 966$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the PQA.

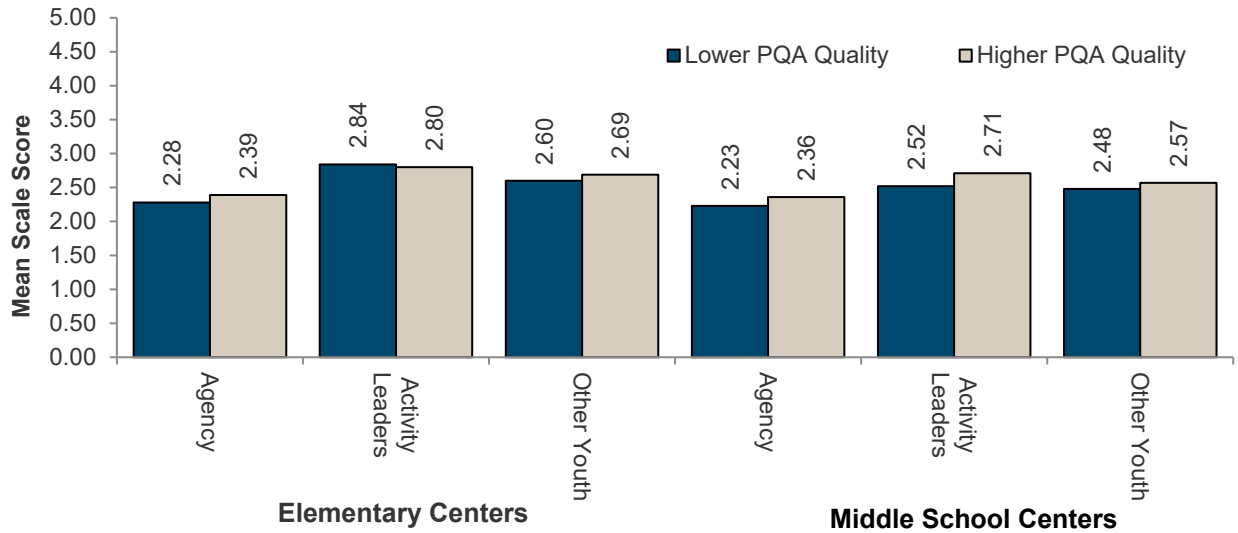
Note. ⁺ $p < .10$; ^{***} $p < .001$ and indicate that the mean score for the quartile was significantly higher than quartiles labels with an “a” value. Quartile 1 corresponds to centers with the lowest PQA scores, whereas Quartile 4 corresponds to centers with the highest PQA scores.

The results highlighted in Figures 4.16 and 4.17 were slightly less robust than would have been expected based on the theorized relationship between the practices described in the PQA and youth experiences in afterschool programming. A stronger and more consistent trend was expected between higher scores on the PQA and positive youth-reported experiences in programming. As such, the evaluation team decided to examine these relationships separately across individual grade levels—elementary school, middle school, and high school. Given that the site visit sample was small (i.e., 20 centers), it was not viable to break centers down by both grade level and quartile based on their performance on the PQA. High school centers also were not examined separately because only two high schools were in the site visit sample. Instead, within a given grade-level category (i.e., elementary and middle school), centers were divided evenly into higher and lower implementing groups based on total PQA score, and independent sample t -tests were conducted to compare mean scores between the higher and lower quality groups. Here again, it was hypothesized that students attending centers with higher PQA scores would be more apt to report having opportunities to experiences a sense of agency and maintaining positive perceptions of activity leaders and other youth (Figure 4.18) and more positive experiences in programming as measured by the end-of-session survey (Figure 4.19).

As shown in Figures 4.18 and 4.19, a relationship more consistent with expectations was found between performance on the PQA and student experiences in programming among centers serving middle school students. This was particularly true for the constructs measured on the end-of-session survey; centers with higher PQA scores were associated with students reporting higher levels of engagement, relevance, positive affect, and expression of learning or getting better at something (see Figure 4.19) relative to students attending centers with lower PQA scores. Membership in this higher PQA group also was associated with better relationships with activity leaders and more opportunities for agency (moderately significant) in middle school centers (see Figure 4.18). These results seem to suggest that there is potentially more of a connection between staff adoption of the practices described in the PQA and

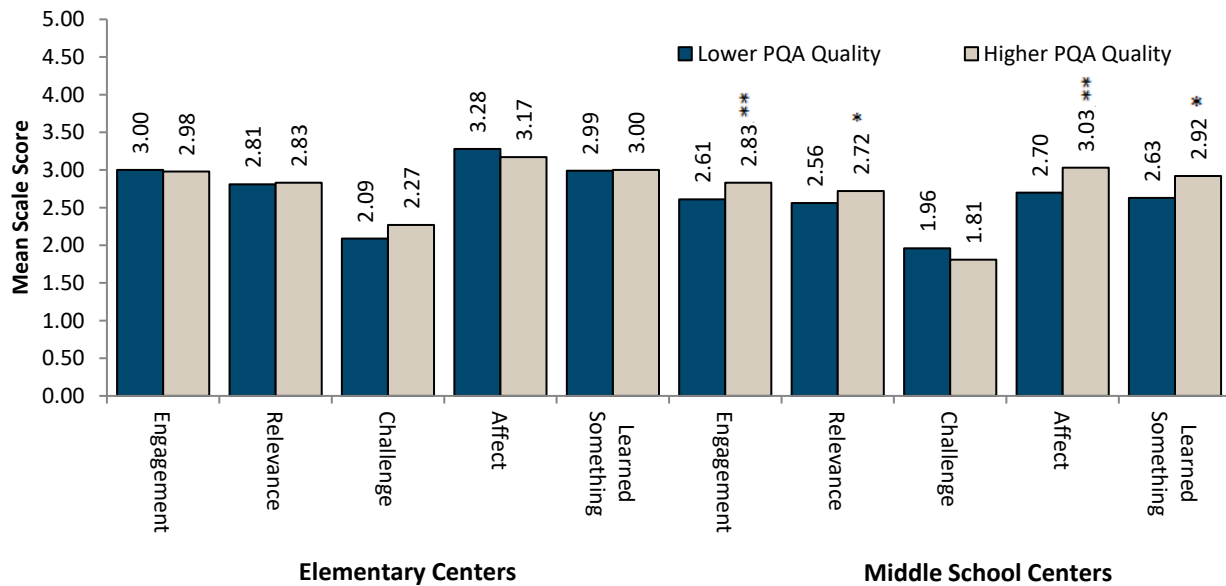
positive youth experiences in middle school programs than those serving students in elementary school. This may have ramifications for the types of guidance that TEA may want to provide Texas ACE programs on how to effectively make use of the PQA or other quality assessment tools to support quality improvement efforts.

Figure 4.18. Mean Youth Experience Survey Scores by Level of Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Quality and Grade Level Served



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 762$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 763$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 755$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the PQA.
Note. $^*p < .10$; $^{**}p < .01$.

Figure 4.19. Mean End-of-Session Survey Scores by Level of Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Quality and Grade Level Served



Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 818$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 812$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 809$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 797$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the PQA.
 Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. Learned category corresponds to “learned something.”

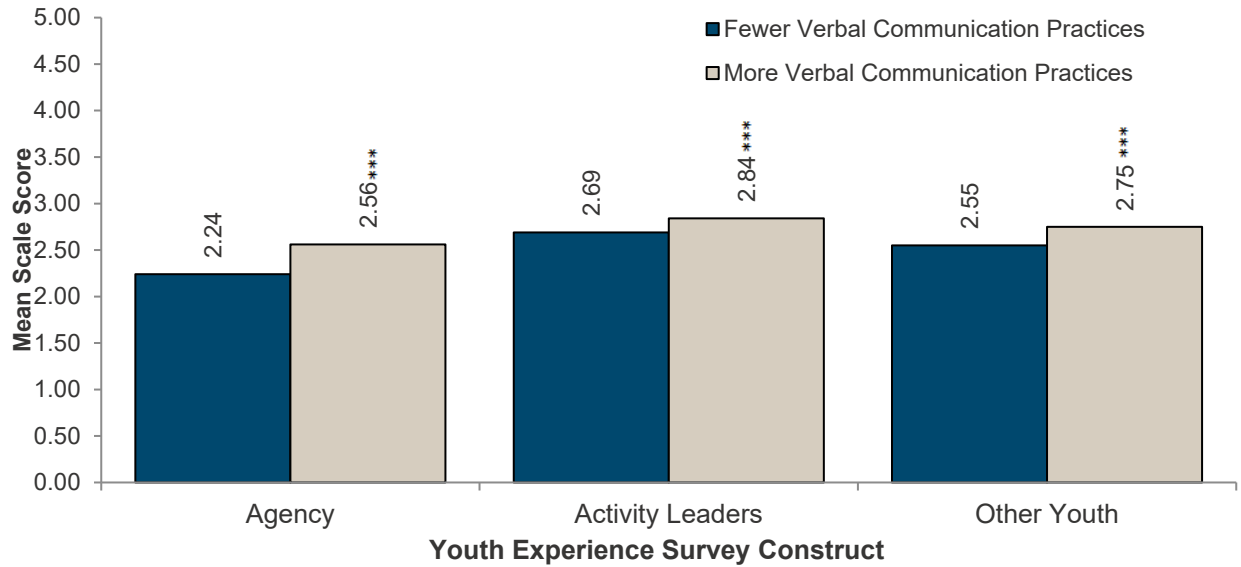
The second primary category associated with the assessment of quality in afterschool programs relates to the presence of content-specific practices, such as staff modeling reading comprehension strategies, engaging students in hands-on mathematics games or projects that use mathematics, and students participating in group discussions or debates. During the site visits, the presence of content-specific practices was assessed using a portion of the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O). More specifically, sections of the APT-O scored by the site visitors related to supports provided by staff and tasks undertaken by students to practice specific academic skills in mathematics, reading, writing, and verbal communication. A full listing of these practices and tasks is in Appendix I.

Like the PQA, steps were taken to explore whether content-specific practices were related to youth experiences in programming. This was done by dividing the centers in the site visit sample into two groups, one demonstrating lower adoption of practices in a given area and the other demonstrating greater adoption of those practices. The hypothesis was that students attending centers with higher APT-O scores on a given scale would be more apt to report having opportunities to experience a sense of agency and maintaining positive perceptions of activity leaders and other youth and more positive experiences in programming as measured by the end-of-session survey. When running independent sample t -tests to explore these relationships, two content areas measured by the APT-O were especially positively associated with youth experiences measured on both the youth experience and end-of-session surveys: verbal communication and written communication. (Results for reading and mathematics practices are in Appendix D, Tables D4.4–D4.7.)

As shown in Figures 4.20 and 4.21, centers that promoted and encouraged students to build and practice their verbal communication skills were consistently found to have higher scores on all constructs examined across both the youth experience and end-of-session surveys. This finding is notable because it is the only set of practices found to be related with each type of youth experience associated with positive youth development across the two surveys. Table 4.4 outlines the practices in greater detail.

Each practice reflects a social dimension of learning and the importance of creating environments that have the space needed for these types of interactions to take place in a meaningful and substantive way. The social environment associated with learning activities plays a critical role in shaping students' academic, behavioral, and motivational outcomes (Patrick et al., 2002; Wentzel, 2002).

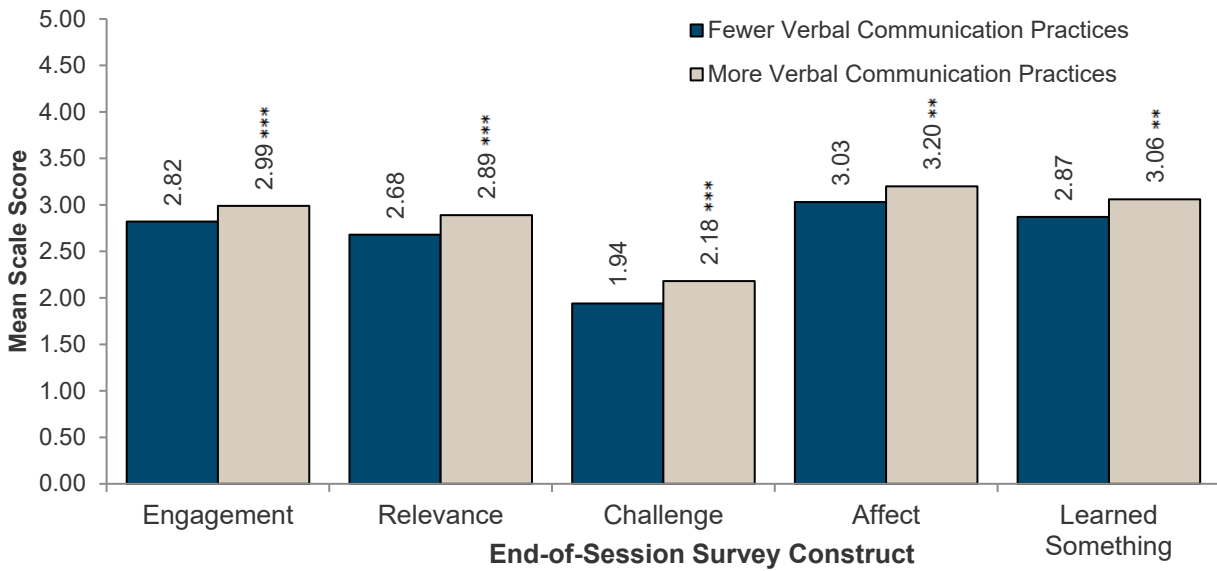
Figure 4.20. Mean Youth Experience Survey Scores by Use of Verbal Communication Practices



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool.

*** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.21. Mean End-of-Session Survey Scores by Use of Verbal Communication Practices



Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 966$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the APT-O.
 ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

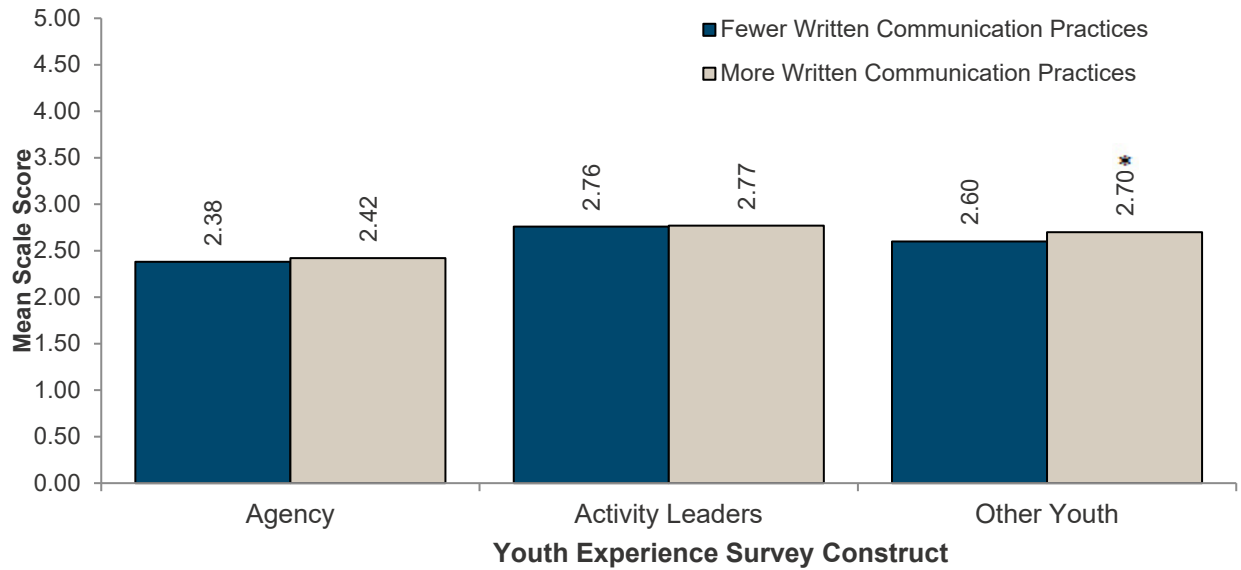
Table 4.4. Practices Represented in the Verbal Communication Scale of the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool

<p>Actions taken by activity leaders to promote and encourage verbal communication skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff engage in frequent one-on-one conversations with youth. • Staff encourage youth to verbally elaborate on their ideas. • Staff encourage all youth to participate in conversations/discussions. <p>Tasks youth undertake to build and practice verbal communication skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth present in front of peers or other audience. • Youth participate in group discussions or debate. • Youth play games that require verbally describing, explaining objects, views, and/or phenomena. • Youth explain ideas or experiences to adults or peers. • Youth explain their own thinking process—how they arrived at an answer/made a decision.

Similar but not quite as consistent findings were found in relation to centers adopting a higher number of practices related to written communication, as shown in Figures 4.22 and 4.23. Here, centers where written communication practices were more likely to be observed demonstrated significantly higher survey scores in terms of student perceptions of other youth in the program, engagement, relevance (moderately significant), positive affect, and expressions of learning something or getting better at something. Interestingly, however, the centers where written communication practices were more common also were significantly associated with lower challenge scores on the end-of-session survey (see Figure 4.23). It also is important to note that substantive overlap occurred among centers adopting verbal and written communication practices at a higher level, with 70% of the centers in the higher frequency group for

written communication group also appearing in the higher frequency group for the adoption of verbal communication practices.

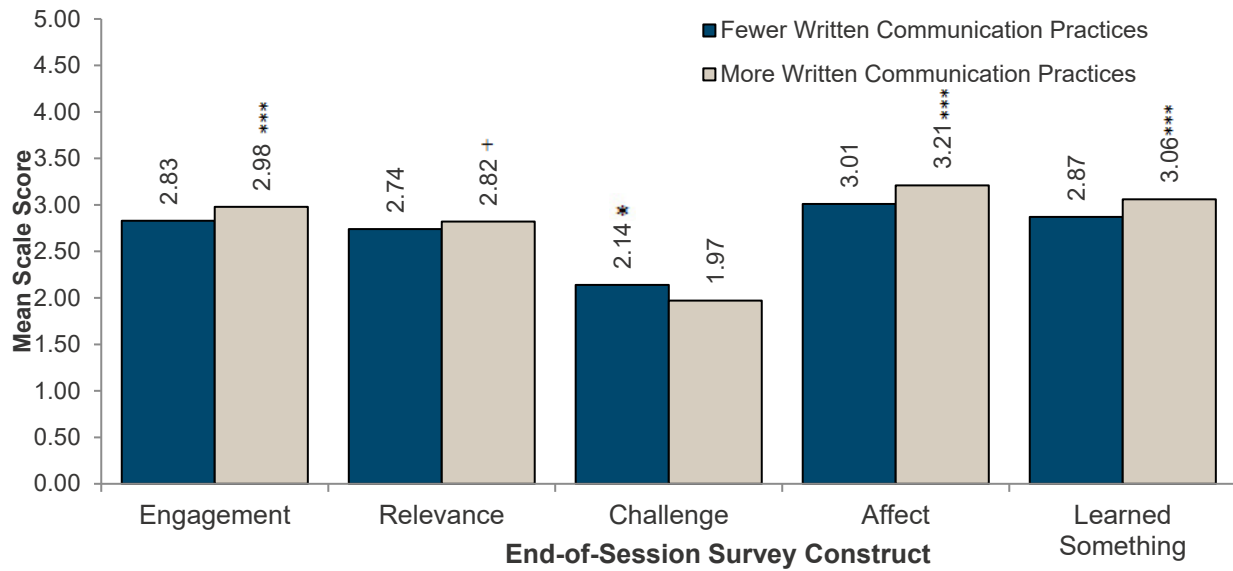
Figure 4.22. Mean Youth Experience Survey Scores by Use of Written Communication Practices



Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool.

* $p < .05$.

Figure 4.23. Mean End-of-Session Survey Scores by Use of Written Communication Practices



Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 966$ responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, $N = 958$ responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, $N = 955$ responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, $N = 939$ responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool. $+p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Youth-Reported Impacts

On the youth experience survey, students were asked to identify the top three areas where they thought the program had helped them the most by selecting from a list of possible impact areas. This allowed students to indicate how they thought they may have benefitted from participating in their Texas ACE program. Table 4.5 provides the percentage of responding youth selecting a given impact area in their top three. The top five youth-reported impacts fell within three primary categories:

- New friendships
- Improved confidence or self-esteem
- Discovery of new interests or abilities

Table 4.5. Percentage of Youth Experience Survey Respondents Indicating a Particular Program Impact

How has this program helped you specifically?	Percentage in top three
To make new friends	48.7%
Feel good about myself	37.5%
With my confidence	29.9%
Find out what I like to do	23.5%
Find out what I'm good at doing	23.2%
Discover things I want to learn more about	20.0%
Learn things that will help me in school	18.5%
Think about what I might like to do when I get older	17.1%
Learn things that will be important for my future	17.1%
Find out what is important to me	14.8%
Go to school more often	12.4%
Think about the kinds of classes I want to take in the future	11.3%
Feel good because I was helping my community	9.4%
Learn about things that are important to my community	7.5%

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, *N* = 2,152 responses.

The results in Table 4.5 are consistent with what the evaluation team has observed in other studies, where similar data were collected from students participating in 21st CCLC programs (Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018). They also are aligned with how afterschool programs have been shown to support positive youth development. For example, students can develop positive mindsets and beliefs about their capacities, including confidence and a sense of self-efficacy through participation in high-quality afterschool programs that provide youth with opportunity to experience a sense of agency by solving problems or pursuing goals related to the program (Beymer, Rosenberg, Schmidt, & Naftzger, 2018; Larson & Angus, 2011; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Nagaoka, 2016). Such experiences provide youth with feedback about what they can accomplish and their ability to solve problems and overcome challenges, enhancing an underlying sense of self-efficacy, competence, and self-concept.

Youth participating in high-quality afterschool programs also can experience a sense of belonging and mattering through positive and supportive relationships, both with activity leaders and their peers in the program (Akiva et al., 2013; Auger et al., 2013; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Kauh, 2011; Larson & Dawes, 2015; Miller, 2007; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Traill et al., 2013). Having a feeling of belonging is a precondition for motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), highlighting the importance of practices that contribute to participating students experiencing belonging and principled, high-functioning relationships with both staff and other youth in the program (Larson et al., 2019).

Afterschool programming can afford youth the opportunity to experience new things, which supports both identity development and young people’s ability to make sense of themselves and the world around them, as well as develop new interests in domain-specific content areas, such as STEM and the arts. The development of new interests is a critical component of youth growth and development and linked to numerous motivational elements related to learning, including goal-directed behavior, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and achievement value (Renninger & Hidi, 2011). The results outlined in Table 4.5 are largely consistent with what is known about how high-quality afterschool programs support the development of participating youth.

Some significant differences were noted in responses based on youth grade level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school; see Table D4.8 in Appendix D for more detail).²¹ More specifically, high school students seemed more likely than students in elementary and middle school to indicate that attendance in programming helped them in the following areas:

- Discover things they wanted to learn more about ($p < .05$)
- Learn things that will be important for their future ($p < .05$)
- With their confidence ($p < .10$)

Steps also were taken to explore if youth-reported impacts were related to youth experiences in programming. In this sense, was there evidence that certain experiences were likely related to certain types of youth-reported benefits of program participation? To explore this, the different groups derived from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys were examined to assess if the greater presence of certain experiences was associated with specific youth-reported outcomes.²² A student-reported outcome was deemed as being present if students included it in their top three ways they felt they had benefitted from participation in their Texas ACE program. The results are summarized in Tables 4.6 and 4.7.

Table 4.6. Summary of Youth-Reported Impacts Positively Related to Key Experiences in Programming

More opportunities to experience a sense of agency related to	Better relationships with activity leaders related to	Better relationships with other youth in the program related to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling more confident ($p < .05$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling more confident ($p < .001$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling more confident ($p < .01$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth learning things that will be important for their future ($p < .05$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth learning things that will be important for their future ($p < .05$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling good about themselves ($p < .10$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling good because they were helping their community ($p < .01$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feeling good about themselves ($p < .05$) 	

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,152$ responses to the question, “Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . .”

As outlined in Table 4.6, students who reported having more frequent opportunities to experience a sense of agency and who reported having better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the programs were more likely to report that the program helped them feel more confident about themselves. Also, students who reported having more frequent agency opportunities were more apt to indicate that the program helped them feel good about themselves because they were helping their community and were learning things that will be important for their future. This latter area of impact pertaining to students feeling that they were learning things important for their future also was more commonly reported by students who reported better relationships with the activity leaders in their program. In addition, students who reported having better relationships with activity leaders and other youth (moderately significant) in the program were more likely to report that participating in the Texas ACE program helped them feel good about themselves.

²¹ Significance was determined by using a crosstabs analysis with the calculation of a chi-square statistic.

²² These relationships were assessed via chi-square-based analyses.

Table 4.7. Summary of Youth-Reported Impacts Positively Related to Key Experiences in Programming

More challenge in programming related to	More engagement in programming related to	Greater sense of relevance reported in relation to programming related to	Greater positive affect reported in relation to programming related to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth making new friends ($p < .05$) Youth thinking about what they want to do when they're older ($p < .05$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth feeling more confident ($p < .10$) Youth feeling good about themselves ($p < .05$) Youth finding out what is important to them ($p < .01$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth making new friends ($p < .05$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth making new friends ($p < .01$) Youth thinking about what they want to do when they're older ($p < .10$)

Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 900$ responses to the question, “Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . .”

Some ways that students reported benefitting from programming were negatively associated with the survey scales measured on the youth experience survey. This was particularly the case in relation to the opportunities for agency scale, where higher scores were negatively associated with the following three youth-reported areas of impact. This meant that students were less apt to indicate they benefitted in these areas when they reported more opportunities for agency (see Table D4.9 in Appendix D for additional details):

- Make new friends ($p < .01$)
- Find out what I like to do ($p < .05$)
- Learn things that will help me in school ($p < .05$)

In addition, students who reported more positive relationships with other students in the programs were less apt to report that the program had helped them find out what they like to do ($p < .05$).

Students feeling more confident and better about themselves also emerged as being related to centers where students reported being more engaged in Texas ACE based on results from the end-of-session survey (see Table 4.4). In addition, in centers where students reported experiencing more challenge, relevance, and positive affect while participating in programming, students were more apt to report that the program helped them make new friends.

Also, when programming was more challenging and when students experienced more positive affect in programming, students were more likely to report that the program helped them think about what they want to do when they are older. Finally, when students reported more engagement in programming, they were more apt to report that the program helped them find out what is important to them.

Some ways students reported benefitting from programming were negatively associated with the survey scales measured on the end-of-session survey. (See Table D4.10 in Appendix D for additional details.) For example, higher levels of engagement in programming was negatively associated with students indicating that participating in Texas ACE had helped them find out what they're good at ($p < .10$) and had helped them learn things that would help them in school ($p < .05$). This meant that students were less apt to indicate they benefitted in these areas when they reported more engagement in programming. A similar negative association was found between students feeling more challenged and students reporting that the program helped them find out what they like to do ($p < .05$), and learn about things important to their community ($p < .10$).

Summary of Youth Experience Findings

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the extent to which students reported having experiences while participating in Texas ACE that past research has shown are associated with positive youth development. Based on responses to the youth experience and end-of-session surveys, students described most commonly experiencing positive relationships with activity leaders, engagement in programming, and feelings of positive affect when participating in programming. In addition, feelings that what they were doing in programming was relevant and that they were learning something or getting better at something also were relatively common experiences among students participating in Texas ACE. However, students were less apt to report having opportunities to experience a sense of agency through voice and choice; positive perceptions of other youth in the program; and experiencing challenge while participating in Texas ACE activities. Each experience could be an area where Texas ACE programs could potentially improve in further providing participating students with programmatic experiences linked to positive youth development.

In addition, the student experiences measured through the youth experience and end-of-session surveys were positively associated with students' motivation to attend programming. Overall, 64% of the students responding to the youth experience survey indicated they really looked forward to attending the program, but this percentage was higher when students reported more opportunities for agency and better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, as well as experiencing more engagement, relevance, challenge, positive affect, and more of a sense that they were learning something or getting better at something while participating in programming.

Steps also were taken in describing the findings in this chapter to examine the relationship between quality criteria outlined in the PQA and portions of the APT-O and youth experiences in programming. Students attending centers with the highest PQA scores were more likely to report having more frequent opportunities for agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program and experiencing more engagement and challenge while participating in programming than students in centers scoring lower on the PQA. In addition, the relationships between PQA scores and positive youth experiences in programming seemed to be stronger in programs serving middle school students. In middle school centers, higher PQA scores were associated with greater perceptions of what they were doing was relevant, higher scores pertaining to positive affect, and a greater expression on the part of students that they had learned something or gotten better at something because of participating in programming.

More consistent associations occurred between scales from the APT-O and student experiences in programming, particularly in relation to the verbal communication scale. This scale was positively associated with each youth experiences scale examined. Similar but not quite as consistent results were found in relation to the written communication scale of the APT-O as well.

Moreover, certain types of youth experiences were found associated with certain ways in which students indicated benefitting from program participation. More opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves. Students were more apt to indicate that they had learned things that will be important for their future when they reported more agency opportunities and better relationships with their Texas ACE activity leaders.

Finally, students attending centers where youth experienced more challenge, relevance, and positive affect while participating in Texas ACE activities were more likely to report making new friends in the program as a key way they benefitted from program participation. These experiences are important because youth who have positive relationships and meaningful friendships demonstrate better emotional well-being, prosocial behaviors, and better academic performance than youth lacking such relationships (Wentzel et al., 2012).

It is important to note that there are limitations associated with the types of data collected by AIR during the 2017–18 programming period and limitations intrinsic to the methods employed to support the analyses outlined in this chapter.

- *Youth surveys were administered by the grantees themselves.* AIR asked grantees to administer the youth experience and end-of-session surveys described in this chapter. It was up to the grantees to determine which youth should participate in the survey based on AIR guidance, on what day the survey should be administered, at what time of day, and so on. As such, there may be considerable variance in survey administration from one center to the next, which may have influenced the survey results.
- *Youth surveys can be subject to bias.* With respect to youth surveys, Duckworth and Yeager (2015) identified three sources of potential bias: social desirability (answering a question based on what is deemed acceptable or wanted rather than on what is true); the desire to be agreeable (answering positively to a question, or high on an agreement scale, not because that answer is true but because the respondent tends to be agreeable); and reference bias (basing responses on a comparison to one's immediate peers, a standard that varies from center to center and school to school). These biases could have influenced how students responded to the youth surveys described in this chapter.
- *Relatively little observation data were collected as part of the site visits.* Programs were observed on 2 days during the 2017–18 school year. Past experience has shown that programming can vary greatly from one day to the next, in terms of both underlying quality and the degree to which youth are engaged in programming. It may be the case that the observations conducted during the site visits may have represented too small a sample of programming days from which to accurately infer overall center-level quality.
- *Descriptive study.* The analyses outlined in this chapter were descriptive and correlational. In this sense, although evidence was found of key relationships hypothesized to exist, the reader should not interpret these results as certain practices causing certain outcomes to happen. The research design used to collect and analyze these data does not support this level of inference.

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Chapter 5. The Impact of the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program on Youth Outcomes

Objectives 2 and 4

- What effect does the program have on students attending regularly during the school year relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
- What effect does the program have on students attending regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
- What center-level characteristics are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among students participating in the program?

Introduction

Participation in Texas ACE is meant to support student growth and development on a variety of school-related outcomes. Although previous evaluations of the program demonstrated that participation in Texas ACE was associated with higher academic performance in mathematics, fewer school-day absences and disciplinary incidents, and greater grade-level promotion (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013), more recent analyses have shown an association with fewer positive student outcomes and, in some cases, a negative relationship between program participation and student performance on school-related outcomes, particularly in relation to academic achievement (Arellano et al., 2020). However, other recent analyses have suggested that students are more likely to benefit in terms of performance on school-related outcome the more they participate in Texas ACE (Arellano et al., 2020). In this sense, previous analyses examining the relationship between student participation in Texas ACE and student outcomes have been mixed and have not always been consistent in terms of depicting the relationship between participation and outcomes.

Previous analyses have largely focused on the average association between student participation in Texas ACE and student performance on school-related outcomes. However, as shown by the results in Chapters 3 and 4, substantial variability exists in how Texas ACE programs go about the process of designing and delivering programming and, therefore, the types of experiences students have while engaged in Texas ACE activities. Considering this, a key objective of the present statewide evaluation of the Texas ACE program is to understand what set of program characteristics and youth experiences in programming are positively associated with student outcomes the program is designed to achieve (e.g., academic achievement, behaviors related to school-day success).

This chapter contains both types of analyses: (a) analyses that summarize the average association between student participation in Texas ACE and school-related outcomes and (b) analyses that examine the relationship between specific center characteristics, including student experiences in programming, and the school-related outcomes under consideration. This chapter begins with a discussion of what was found in relation to average program effects and then explores how these effects may differ across different kinds of centers that vary across a set of key center characteristics.

Annual Effectiveness Analyses

The first set of results highlighted in this chapter summarizes the effect that participation in Texas ACE had on school-related outcomes for the 2017–18 programming period. This set of analyses explored the effect the program had on school-related outcomes after a single year of participation. Effectiveness analyses were conducted separately for students participating in Texas ACE at various program attendance levels during the 2017–18 programming period:

- Less than 45 days of attendance

- 45–59 days of attendance
- 60–89 days of attendance
- 90–119 days of attendance
- 120 days or more of attendance

Some research suggests that the more students participate in Texas ACE, the more likely they benefit from program participation. This relationship has been supported in past evaluations of the Texas ACE program; it has been linked to greater school-day attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and a greater likelihood of earning career and technical education (CTE) credits and being promoted to the next grade level among high school students (Arellano et al., 2020; Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). The full set of school-related outcomes examined in previous evaluations and this chapter of the report is as follows:

- STAAR Mathematics scores (Grades 4–8)²³
- STAAR Reading scores (Grades 4–8)
- School-day attendance (Grades K–12)—limited to youth who were absent 5% or more of school days in the prior academic year
- School-day disciplinary incidents (Grades K–12)
- CTE credits earned (Grades 9–12)
- Grade-level promotion (Grades (K–12)

A key goal of examining the relationships between various levels of Texas ACE program attendance and school-related outcomes is to help TEA better understand what level of program participation may be more strongly associated with desired student outcomes. For the most recent set of analyses examining annual program effects in relation to the 2014–15 to 2016–17 programming periods, attendance thresholds were consistently associated with positive program effects (Arellano et al., 2020), as follows:

- School-day attendance—Any level of Texas ACE participation
- CTE credits earned—Any level of Texas ACE participation
- Disciplinary incidents—When Texas ACE participation was 90 days or more
- STAAR Mathematics assessment scores—When Texas ACE participation was 120 days or more
- Grade-level promotion—When Texas ACE participation was 120 days or more, except among high school students, where any level of Texas ACE participation was associated with positive effects

The results outlined in this portion of the chapter explore whether this set of findings is largely replicated in relation to the 2017–18 programming period.

Like the analyses conducted for previous years, the evaluation team employed a quasi-experimental design to assess the effect of Texas ACE participation on student outcomes for the 2017–18 programming period. Propensity score matching (PSM) was used to create separate comparison groups consisting of students not participating in the program who were similar demographically and on certain achievement levels to students participating in Texas ACE. This approach allowed the evaluation team to explore more carefully how participation in Texas ACE may be related to school-related outcomes by controlling for preexisting differences between students that would otherwise influence analysis results. Student outcomes were then modeled using two-level hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to assess

²³ Grade 3 was not included in effectiveness analyses related to STAAR achievement given the need for a prior year score to conduct the matching processes used to construct the comparison groups consisting of nonparticipating students. STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics are first administered in Grade 3.

differences between participants and nonparticipants. Outcome differences observed between the two groups could then be ascribed to participation in the program with a higher degree of confidence.

In conducting these analyses, Texas ACE program participants in a given attendance band (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days) were matched and then compared with similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming.

Limitations are associated with using PSM techniques to approximate matched student groups. Although PSM helps ensure that Texas ACE students are as similar as possible to students not participating in Texas ACE, the matching process was based on only those student and school characteristics that could be obtained from the data warehouses maintained by TEA (e.g., race/ethnicity, prior performance on the STAAR assessment). The PSM approach used to create comparisons groups did not guarantee that students were matched for other key differences that may have existed between the two groups of students not represented in the data used to support the matching process, which could influence the outcomes being assessed (e.g., student motivation, interests). These limitations should be considered when interpreting the final results. Additional information about the use of PSM to create matched comparison groups is in Appendix C.

Pooled results spanning all grade levels are in the sections that follow. These analyses were further disaggregated by grade level (i.e., K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12), where applicable. Significant findings related to differences in program effect across grade-level bands are in the sections that follow; however, figures showing these results specifically are in Appendix E.

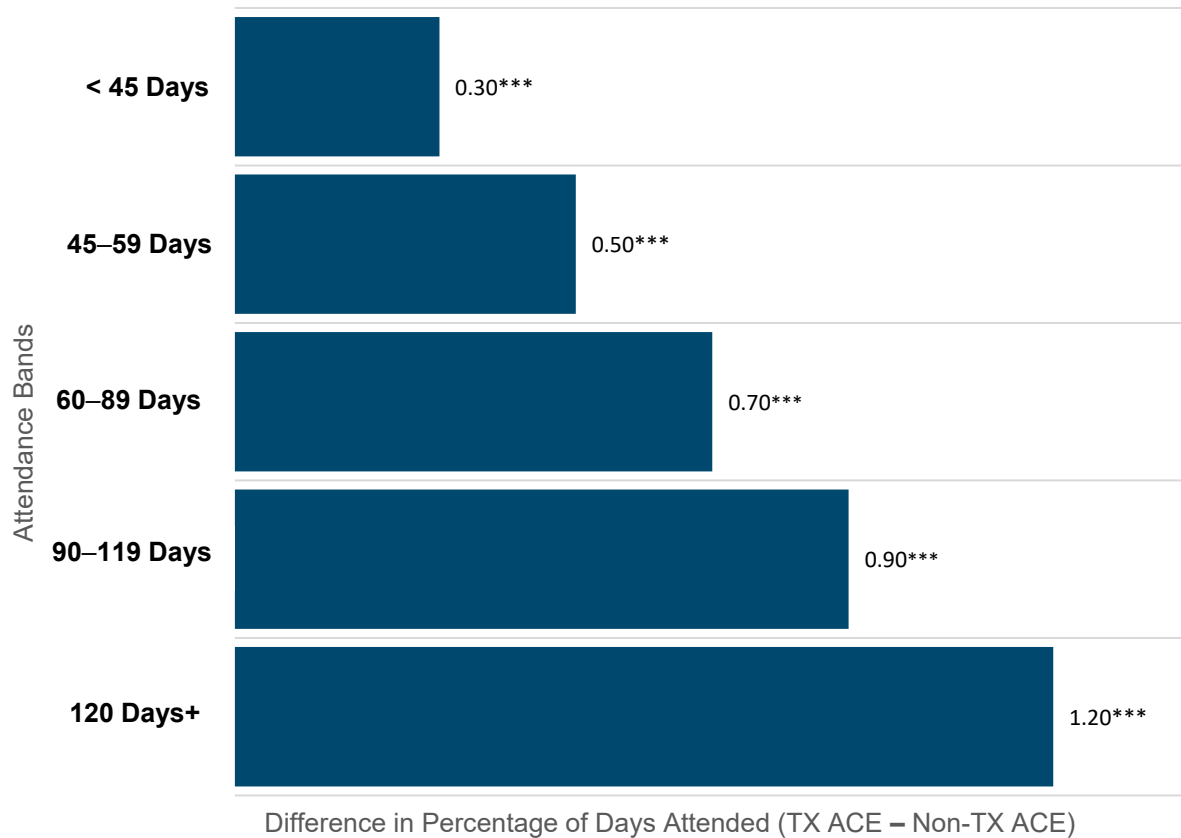
Outcomes Positively Associated With Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Participation in Most Cases

Two school-related outcomes were examined in previous evaluation cycles that were positively associated with Texas ACE participation across the five attendance levels examined: school-day attendance and CTE credits earned. These results were found for the 2017–18 programming period as well. In this sense, student participation in Texas ACE for a greater number of days during a given programming period has consistently showed a positive association with school-day attendance and the earning of CTE credits.

School-Day Attendance

Figure 5.1 outlines the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students participating in Texas ACE and similar nonparticipating youth pooled across Grades K–12. These analyses included only those students who were absent for 5% or more of school days during the preceding school year. The goal of this decision was to limit the analysis to those students who had some room to improve in terms of their level of school-day attendance. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

Figure 5.1. School-Day Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

*** $p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

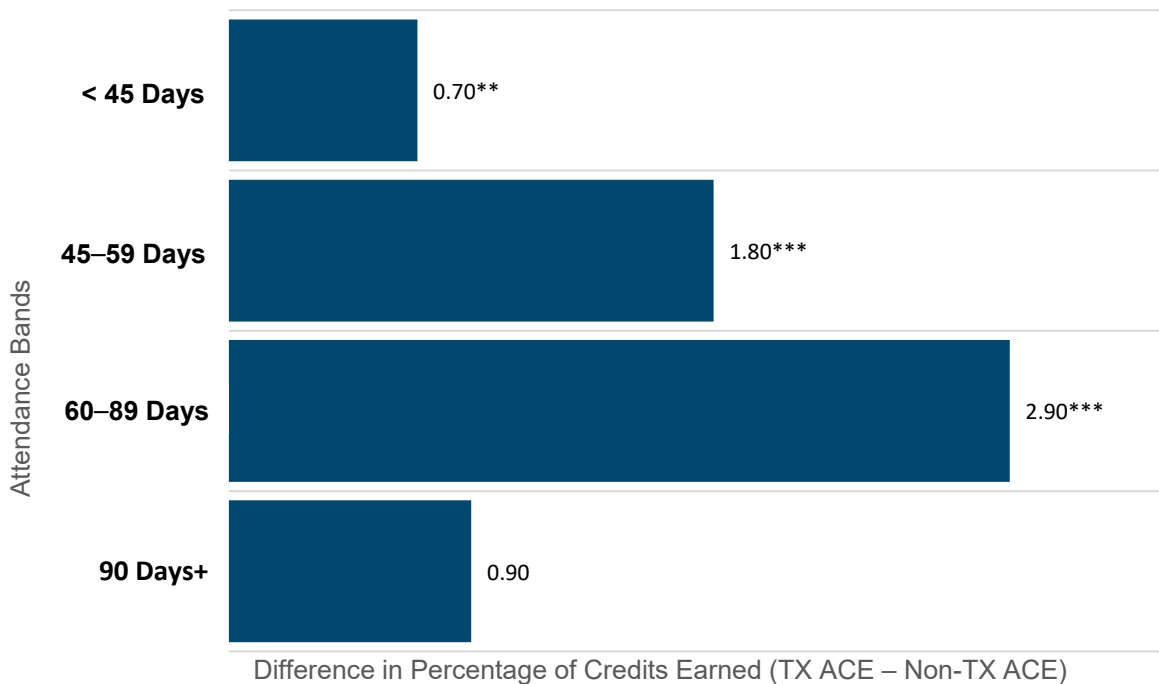
- Across all attendance bands, students who participated in Texas ACE for 45 days or more had higher school-day attendance rates compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE.
- The effect of participating in Texas ACE was larger for students who participated in more days of Texas ACE than students who participated less frequently.
- Some differences were noted by grade level (see Figures E5.1–E5.4 in Appendix E for more detail). For Grades K–3, significant positive effects were not found until students had participated in programming for 60 days or more. For Grades 4–5, significant positive associations were found when students had participated in programming for 45 days or more. For Grades 6–12, significant positive associations were found across all attendance levels.
- Although statistically significant, Texas ACE participation was associated with an improvement in school-day attendance of only .3 to 1.2 percentage points when considering the pooled results as shown in Figure 5.1 and by .3 to 1.90 percentage points when examining the results by different

grade-level bands (see Figures E5.1. to E5.4 in Appendix E for more detail). The largest differences were at the high school level, translating to approximately 3.42 more school days attended compared with similar youth in the comparison group (assuming a 180-day school year), a relatively small difference from a practical perspective.

CTE Credits Earned

Figure 5.2 shows the percentage of CTE credits earned based on total CTE credits attempted, pooled across Grades 9–12, for students who participated in Texas ACE compared with youth who did not participate. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participation was associated with a higher percentage of CTE credits earned based on CTE course taken (i.e., credits attempted based on the taking of a CTE course) compared with similar nonparticipating youth.

Figure 5.2. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Credits Earned: Difference in the Percentage of Credits Earned Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of CTE credits earned between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. CTE credits earned data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participation was associated with a higher percentage of CTE credits earned compared with similar nonparticipating youth.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

- Participation in Texas ACE was found to have a statistically significant positive association with CTE credits earned when students participated in programming up to 89 days. It is hypothesized that the nonsignificant effect associated with those students participating for 90 days or more is likely related to a small sample size resulting in a lack of power to detect an effect because the p value for this set of analyses was .154.

- Overall, the biggest difference in impact across the Texas ACE attendance bands examined was between those students attending less than 45 days and those attending 45–90 days. However, even among students attending Texas ACE 45–90 days, the effect on the percentage of CTE credits earned was small, with students attending Texas ACE demonstrating a 1.8 to 2.9 percentage point difference, respectively, compared with students not participating in Texas ACE.

Outcomes Where Effects Moved From Undesirable to Desirable as the Level of Participation Increased

For some of the school-related outcomes examined, the relationship between varying levels of Texas ACE participation and student performance on the outcome has followed an inconsistent pattern. For both disciplinary incidents and student performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment, lower levels of participation in Texas ACE have been associated with a significant, undesirable effect (i.e., more disciplinary incidents and lower STAAR Mathematics scores among Texas ACE participants) on the outcome when compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. However, this result changes as participation in Texas ACE increases, ultimately resulting in a significant and desirable association between higher levels of program participation and performance on the outcome in question. This pattern is reflected in the results for both disciplinary incidents and performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment for 2017–18.

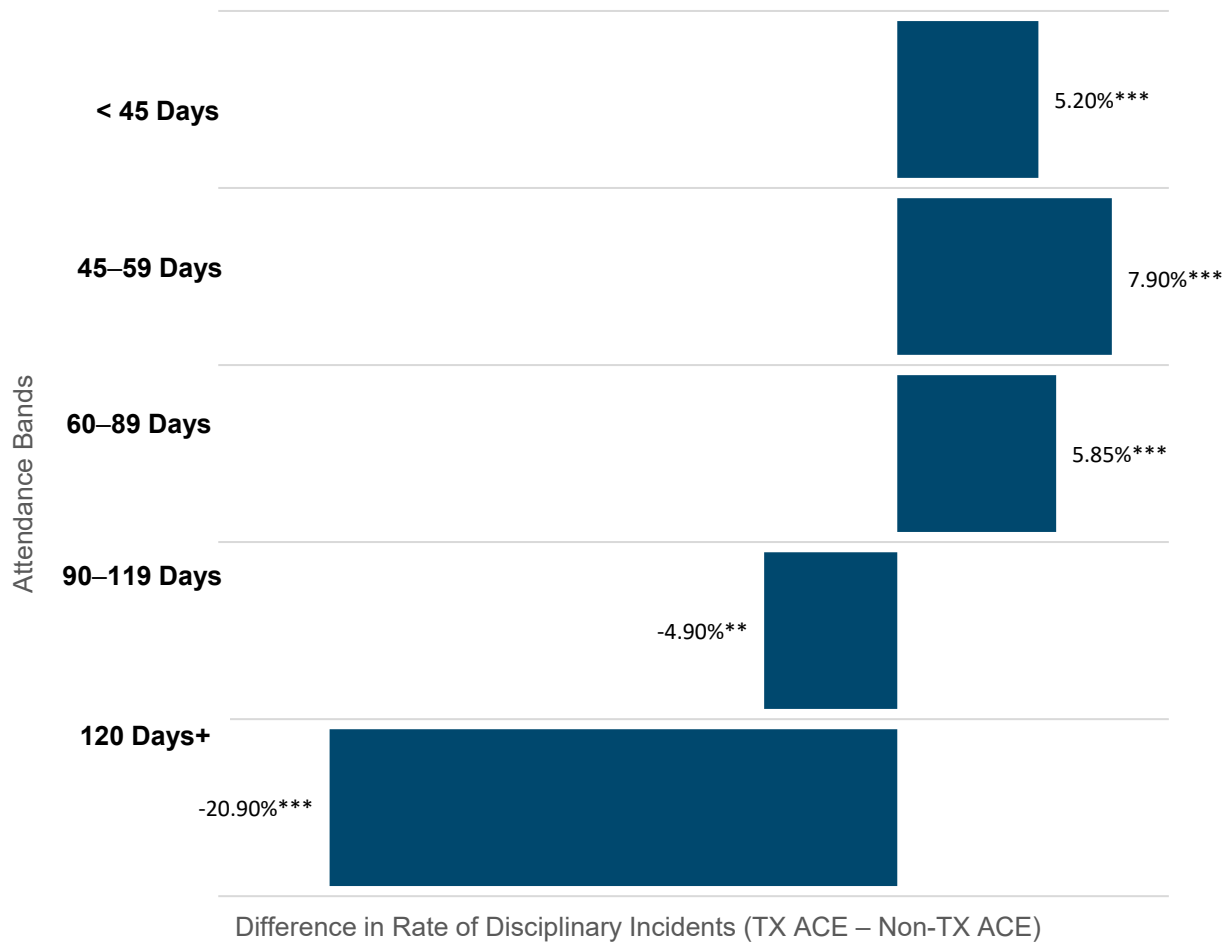
Disciplinary Incidents

Figure 5.3 summarizes the pooled results for students in Grades K–12. The results in Figure 5.3 represent the rate of disciplinary incidents between Texas ACE participants and nonparticipants as a percentage difference. A percentage of 0 represents no difference between the disciplinary incident rate of Texas ACE participants and nonparticipating youth. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate. For example, students participating in Texas ACE for less than 45 days had a disciplinary rate that was 5% higher than that for similar nonparticipating youth, which represents a ratio of 1.05 disciplinary incidents for the under 45-day group for every 1.0 incident among nonparticipating youth.

Key findings outlined in Figure 5.3 include the following:

- All analyses related to disciplinary incidents were statistically significant. However, participation in Texas ACE at some attendance bands was associated with a higher rate of disciplinary incidents than for similar nonparticipating youth, and others were associated with a lower rate of disciplinary incidents.
- Students participating in Texas ACE for less than 90 days demonstrated a statistically significant higher rate of disciplinary incidents than the comparison group, ranging from 5% to 8% higher.
- Conversely, students participating in Texas ACE for more than 90 days demonstrated a statistically significant lower rate of incidents. This was particularly the case for students participating in Texas ACE for 120 days or more, who had a disciplinary incident rate that was 21% lower than for similar nonparticipating youth.
- Some differences were found across grade levels (see Figures E5.5 to E5.8 in Appendix E for more detail). For elementary students (Grades K–3 and Grades 4–5), a significant negative association between Texas ACE participation and disciplinary incidents was not found until students had participated in programming for 120 days or more. For Grades 6–8, a significant negative association between Texas ACE participation and disciplinary incidents was found when students participated in programming for 90 days or more. Texas ACE participation did not have a significant negative effect on disciplinary incidents in Grades 9–12.

Figure 5.3. Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

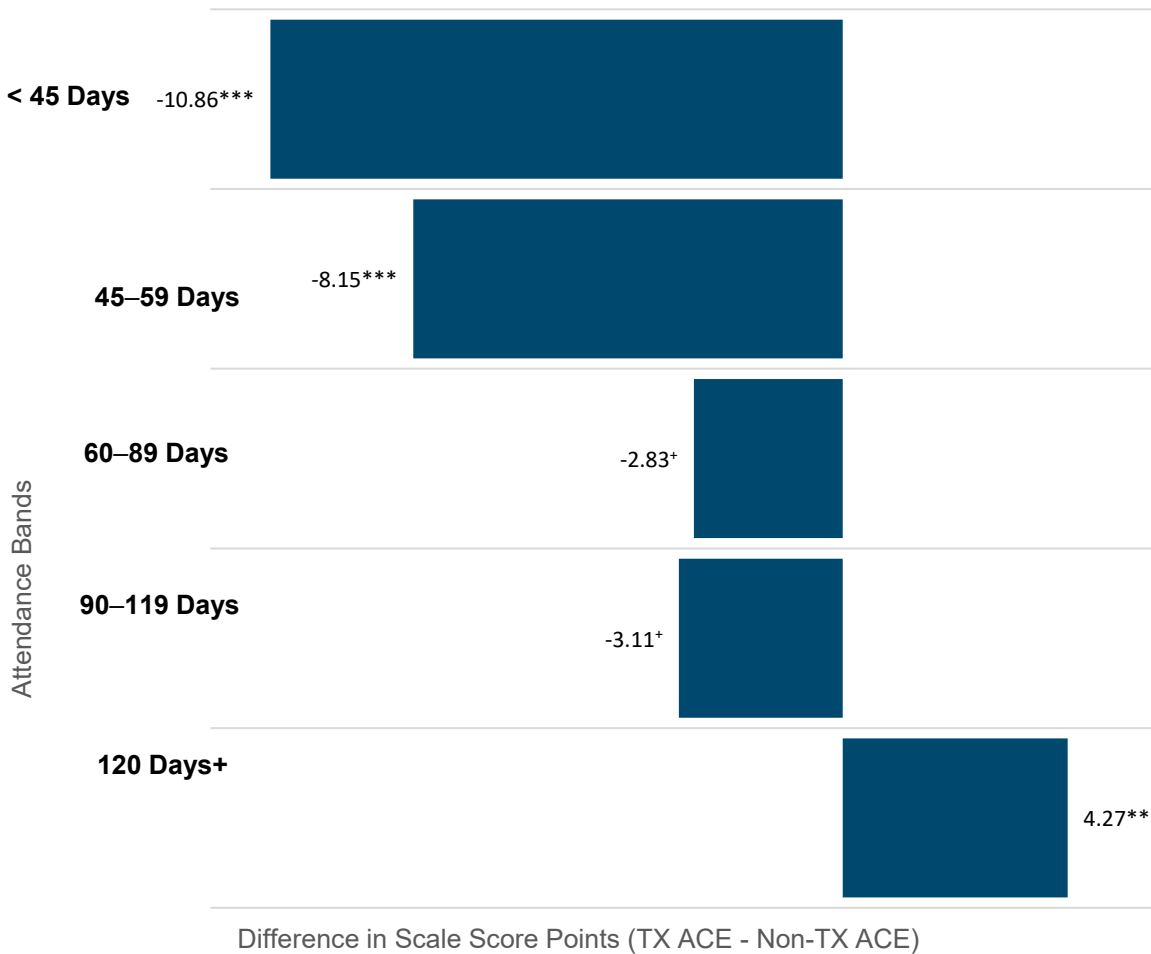
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

STAAR Mathematics Scores

Figure 5.4 summarizes the pooled results for students in Grades 4–8. The outcome in Figure 5.4 is the average difference in scale score points obtained on the STAAR Mathematics assessment between Texas ACE participants and similar youth not participating in in Texas ACE. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.

Figure 5.4. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–8



Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

- Participation in Texas ACE was found to have a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Mathematics achievement when students participated in programming for less than 120 days. Students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored anywhere from 2 to 11 scale score points lower, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment. This translates to a standardized effect of -0.023 to -0.083 standard deviation.
- However, participation in Texas ACE was found to have a statistically significant positive association with STAAR Mathematics achievement when students participated in programming for 120 days or more. Students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored 4 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment. This translates to a standardized effect of

0.032 standard deviation. This finding also characterized analyses that examined students in Grades 4–5 and Grades 6–8 separately (see Figures E5.9 and E5.10 in Appendix E for more detail).

- Generally, the significant positive and negative associations outlined in Figure 5.4 are not substantively meaningful given the small size of the effects. As a result, the reader should not attach too much significance to these findings.

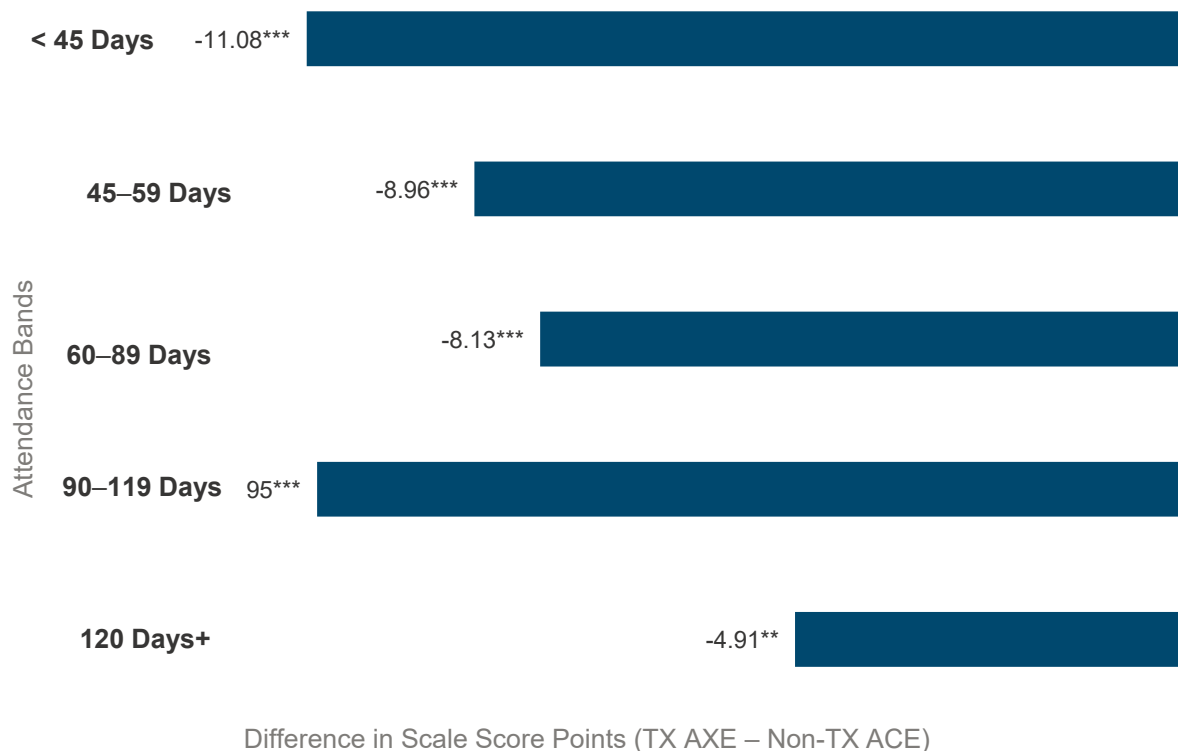
Outcomes Where Effects Were Consistently Negative

One outcome was examined where a consistent negative relationship has been found between participation in Texas ACE and the outcome in question: STAAR Reading assessment scores. This also was found when examining results for the 2017–18 programming period.

STAAR Reading Scores

Figure 5.5 summarizes the pooled results for students in Grades 4–8. The outcome in Figure 5.5 is the average difference in scale score points obtained on the STAAR Reading assessment between Texas ACE participants and similar youth not participating in Texas ACE. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average.

Figure 5.5. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–8



Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and comparison group students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s reading performance and student-level characteristics across attendance bands. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

- Texas ACE was not found to have any statistically significant positive associations with STAAR Reading achievement in 2017–18. All statistically significant findings demonstrated Texas ACE participation as having a negative association with reading achievement for all grades combined. This finding also characterized analyses that examined students in Grades 4–5 and Grades 6–8 separately (see Figures E5.11 and E5.12 in Appendix E). Students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored anywhere from 4 to 11 scale score points lower, on average, on the STAAR Reading assessment compared with similar youth who did not participate in Texas. This translates to a standardized effect of -0.036 to -0.084 standard deviation.
- Generally, the significant negative associations outlined in Figure 5.5 represent a small effect.

Outcomes Where the Relationship With Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Participation Was Not Significant

Two outcomes were examined where the relationship with Texas ACE participation was nonsignificant across all attendance levels when examining pooled results: EOC assessments and grade-level promotion.

Analyses conducted to assess the relationship between Texas ACE participation and high school EOC assessments in Algebra I and English I, II, and III yielded no statistically significant results. The finding that participation in Texas ACE did not have a statistically significant association with English EOC scores is consistent with previous evaluation findings; however, a prior evaluation of Texas ACE did show a statistically significant positive effect of Texas ACE participation on Algebra I EOC scores (Devaney et al., 2016). This result was not replicated in this report.

The nonsignificant findings related to grade-level promotion are a deviation from past analyses conducted for the 2014–15 to 2016–17 programming periods. These analyses demonstrated a significant and negative association between participation in Texas ACE and the probability of students promoted to the next grade level when Texas ACE participation was less than 90 days (Arellano et al., 2020).

Although the overall pooled effects in relation to grade-level promotion were not statistically significant, some differences were noted by grade level. For students in Grades K–3, participation in Texas ACE for less than 120 days was negatively related to student grade-level promotion. Overall, students in Grades K–3 participating in Texas ACE had anywhere from a 20% to 25% lower chance of promotion to the next grade level than similar students not participating in Texas ACE (see Figure E5.13 in Appendix E).

However, for some high school students, participation in Texas ACE was positively associated with promotion to the next grade level. More specifically, students in Grades 9–12 participating in Texas ACE between 45 and 89 days had a 91% to 127% higher chance of being promoted to the next grade level than similar students not participating in Texas ACE (see Figures E5.14-E5.16 in Appendix E).

Effectiveness Analyses Associated With 2 Years of Texas ACE Participation

The hypothesis was that students would benefit more from participation in Texas ACE if they remained enrolled in the program across multiple school years and attended on a regular basis. To explore if there was evidence to support this hypothesis, students who attended Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods were identified and compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. Similar to results associated with previous programming periods, participation in Texas ACE at the 60 days or more threshold per year was associated with greater school-day attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, a higher percentage of CTE credits earned, and greater grade-level promotion relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. However, participation in Texas ACE at this level also was associated with lower STAAR Mathematics and Reading assessment scores.

Similar to the annual effectiveness analyses, PSM was used to identify a comparison group consisting of similar students attending the same schools during this period but who did not participate in Texas ACE. Multilevel analyses were then run to assess if there was an association between students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more across the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods and more desirable performance on the school-related outcomes under consideration, which were the same as those examined as part of the annual effectiveness analyses. The results are in the Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More: Outcomes Related to Academic Performance

Outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	2016–17 & 2017–18	-0.93 point	0.011	> .10
STAAR Reading	2016–17 & 2017–18	-10.27 points	0.011	< .001
Percentage of career and technical education credits earned	2016–17 & 2017–18	+1.5 percentage points	0.007	< .01
Grade-level promotion	2016–17 & 2017–18	+41.88% chance of being promoted	0.001	< .01

Source. STAAR scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Key findings highlighted in Table 5.1 include the following:

- Texas ACE had a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Reading achievement when students participated in programming for 60 days or more across the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. Students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored slightly more than 10 scale score points lower, on average, on the STAAR Reading assessment taken during the 2017–18 school year. This translates to a standardized effect of -0.09 standard deviation. No significant association was found with STAAR Mathematics scores. Similar results were obtained when examining program effects separately for students in Grades 4–5 and Grades 6–8 (see Tables E5.2 and E5.3 in Appendix E).
- Participation in Texas ACE for 2 years at 60 days or more had a statistically significant positive association with CTE credits earned, with Texas ACE participants demonstrating a 1.5 percentage point difference compared with students not participating in Texas ACE in terms of the percentage of CTE credits earned relative to courses attempted.

- Although the effects related to STAAR assessment scores and CTE credits earned were small, participation in Texas ACE for 2 years at 60 days or more was found to have a statistically significant positive association with students being promoted to the next grade level. In this case, students participating in Texas ACE had a nearly 42% higher chance of promotion to the next grade level. This association was found only in relation to students in Grades 4–5 and Grades 9–12, where the higher chances of promotion to the next grade were 232% and 470%, respectively (see Tables E5.2 and E5.4 in Appendix E).

The results for analyses assessing the relationship between 2 years of participation in Texas ACE and student school-day attendance and disciplinary incidents are in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More: Outcomes Related to Student Behaviors

School-related outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
School-day attendance	2016–17 & 2017–18	+1.10 percentage points	0.002	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	2016–17 & 2017–18	-5.77% chance of an incident occurring	0.019	< .01

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Key findings highlighted in Table 5.2 include the following:

- Texas ACE had a statistically significant positive association with school-day attendance when students participated for 60 days or more across the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. Although statistically significant, Texas ACE participation was associated with an improvement in school-day attendance of only 1.10 percentage points in terms of the percentage of school days attended when considering the pooled results shown in Table 5.2, which approximates to about 2 additional school days during a 180-day school year. A significant association was found for each grade level examined (see Tables E5.1–E5.3 in Appendix E).
- Participation in Texas ACE for 2 years at 60 days or more had a statistically significant and negative association with disciplinary incidents, with students attending Texas ACE having an almost 6% lower chance of having a disciplinary incident. However, this negative association was found only in relation to students in Grades 6–8 and Grades 9–12, where the reduction in an incident occurring was -13.65% and -8.38%, respectively. For students in Grades K–3 and Grades 4–5, there was a significant and positive association between participation in Texas ACE for 2 years at 60 days or more and disciplinary incidents, where the increase in an incident occurring was 12.40% and 9.83%, respectively (see Tables E5.1–E5.4 in Appendix E).

Summary of Results From the Effectiveness Analysis

Funding for Texas ACE programs supports the academic development of participating students and promotes behaviors that will contribute to school-day success. It was hypothesized that the more students participate in programming as measured by days of attendance, the more likely they will be to benefit from their participation. This hypothesis was tested in a series of effectiveness analyses conducted to assess how student participation in Texas ACE at different levels was related to youth improvement on a series of school-related outcomes relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. The results from these analyses were generally mixed.

The hypothesized relationship between program attendance and student outcomes seemed to be most supported by evidence of a consistent, positive relationship between participation in Texas ACE and

school-day attendance and the earning of CTE credits. However, the differences observed between students participating in Texas ACE and similar students not participating in the program were rather small.

For both disciplinary incidents and student performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment, lower levels of participation in Texas ACE were first associated with a significant, undesirable effect (i.e., more disciplinary incidents and lower STAAR Mathematics scores among Texas ACE participants) when compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. However, this result changed as participation in Texas ACE increased, ultimately resulting in a significant and desirable association between higher levels of program participation and performance on each outcome. This was particularly the case for students participating in Texas ACE for 120 days or more, yielding a disciplinary incident rate that was 21% lower than for similar nonparticipating youth.

In terms of academic achievement, mostly a negative relationship was found between participation in Texas ACE and STAAR Mathematics and Reading assessment scores, although most differences between students participating in Texas ACE and those students who were not enrolled in programming were relatively small.

Finally, a notable difference was observed between results from the single-year effectiveness analysis and those associated with students who participated in Texas ACE for 60 days or more across two programming years on the grade-level promotion outcome. When examining pooled effect estimates related to different program attendance bands for 1 year of program participation, no significant differences were found between students participating in Texas ACE and similar students not enrolled in the program. However, when considering participation in Texas ACE across two programming years at the 60 days or more threshold, students participating in Texas ACE had a nearly 42% higher chance of being promoted to the next grade level relative to nonparticipating youth. Some important grade-level differences were noted here as well, with negative effects on grade-level promotion associated with students in elementary grade levels and positive effects associated with students in middle and high school.

The results outlined in this chapter so far provided relatively few definitive indications that participation in Texas ACE is having a substantial positive effect on the school-related outcomes examined, with the most substantive effects associated with a reduction in disciplinary incidents when students participated for 120 days or more and in relation to grade-level promotion for students attending Texas ACE for 2 years or more at 60 days or more. Thus, the evaluation team encourages the reader to keep a couple of key points in mind.

- The effectiveness analyses highlighted in this section of the chapter are based on an examination of average effects across the 460 centers active in providing Texas ACE during the 2017–18 school year. As shown in both Chapters 3 and 4, there is a fair degree of diversity in terms of how centers go about the process of designing, delivering, and refining programming and the ways in which youth experience that programming. This raises the question, are certain types of programs more apt to demonstrate a positive association between participation in Texas ACE and desirable student outcomes? This question is examined in the next portion of this chapter.
- Limitations are associated with the method employed to carry out the effectiveness analyses summarized in the preceding sections. The methods employed to conduct these analyses were chosen to address issues of selection bias between students participating in Texas ACE and nonparticipating youth included in each analysis. The data for supporting these analyses were limited to what could be obtained from the PEIMS and STAAR data stores maintained by TEA. In this sense, there always is the possibility that other factors influenced the results that were not controlled for in the matching or multilevel analyses, resulting in selection bias that was not accounted for and which could be influencing the results highlighted in this chapter.

In the next section of this chapter, steps are taken to examine how the effect of participating in Texas ACE varies across centers.

Center Characteristics and Center-Level Effects on Youth Outcomes

One hallmark of the Texas ACE program is the diversity in how individual centers design and deliver programming and what this means for the types of experiences students have when attending Texas ACE activities and the types of student outcomes a given center is likely to support. As a result, it would be expected that some centers would be better positioned to support certain types of student outcomes. One of the goals of this section is to explore the extent to which individual centers active during the 2017–18 programming period were found to have a positive effect on school-related outcomes. For example, how many centers active during the 2017–18 programming period were found to have a positive effect on school-day attendance? This type of question will be answered in the initial portion of this section of the chapter.

To answer these types of questions, steps were taken to calculate a center-level effect estimate. In the previous section, analyses were based on calculating effect estimates across all centers active during the 2017–18 programming period. Here, these same effect estimates were calculated for each individual center.

Then, results presented explore how different center characteristics may be related to benefits of student participation in Texas ACE. A primary goal of the analyses that will be described was to potentially identify attributes or characteristics of Texas ACE implementation that may be more likely to be associated with positive student outcomes. A specific focus was placed on those practices and approaches that centers could work toward or adopt related to program design and delivery that may better support the achievement of desired student outcomes.

Calculating Center-Level Effects and Examining the Distribution Across Centers

One of the goals of calculating center-level effect sizes for each center active during the 2017–18 programming period was to identify how many centers demonstrated a positive effect on student outcomes and how many centers had a negative effect on youth outcomes. To calculate center-level effects, PSM was used to match Texas ACE program participants with similar nonparticipants at the center level. That is, for each center, students were matched to nonattending students who were enrolled in the school or schools affiliated with the center. Although similar conceptually to the analyses summarized earlier in this chapter, this set of analyses conducted the matching process for each center individually versus statewide. Students attending programming for 60 days or more were matched with similar youth attending the same schools but not participating in programming. This resulted in each center having a specific effect estimate of how Texas ACE participation was associated with school-related outcomes. Like statewide analyses described in the previous section, this approach to calculating center-level effects does not control for student characteristics such as student interest or motivation to attend programming. In this sense, there may be some key differences between students attending programming and those who opted not to that are not controlled for in these models that could be biasing the results. The reader should keep these limitations in mind.

Two sets of center-level effects were calculated. For one set, students attending the program for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period were matched with students attending the same schools served by the center but did not participate in the program. For the second set of analyses, students attending Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods were matched with nonparticipating students. The number of centers included in each type of analysis differed slightly, depending on how many centers had a viable number of Texas ACE participants with data available on the outcome being examined and the extent to which matched students could be found for participating students. The number of centers included in each analysis is in Tables 5.3 and 5.4.

As shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4, the percentage of centers associated with a positive effect varied across the outcomes examined. A very high percentage of centers were associated with a positive effect on school-day attendance, with 96% of the centers included in the analysis assessing the effect of 1 year of participation on school-day attendance (see Table 5.3) associated with a positive effect on this outcome. Among centers included in the 2 years of participation analysis (see Table 5.4), 88% of the centers were

associated with a positive effect on student school-day attendance. However, consistent with the statewide analyses, the average effect for centers associated with a positive effect on school-day attendance was still small, averaging 1.19 and 1.29 percentage points, respectively, or approximately 2.14 to 2.32 additional days of school attendance in a 180-day school year.

Table 5.3. Percentage of Centers, Average Effect, and Range of Effects by Centers Having Either a Positive or a Negative Effect on Student Outcomes: 1 Year of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

Student outcome	Total centers	Centers with a positive effect			Centers with a negative effect		
		% of total	Average effect	Range of effects	% of total	Average effect	Range of effects
Academic performance							
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	339	47%	+9.99 points	+0.04 to +41.93 points	53%	-14.75 points	-0.35 to -208.82 points
STAAR Reading	340	29%	+9.54 points	+0.11 to +51.46 points	71%	-19.04 points	-0.07 to -286.26 points
Career and technical education credits earned	63	79%	+5.87 percentage points	+0.01 to 23.03 percentage points	21%	-2.95 percentage points	-0.6 to -8.76 percentage points
Student behaviors							
School-day attendance	418	96%	+1.19 percentage points	+0.01 to +7.89 percentage points	4%	-0.52	-0.01 to -3.41 percentage points
Disciplinary incidents	418	57%	-11.23% chance of an incident occurring	-0.01% to -72.25% chance of an incident occurring	43%	+10.33% chance of an incident occurring	+0.01% to +72.47% chance of an incident occurring

Source. STAAR scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Table 5.4. Percentage of Centers, Average Effect, and Range of Effects by Centers Having Either a Positive or Negative Effect on Student Outcomes: 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

Student outcome	Total centers	Centers with a positive effect			Centers with a negative effect		
		% of total	Average effect	Range of effects	% of total	Average effect	Range of effects
Academic performance							
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	229	55%	+29.09 points	+0.21 to +132.56 points	45%	-28.82 points	-0.15 to -107.03 points
STAAR Reading	233	39%	+24.87 points	+0.01 to +81.89 points	61%	-33.93 points	-0.22 to -123.79 points
Career and technical education credits earned	24	79%	+4.70 percentage points	+0.01 to +21.18 percentage points	21%	-2.95 percentage points	-0.01 to -5.27 percentage points
Student behaviors							
School-day attendance	289	88%	+1.29 percentage points	+0.01 to +6.53 percentage points	12%	-0.56	-0.01 to -1.57 percentage points
Disciplinary incidents	289	55%	-16.89% chance of an incident occurring	-0.01% to -160.26% chance of an incident occurring	45%	+11.66% chance of an incident occurring	+0.01% to +127.00% chance of an incident occurring

Source. STAAR scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 and 2017–18.

Similar results were found in relation to the percentage of CTE credits earned. For this outcome, 79% of the centers had a positive effect on Texas ACE participants. This was the case for the percentage of CTE credits earned after both 1 and 2 years of participation in the program. The average effect also was similar after both 1 and 2 years of participation in the program, with students participating in Texas ACE demonstrating a 4.70 to 5.87 percentage point difference compared with students not participating in Texas ACE in terms of the percentage of CTE credits successfully earned.

More variability existed in terms of the percentage of centers associated with a positive effect on STAAR Mathematics and STAAR Reading. In terms of STAAR Mathematics, 47% of the centers had a positive effect after 1 year of Texas ACE participation, whereas this increased slightly to 55% of the centers when assessing the effect associated with 2 years of participation in Texas ACE at the 60 days or more threshold. In addition, the average effect noticeably increased between 1 and 2 years of Texas ACE participation in centers associated with a positive effect on STAAR Mathematics. Students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period scored almost 10 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment than students not participating in Texas ACE (see Table 5.3). When students participated at this level across 2 years, this average difference increased to 29 scale score points (see Table 5.4).

Similar results were observed in relation to STAAR Reading scores. Here, students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period scored almost 10 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Reading assessment than students not participating in Texas ACE (see Table 5.3). When students participated at this level across 2 years, this average difference increased to approximately 25 scale score points (see Table 5.4). However, fewer centers overall were associated with a positive effect on STAAR Reading scores, with only 29% of the centers associated with a positive effect after 1 year of Texas ACE participation and 39% after 2 years of Texas ACE participation at the 60 days or more threshold.

Finally, more than 50% of the centers had a positive outcome, on average, pertaining to disciplinary incidents, with Texas ACE participants demonstrating fewer incidents than matched students not participating in Texas ACE. As with the results related to STAAR Mathematics and Reading, students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more across 2 years demonstrated a lower chance of incurring a disciplinary incident than students participating at this threshold for 1 year (-17% chance compared with a -11% chance, respectively—see Tables 5.3 and 5.4).

The findings related to STAAR Mathematics and Reading scores and fewer disciplinary incidents highlighted in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 may be of interest because evidence was found that average effects were larger when students stayed engaged in programming across 2 years at the 60 days or more threshold versus when students attended programming at this level for just 1 year. This type of growth in a positive program effect across multiple years of sustained program participation represents the type of outcome one would hope to see by participating in the program. These findings may warrant additional exploration in future years of the project.

Association Between Center Characteristics and Center-Level Effects

A second goal of calculating center-level effect sizes was to explore how different center characteristics may be related to positive student outcomes. The intent was to identify a set of promising approaches or elements that characterized center operation that could be more broadly supported or adopted with the goal of improving the likelihood that Texas ACE would support positive student outcomes.

The characteristics examined in undertaking these analyses were first informed by the conceptual framework introduced at the beginning of the report (see Figure 1.1). Some of the characteristics examined related specifically to the level of observed program quality among centers associated with the site visit sample.²⁴ Other characteristics related to the levels of student attendance in Texas ACE and their reported experiences related to attending their Texas ACE program based on responses to the youth experience survey. Finally, additional operational elements were examined as well, including the staffing model employed by the center as well as the degree to which it offered Texas ACE programming during the summer.

Center Characteristics Related to Program Quality

Given that they were based on data obtained from observations of Texas ACE programming, measures of program quality were available for only those centers selected for inclusion in the sample of centers visited in spring 2018. Scores derived from scoring the PQA and the APT-O were used to place each center associated with the site visit sample into evenly divided higher and lower quality groups. Steps were then taken to explore how the average effect size differed between the higher and lower quality groups across the student outcomes examined: STAAR Reading and Mathematics, school-day attendance, and disciplinary incidents.

²⁴ For analyses based on PQA and APT-O data obtained from the site visits, it was possible to examine only center-level effect sizes for STAAR Reading and Mathematics, school-day attendance, and disciplinary incidents. Effect sizes for CTE credits earned also were calculated but not viable to examine in relation to the PQA and APT-O data because only two high schools were part of the site visit sample. Center-level effects were not included in the analyses outlined in this section of the chapter because too many centers lacked students who did not advance to the next grade level, making the calculation of a center-level effect impossible.

Separate descriptive analyses were performed using effect sizes based on (a) those students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period and (b) those students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. A complete summary of results is in Tables E5.12–E5.23 in Appendix E.

Overall, centers classified as being in the higher quality group based on PQA scores demonstrated average effect sizes on student outcomes not substantially different from centers in the lower quality group or, in some cases, less effective effect sizes. These results were not consistent with the expectation that centers with better scores on the PQA would demonstrate better student outcomes. However, the results summarized in Chapter 4 seemed to suggest that performance on the PQA was more connected to positive youth experiences in Texas ACE among middle school participants specifically (see Figures 4.18 and 4.19). This issue may warrant consideration in future reports, which will examine the relationship between center characteristics and student outcomes across centers involved in site visit data collection activities across the 2016–17 to 2018–19 programming periods.

Centers with greater adoption of mathematics and verbal communication practices outlined on the APT-O were associated with larger center-level effects related to STAAR Mathematics achievement in particular. Although centers falling in the higher quality group based on PQA scores did not have substantially different average effect sizes across all the school-related outcomes examined, some noticeable differences were found between higher and lower quality groups based on APT-O scores. This was specifically found in relation to center-level effects associated with students attending Texas ACE during both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. These results were not found when examining center-level effects associated with students attending 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period only.

Specifically, in centers with greater adoption of mathematics practices identified on the APT-O, the average effect size for STAAR Mathematics scores was +6.87 scale score points, meaning students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored almost 7 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment than similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in Texas ACE. In centers with lower adoption of these practices, the average effect size for STAAR Mathematics was -15.63 scale score points.

Similar results were found when centers were classified as being higher adopters of practices on the verbal communication scale of the APT-O. In this case, centers with greater adoption of these practices had an average effect size for STAAR Mathematics that was +7.01 scale score points, whereas centers that adopted these practices less had an average effect size of -9.34 scale score points.

Centers classified as higher implementing based on KPI data also demonstrated larger center-level effects in relation to several student outcomes. In addition to PQA and APT-O quality scores, another measure of quality associated with the site visit sample was a center's assignment to either being a higher or lower implementing center based on the KPIs described in Chapter 3. More specifically, centers classified as higher implementing based on the KPI data represented in the site visit sample demonstrated larger center-level effects related to STAAR Mathematics assessment scores, school-day attendance, and disciplinary incidents (meaning fewer incidents), on average, for students attending 60 days or more during the both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods than centers in the lower implementing group. These results were not found when examining center-level effects associated with students attending 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period only.

Specifically, in centers classified as higher implementing based on KPI data, the average effect size for STAAR Mathematics scores was +3.16 scale score points, meaning students participating in Texas ACE at this level scored slightly more than 3 scale score points higher, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment than similar students attending the same schools who did not participate in Texas ACE. This is a small effect. In the lower implementing centers, the average effect size for STAAR Mathematics was -8.94 scale score points.

In terms of effect sizes related to school-day attendance, higher implementing centers demonstrated an average effect of +1.03 percentage points in terms of the percentage of school days attended or approximately 1.85 additional days of school attendance in a 180-day school year relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. In the lower implementing centers, the average effect was only +0.60 percentage points.

Finally, in the higher implementing centers based on KPI data, the average effect on disciplinary incidents was a 10.18% reduction in the chance that an incident would occur, whereas in the lower implementing centers, the average effect was an 0.90% increase that a disciplinary incident would occur.

Although both select measures from the APT-O and the KPIs seem to potentially hold some promise in terms of being positively associated with student outcomes, the small *n* size associated with the site visit sample means that these results should be considered as exploratory and in need of further study to ensure that they are replicated across the other site visit samples.

Center Characteristics Related to Student Attendance in Programming

Student attendance in Texas ACE also is a key component of the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1.1, with several studies showing that sustained participation in high-quality afterschool programming is positively associated with desired student outcomes (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Naftzger et al., 2013; Naftzger et al., 2018). Center success in keeping students engaged in Texas ACE programs was examined by assessing how the KPIs related to program attendance may be associated with the center-level effects calculated for students participating for 60 days or more in 2017–18 and across both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. The goal was to explore if centers that demonstrated more success in keeping students engaged in Texas ACE programs demonstrated more positive effect sizes, on average, relative to centers demonstrating less success in keeping youth enrolled in and participating in programming.

The three KPIs related to Texas ACE program attendance are as follows:

- Percentage of students attending Texas ACE in both the fall and spring semesters of the school year
- Percentage of students attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE during the programming period
- Percentage of students attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE across two programming years

Given that there is an association between how a center performs on this set of indicators and the grade level served by the center, with centers serving middle and high school students demonstrating lower levels of performance, centers were classified into quartiles by grade level based on their performance on each indicator. This quartile value was then used in the analyses to assess the relationship between center performance on that indicator and center-level effects. A fourth variable was calculated as well, which represented the average quartile value across all three program attendance indicators for the center.

In addition, steps were taken to identify if a given center could be classified as having high average student attendance in Texas ACE during the 2017–18 programming period. A similar variable was created and used in analyses reported in the previous Texas ACE evaluation report (Arellano et al., 2020). It is important to note that the definition of high average attendance in Texas ACE varied by grade level. High elementary program attendance was defined as 280 hours or more; high middle school attendance was defined as 128 hours or more; and high attendance for high school youth was defined as 75 hours or more. In the *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*, centers where average student attendance in Texas ACE was at a higher level had more of an association with positive STAAR Reading effects.

Unlike center characteristics related to program quality, variables summarizing how successful centers were in keeping students enrolled in Texas ACE were available for most centers active during the 2017–18 programming period (*n* = 421). In addition, because the sample size was larger, a different approach was used to explore how variables summarizing levels of center program attendance were related to center-level effect sizes. To undertake these analyses, center-level effect estimates described in the previous

section served as the outcome variables in a series of multiple regression models run to explore how center characteristics like those related to program attendance were related to the center-level effects examined. Separate analyses were run when effect sizes were based on those students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period and when effect sizes were based on students participating in programming for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. Additional information about how these analyses were conducted is in Appendix E.

Texas ACE program attendance KPIs were positively related to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics performance. For centers with students attending Texas ACE programming in both 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods for 60 days or more, there was largely a significant and positive association between higher levels of performance on the program attendance-related KPIs and center-level effects pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics (see Table E5.5 in Appendix E for additional details). In this sense, center-level effect sizes related to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics assessment scores were significantly larger in centers that performed better on the program attendance-related indicators, although the effects were still generally small. This was not the case in relation to center-level effects associated with students attending programming for 60 days or more only during the 2017–18 programming period. These results highlight the potential value of the using the program attendance KPIs as an intermediate indicator given that performance on these metrics has now been shown to be related to positive student outcomes.

Similar positive findings were found in relation to centers that demonstrated high average program attendance during the 2017–18 programming period in terms of STAAR Reading performance. Centers where the average student attendance in Texas ACE was at a higher level had more of an association with larger STAAR Reading impact estimates for those students attending 60 days or more of Texas ACE programming in both 2016–17 and 2017–18 (see Table E5.6 in Appendix E for additional details). This result was consistent with findings from the *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*.

Center Characteristics Related to Youth Experiences in Programming

As described in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4, participation in high-quality afterschool programs has been associated with a variety of experiences in programming that have been linked to the positive development of participating students. These experiences include providing youth with the opportunity to experience a sense of agency by allowing choice and autonomy in program offerings (Beymer et al., 2018; Larson & Angus, 2011; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Nagaoka, 2016) and experiencing a sense of belonging and mattering through positive and supportive relationships, both with activity leaders and their peers in the program (Akiva et al., 2013; Auger et al., 2013; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Kauh, 2011; Larson & Dawes, 2015; Miller, 2007). Each area was measured on the youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in a sample of centers ($n = 48$ where it was possible to also calculate center-level effect sizes for that center). Using the same type of regression approaches as described in the previous section, steps were taken to assess if there was a relationship between how a center performed on these areas assessed by the youth experience survey and the center-level effect sizes. Variables included in these regression models represented the mean score for the center on the opportunity for agency and positive relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program scales. A series of other measures from the youth experience survey also were included in these analyses, as described in greater detail in Appendix E.

It was hypothesized that average scores on the positive relationship scales with activity leaders and other youth in the program would be positively associated with center-level effect sizes, but this was not the case (see Table E5.10 in Appendix E). Only nonsignificant relationships were found between these scales and the center-level effect sizes examined.

Inconsistent findings were found in relation to centers providing more frequent opportunities for Texas ACE participants to experience a sense of agency and center-level effect sizes. Mean scale scores related to opportunities for youth to experience a sense of agency had less of an association with fewer disciplinary incidents and CTE credits earned (moderately significant²⁵) by youth attending the programming for 60 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period. However, for youth attending 60 days or more programming in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods, mean scale scores related to opportunities for youth to experience a sense of agency were associated with larger effects and fewer disciplinary incidents. This latter finding was consistent with what would be hypothesized (see Table E5.10 in Appendix E for additional details).

Center Characteristics Related to Youth-Reported Outcomes

Questions on the youth experience survey also asked students to reflect on how they may have benefitted from participation in Texas ACE. In the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1.1, these types of outcomes would fall under the heading of direct program outcomes. Student growth and development across these types of outcomes happen within the confines of the program and often can be observed directly by the staff leading afterschool activities, making them a natural place to start when assessing how participation in Texas ACE may have benefitted participating youth.

The more common ways that students taking the youth experience survey indicated benefitting from program participation were examined using the same regression techniques described in the previous section to explore how they may be related to center-level effect sizes. The following variables were constructed to support this effort and included in the regression models in question:

- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them feel good about themselves
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them with their confidence
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them develop new interests
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them make new friends

Centers with a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence were positively associated with a variety of center-level effects. The proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them with their confidence was positively associated with STAAR Mathematics assessment scores for youth attending 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods and with STAAR Reading scores for youth attending 60 days or more in the 2016–17 programming period (moderately significant). In addition, centers that had a greater proportion of youth who indicated that the program helped them with their confidence also were associated with larger effects related to fewer disciplinary incidents (moderately significant).

In addition, the proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them feel good about themselves was significantly related to larger effects associated with school-day attendance, both for youth attending Texas ACE programming for 60 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period and those attending at this threshold in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods.

However, the proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them develop new interests and new friends were associated with smaller center-level effects related to STAAR Mathematics and STAAR Reading assessment scores (see Table E5.11 in Appendix E for more details).

Other Center Characteristics

For those regression analyses involving all the centers active during the 2017–18 programming period, a series of additional center characteristics was included in the models to assess how they may be related

²⁵ The reader is urged to be cautious in interpreting this finding because it was only moderately significant ($p < .10$). The evaluation team decided to note of the finding given the exploratory nature of these analyses.

to the center-level effect sizes that were calculated. These additional center characteristics were derived from data housed in the Tx21st and PEIMS and had been significantly associated with center-level effect sizes based on analyses conducted in relation to and summarized in the *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*. The additional characteristics as well as the findings associated with students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period and in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods are as follows:

Staffing Model

Variables were created to represent two types of staffing models employed by centers operating during the 2017–18 programming period.

- Centers where 50% or more of the staff were school-day teachers
- Centers where 50% or more of the staff were college students or paraprofessionals

Findings from the *2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report* demonstrated that centers mostly staffed by teachers had a greater association with fewer disciplinary incidents during the school day relative to centers employing a different staffing model (Arellano et al., 2020), although this finding was not observed in relation to the 2017–18 programming period, other positive associations were found between centers mostly staffed by school-day teachers. The opposite was true for centers staffed mostly by college students or paraprofessionals, where in both the previous and current report, negative associations were found between centers employing this staffing model and certain student outcomes.

More specifically, centers largely staffed by school-day teachers were positively associated with STAAR assessment outcomes. Centers where 50% or more of the staff were school-day teachers had a greater association with larger effects in STAAR Reading assessment scores (moderately significant) for students attending 60 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period and STAAR Mathematics assessment scores for students attending 60 days or more in both 2015–16 and 2016–17 (also moderately significant) programming periods. However, a negative association was found between centers staffed mostly by teachers and center effects related to school-day attendance. Finally, centers where 50% or more of the staff were mostly college students or paraprofessionals were found to have an association with significantly smaller effects related to STAAR Reading assessments for students attending 60 days or more in the 2016–17 programming period. (See Table E5.7 in Appendix E for additional details.)

Summer Programming

High summertime programming days were defined as those centers that offered approximately 150 hours or more of programming in summer 2017. In the *2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*, centers operating at this level during the summer had more of an association with positive effects on STAAR Mathematics assessment scores and a greater association with fewer disciplinary incident referrals than centers offering fewer than 150 hours of summer programming (Arellano et al., 2020). This effect was not replicated in relation to the 2017–18 programming period.

However, multiple positive relationships were found between high levels of summer programming and center-level effects. Centers that offered approximately 150 hours or more of programming during the summer had more of an association with larger effects on STAAR Mathematics assessment scores (moderately significant) and a greater association with larger effects on school-day attendance and CTE credits earned. This finding specifically relates to students attending 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period. In this sense, offering extended summer programming may contribute to achieving desired student outcomes after 1 year of participation in Texas ACE. (See Table E5.6 in Appendix E for additional details.)

Higher need population than affiliated school(s). Variables were created to represent centers characterized by students attending Texas ACE programming who were classified as economically disadvantaged, ELs, identified for special education services, and/or were identified as being

academically at risk at a higher percentage than the overall school population where these youth were enrolled. In the 2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report, center-level impact estimates pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics were significantly smaller than in centers where the Texas ACE and school populations were more similar on this set of characteristics (Arellano et al., 2020).

Centers serving a higher need student population generally demonstrated lower effects on the student outcomes examined. In centers that served a higher need population than affiliated school(s), center-level impact estimates pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics were generally smaller than in centers where the Texas ACE and school populations were more similar on this set of characteristics. This was the case for students attending 60 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period and those students attending 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. In addition, for students attending 60 days or more in 2017–18, a negative association was found between some center characteristics, indicating that the center served a higher need population than the school overall, and center-level impact estimates related to school-day attendance. (See Table E5.8 in Appendix E for additional details.)

Summary of Program Effectiveness Findings

Funding for Texas ACE programs supports the academic development of participating students and promote behaviors that will contribute to school-day success. In addition, some evidence indicates that the more youth participate in programming as measured by days of attendance, the more likely they will be able to benefit from their participation in programming (Arellano et al., 2020; Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). This hypothesis was tested in a series of program effectiveness analyses conducted to assess how youth participation in Texas ACE at different levels was related to youth improvement on a series of school-related outcomes. Results from these analyses were generally mixed.

Steps were initially taken to assess how students participating in Texas ACE across different attendance bands (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days) performed on a series of school-related outcomes compared with similar students attending the same schools not participating in Texas ACE selected through a matching process to reduce the effect of selection bias on program effectiveness estimates. These analyses focused on program attendance levels during the 2017–18 programming period specifically. Participation in Texas ACE was most consistently associated with school-day attendance and the earning of CTE credits by high school students in terms of positive effects, although these effects were generally small.

For some outcomes, the relationship between participation in Texas ACE and desired performance on the outcome in question was negative at lower levels of Texas ACE attendance, but it became a positive relationship when a certain threshold of attendance had been achieved, particularly when students reached 120 days or more of Texas ACE participation. This circumstance occurred when assessing the relationship between program participation and performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment and the incurring of disciplinary incidents during the 2017–18 school year.

For other outcomes, the relationship between participation in Texas ACE and desired performance on the outcome in question was either not significant or negative across each attendance band examined. The relationship between program participation and performance on EOC assessments taken in high school and grade-level promotion were not significant irrespective of the level of participation in Texas ACE, although in the case of grade-level promotion, some significant differences were found across different grade levels.

Finally, only a significant negative association was found between participation in Texas ACE and STAAR Reading assessment scores, although the size of the effect decreased as program participation increased.

Generally, it is not clear exactly how useful this set of analyses was in helping the program discover actionable results pertaining to the relationship between different levels of Texas ACE attendance and the associated effect on the domain of school-related outcomes under consideration. When positive effects have been consistently found, which has been the case with school-day attendance and the earning of

CTE credits, the effects have been rather small. The same can be said about the positive effects observed in relation to STAAR Mathematics when students reached the threshold of participating in the program for 120 days or more or even the consistent negative effects associated with STAAR Reading results. As such, TEA may want to evaluate the underlying benefit of examining program effects across several attendance bands relative to the cost in undertaking those analyses in the future or consider exploring different approaches to creating potential comparison groups, including using students who participated in Texas ACE programming but less frequently.

Considering these results, steps were taken to explore how centers varied in terms of what effect they may have had on student outcomes by calculating individual effect sizes for each center. One goal for calculating center-level effect sizes for each active center during the 2017–18 programming period was to identify how many centers demonstrated a positive effect on student outcomes and how many centers had a negative effect on youth outcomes. These data also allowed for how an examination of how center-level effects may have varied across different center characteristics.

In terms of a positive association between participating in Texas ACE and student outcomes, more promise appears to be associated with students participating in programming for 60 days or more across two programming years when examining center-level effect specifically. There seemed to be two types of analyses that may warrant replication in the future.

The first pertains to the identification of centers with a positive effect on student outcomes when steps were taken to calculate center-level effect estimates using PSM. When the effects in this subset of centers were examined, the average effect size was found to increase when examining students who participated in programming for 60 days or more in just the 2017–18 programming period compared with students who participated in programming at this threshold in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. For the latter group, students participating in Texas ACE across the 2 years at this level scored an average of 29 scale score points higher on the STAAR Mathematics assessment and 25 scale score points higher on the STAAR Reading assessment than matched students not participating in Texas ACE. After 1 year of participation in programming at the 60 days or more threshold, these average differences were approximately 10 scale score points for each assessment in centers found to have a positive association between Texas ACE attendance and STAAR assessment scores. Thus, these results may suggest that students participating in centers with a positive effect on STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores demonstrate more growth on these assessments the more they participate in Texas ACE.

A similar trend occurred in relation to disciplinary incidents, where students attending Texas ACE programming for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period in centers demonstrating fewer disciplinary incidents averaged an 11% lower chance of incurring an incident relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. When examining 2 years of Texas ACE program participation at the 60 days or more threshold, this chance had declined further to a 17% lower chance of an incident occurring.

This type of potential growth in a positive program effect across multiple years of sustained program participation represents the type of outcome one would hope to see by participating in the program. These findings likely warrant additional exploration in preparation of the next report to further unpack what may be happening in these centers specifically that may be supporting the achievement of these outcomes.

In addition, several center characteristics were related to positive student outcomes when examining students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods, including the following:

- Centers scoring better on the program attendance KPIs, which highlighted the degree of center success in retaining students in programming and demonstrated high average program attendance
- Centers largely staffed by school-day teachers
- Centers providing more frequent opportunities for Texas ACE participants to experience a sense of agency

- Centers with a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence
- Centers classified as higher implementing based on KPI data, which highlighted the degree of center success in retaining students in programming, providing students with experiences related to positive development, and having students improve on school-related outcomes.
- Centers with greater adoption of mathematics and verbal communication practices described on the APT-O

Here again, it is recommended that analyses undertaken in the next report focus on further exploring if these relationships hold true more broadly across multiple samples. The goal in undertaking these analyses would be to assess how each characteristic may be related to the types of approaches to Texas ACE program design and delivery highlighted in Chapters 3 and 4. For example, in Chapter 4, steps were taken to describe how students who reported more opportunities to experience a sense of agency and better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program were more apt to indicate that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves, both of which were connected to the school-related outcomes examined in this section of the chapter. In this sense, there may be an opportunity to further describe a sequence of practices, youth experiences, and school-related outcomes when conducting analyses for the next report that builds from this set of findings.

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Chapter 6. Local Evaluation Summary

Objective 6

- What is the status of efforts to support the local evaluation efforts of Texas ACE grantees?
- What have been learned through the development and deployment of local evaluation tools and processes?
- What steps are being taken to help codify local evaluation tools and processes?

Introduction

A distinct objective for the evaluation of the Texas 21st CCLC program is to develop and refine resources and guidelines to assist grantees in engaging in local evaluation efforts for continuous improvement. This chapter describes the approach taken to incorporate a local evaluation framework with a group of centers in the third year of the evaluation contract. The narrative describes the local evaluation concept, the process for updating a set of updated local evaluation guidelines, a description of the LESI, plus insights and lessons learned from centers that participated in the initiative.

Local Program Evaluation Concept

There are many important reasons for conducting rigorous local program evaluations. As outlined in the 21st CCLC Request for Applications (RFAs), all 21st CCLC grantees are required to work with an independent program evaluator to complete a local program evaluation of 21st CCLC implementation at the center level. As part of this process, TEA requires that grantees submit logic models for each center in the fall and an executive summary of program evaluation results in the summer, in addition to posting full evaluation reports online. The goals are to support continuous program improvement and sustainability of local Texas ACE programs beyond the grant period.²⁶ When done well, program evaluation can offer the ability to collect valuable, actionable data to drive ongoing program development. This evaluation increases the likelihood that centers will achieve Texas ACE goals, including desired student-level outcomes. Moreover, program evaluation can be critical for sustainability, giving districts a meaningful way to communicate with local stakeholders and tell their center's story. Sharing program evaluation results can improve opportunities for partners and resources, as well as support outreach and recruitment efforts.

TEA asserted its belief in the importance of local program evaluation when it began developing the Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide with input from grantees and their local program evaluators. The guide was intended to help all 21st CCLC grantees understand the importance of local program evaluation and the role it plays in continuous program improvement.²⁷ In addition, by promoting common approaches across multiple grantees and centers, TEA is better positioned to work toward developing common program-specific measures that state systems can generate for local programs. In the past, state-level efforts supported local evaluation efforts and were geared solely toward developing local capacity for local evaluation (TEA, 2017). Feedback and field experience informed TEA about the underuse of resources, and centers struggled to make improvements in how local evaluation was conducted and applied. For this reason, TEA sought further refinement of local evaluation guidance to increase the tools available to local programs for practical application of evaluation findings across Texas ACE.

In 2018–19, AIR and the Diehl Consulting Group continued the work started in the 2017–18 evaluation year to reimagine the local evaluation support that TEA provides for Texas ACE. In 2017–18, a new Local Evaluation Guide and accompanying Local Evaluation Toolkit, which replaced the original Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, were produced. The guide walks centers step-by-step through how to plan and conduct an evaluation, while also providing a toolkit of templates, tools, and measures to

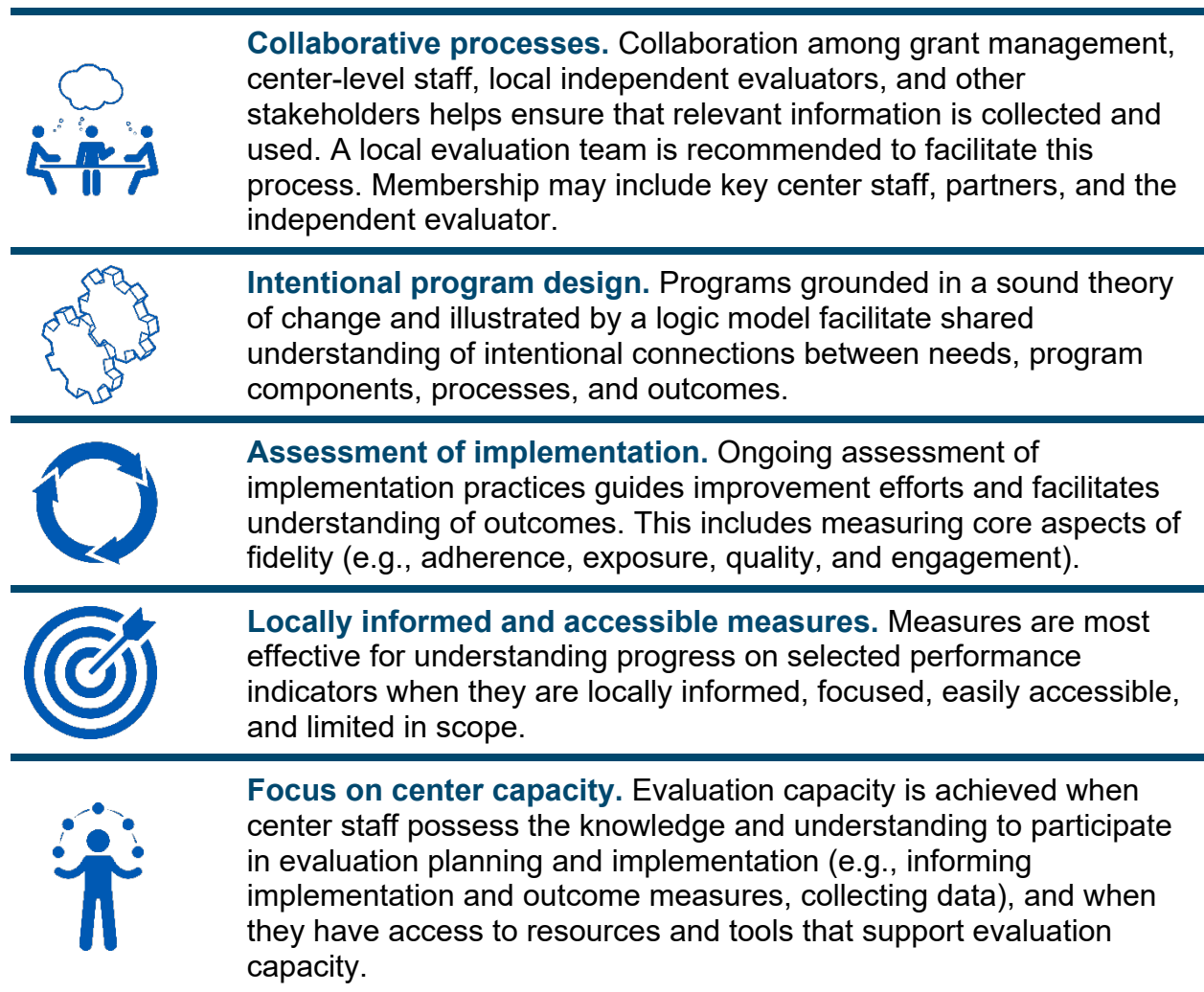
²⁶ See the Texas ACE Cycle 9 RFA (TEA, 2016) and Texas ACE Cycle 10 RFA (TEA, 2018).

²⁷ Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, Cycle 9.

support implementation of the new guide. A goal for Year 2 of the local evaluation work included updating the Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit to reflect additional input from centers and stakeholders after having had time to absorb and implement concepts and tools from both resources. To aid the updating process, the statewide evaluation team reengaged a Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG) consisting of key Texas ACE stakeholders that served as a platform for obtaining stakeholder input for the development of the guide and the creation of the toolkit in the first year of the initiative. In addition, the initiative convened 31 centers from 19 grantees represented in the LESI to work directly with AIR in applying the newly developed tools and share feedback for further refinement of the tools and planning for future statewide requirements related to local program evaluation. This chapter provides an overview of the guide and toolkit components, the resulting outcomes, and recommendations for next steps for local evaluation in centers. The guide and toolkit are in Appendix H.

The purpose of this local evaluation effort is to support centers' capacity to engage in and conduct relevant, meaningful local evaluations that direct program improvement and support sustainability in a tangible way. A significant shift has been to move from a focus on independent evaluator-led activities to a more participatory and collaborative local evaluation process. The vision for this work was based on several key principles that drove the development and use of meaningful local evaluations (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1. Overview of Local Evaluation Key Principals



Source: Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide 2018–19.

Objectives for Supporting Local Evaluation Efforts

The statewide evaluation team had two key objectives for the 2018–19 year: (a) to support up to 32 centers to implement the key concepts detailed in the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide through webinars that draw on the content found in the guide and the toolkit and by providing written feedback to centers on various parts of the LESI process, and (b) to produce an updated version of the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide based on these key principles and an accompanying evaluation toolkit after obtaining further input on aspects of utility and relevance from stakeholders. The timeline for the 2018–19 LESI is in Table H1 in Appendix H.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative

LESI was conceptualized as an opportunity to test out new local evaluation approaches that could support further development before rollout to grantees statewide. In the first year of the pilot, only Cycle 9 centers were invited to participate (a maximum of 32 centers) if they met the requirements related to the capacity to participate in the process and meet all expectations. For the second year of implementation, LESI participation was open to a maximum of 32 centers that also met a similar set of criteria for Cycles 9 and 10 centers. Nineteen grantees and 31 centers agreed to participate and complete the entire process. The list of the participating centers is in Table H2 in Appendix H.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative Expectations

Although participation in LESI was voluntary and no elements were required, the participants had clear expectations. The process kicked off in September 2018 with an introductory webinar that was open to all centers potentially interested in learning more about participation in the initiative. After finalizing the recruitment of the 31 centers, the trainings began in October. The state evaluation team recognized center challenges in doing this initiative, especially given its timing and other evaluation activities already underway. The team, therefore, worked with centers to support their needs and help them adapt the process to make it as useful as possible to them. Additional articulated expectations included the following:

- Centers commit to implementing the evaluation approaches as outlined within the evaluation framework to the extent possible.
- Centers provide feedback to guide further development of the framework for other centers.
- Project directors identify team members who will receive training and appoint a team leader who will serve as the principal contact for the center. Suggested participants include the project director, the site coordinator, and the local evaluator, as appropriate for the grantee.
- Team members attend scheduled webinars (optional introductory webinar, plus training webinars).
- Centers complete homework assignments in-between webinars (including the selection of the PQA instrument, completion of the evaluation plan, completion of an action plan, and identification of local evaluation questions).

Centers work to implement their own action plans this year, building on this plan in future years for continuous improvement of their program. More information about the LESI process is in Appendix H.

Feedback for LESI Participants for Continuous Improvement

A benefit of participating in LESI is that centers could receive feedback related to components of the Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit that they were implementing by the statewide evaluation team. Centers submitted their logic models and evaluation plans in late fall 2018 for feedback. They also submitted their action plans in March 2019, and if they desired, they could submit their evaluation report for feedback before submitting it to TEA. The feedback was to assist centers to improve the quality, detail, and relevance for each evaluation component. The statewide evaluation team submitted summary feedback reports to TEA for each activity. Each task provided the state evaluation team with the opportunity to understand where centers needed additional supports. By relaying this information to TEA's Texas ACE Program Office, all parties could collaborate in suggesting future areas for support by the statewide evaluation technical assistance provider.

Reflections From Local Evaluation Support Initiative Participants

Perspectives and feedback were gathered both formally and informally from LESI participants through a reflection survey and email communications. In addition to the training webinars, the statewide evaluation team provided two technical support webinars to help troubleshoot and gather information on how the process was going. A formal reflection survey also was sent to LESI participants midway through the process. There were 23 respondents, representing 14 of the 19 grantees in the LESI process. Eighteen of the 31 participating LESI sites responded to the mid-reflection survey. Six themes emerged from participants about the success or challenges of the initiative and are captured here:

1. **Collaboration:** Participants expressed finding success and seeing great value in the amount of collaboration occurring as part of the local evaluation and quality assessment processes. Some of the feedback under this area included the following:



- An appreciation for obtaining various perspectives related to multiple stakeholder involvement, such as teachers, local evaluators, and parents.
- The opportunity to get program staff more involved and working together toward a common goal or plan while building stronger relationships.
- The materialization of new concepts or ideas to fulfill pertinent program needs.

Collaboration: “We are working together between both campus and staff, for the first time on the same page.”

2. **Logic Models:** Participants commonly mentioned both success and challenges related to developing and implementing logic models. Overall, statements appear to highlight a need for additional training on logic models. Participants highlighted the following successes and challenges:

- Some successes included the reevaluation and creation of logic models, connections between local evaluation and program needs to logic models, and clarity of goals.
- Challenges mentioned included unclear/confusing verbiage, lack of familiarization with logic model formatting and relationships between the concepts.

Logic Models:

“Understanding and creating opportunities for program alignment using our program needs assessment and logic models were a huge win.”

3. **Time:** Another common theme was the challenge of centers not having enough time. Centers mentioned the challenge of having insufficient time to do the requested activities as part of LESI. More specific details about these challenges are as follows:



- Scheduling challenges both at the site level or with the evaluation team: Having a common time for collaboration to occur.
- Time constraints were a challenge for the local evaluation plan development and quality assessment. More specifically, needing more time for data collection, gathering information from school staff, and observations.

Time:

“Developing the local evaluation team has been a challenge to involve members that can meet at the same time.”

4. **New Centers/Staff Challenges:** Several responses seemed to resonate with the experiences of new programs or newly staffed sites through this process. Some key takeaways include the following:

- Difficulty working through the evaluation process while still attempting to establish the program: Some aspects seemed to be more pertinent to new programs, whereas others seemed less applicable based on the development stages and the prioritization of some of these items.
- New staff felt overwhelmed by the amount of information while trying to understand the different tools and processes.

Challenges:

“As a new center, we are still working on setting up the foundations of our programs and feel like some of the evaluation process does not connect with or support directly what we do day-to-day in Year 1.”

5. **Webinars:** Several participants offered feedback connected to webinar content and delivery. Survey respondents indicated that the webinars were helpful in improving local evaluation planning and understanding the quality assessment process by going through examples. Areas of improvement include breaking up the content and shorter webinars.



6. **Value:** Perhaps the most emphasized parts about the value of the process were expressed in two parts: seeing the big picture and resources.

- Value for sites was expressed in being able to see how all the different elements and steps are connected and support meaningful local evaluation. It has allowed for more thoughtful planning and developing structures and processes for local evaluation.
- Resource wise, the evaluation toolkit and guide were mentioned as well as the presentation of strategies and techniques and learning about specific quality assessment tools. Other less tangible resources mentioned include feedback on materials and hearing what other programs are doing.

Utility of LESI:

“It is a useful process for stepping back from day-to-day detail and reflecting on our broader aims.”

LESI participants also were asked to give input on any recommendations to ideas they have to make the initiative better. The following ideas were captured through the mid-reflection survey:

Recommendations/Ideas Captured From the Mid-Reflection Survey

- It would be helpful to connect newer programs to more experienced programs and include more sharing of practical advice on key problem areas.
- A consideration for the initiative is to include an interactive site or space where program staff can ask questions and have responses from other programs, such as a thread or forum.
- Consider implementing shorter and more frequent webinars to prevent information overload for participants.
- Participants would like suggestions on how to help measure social emotional impacts better.
- Respondents mentioned the need for additional training on quality assessment measures, logic models, and the theory of change.
- A suggestion was made for program site visits to facilitate local evaluation efforts and enhance program quality.
- Another suggestion included developing an introductory program for new centers geared toward troubleshooting some of the initial obstacles and “growing pains” that newer programs face.



Local Evaluation Advisory Group

To support the success of this local evaluation work, AIR and Diehl Consulting Group convened an LEAG in the first iteration of the work, with the objective to produce a Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit. Because the goals in this project were centered on making local evaluation meaningful to drive improvement, gathering feedback from a key set of stakeholders was instrumental in ensuring that (a) the new local evaluation was headed in the right direction, (b) centers could feasibly implement the approaches, and (c) materials were usable for diverse roles from evaluators to frontline staff. Therefore, the statewide evaluation team facilitated a series of meetings to (a) elicit feedback on the approach and rollout of the LESI, (b) understand what the LEAG thought worked well or did not work well or needed clarity on the local evaluation blueprint (to inform the new local evaluation guidelines), and (c) provide guidance on the local evaluation guidelines through reviews and the provision of feedback on the draft guidelines.

The statewide evaluation team reconvened the LEAG two times during 2018–19 to assist in the updating of the local evaluation guidelines and toolkit. Sixteen of the original 19 LEAG members who participated in the first year, 2017–18 continued their participation in 2018–19. The LEAG was composed of diverse stakeholders that support Texas ACE implementation, including project directors, independent evaluators, and internal district evaluators and representing thirteen districts across Cycles 9 and 10.²⁸ A list of stakeholders and their roles in the LEAG is in Table H3 in Appendix H.

The LEAG gathered two times in the 2018–19 school year: April 2019 and July 2019. The meeting agendas are in Appendix H. LEAG members played an active role in participatory working meetings, providing substantive feedback and recommendations. In addition, LEAG participants had the opportunity to submit written input outside meetings through access to the electronic draft materials.

Development Process for the Updated Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit

The updated Local Evaluation Guide, along with the Toolkit, is meant to serve as a comprehensive guide to conducting local evaluations in Texas ACE. It clearly outlines TEA's requirements for local evaluation, as well as recommended best practices, in a user-friendly format for all Texas ACE stakeholders to understand and execute their role in the evaluation. The guide includes the approaches that were core to the first 2 years of the LESI and expands on them to present centers with a full sequence of how to conduct both process and outcome evaluation, including building a theory of change and logic model. The guide also includes a continuous improvement process in a Develop-Assess-Review cycle to support the integration and use of the evaluation. Finally, the guide presents direction on reporting both to fulfill TEA requirements and present the evaluation findings in the most useful format for Texas ACE to share the story of their programs publicly and use the data internally for continuous improvement. The guide is in Appendix H. A supplemental Local Evaluation Toolkit with resources and templates to help centers implement the evaluation also was updated and released in August 2018. The toolkit is in Appendix H.

In terms of a process for updating the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit, the statewide evaluation team began updating the documents in spring 2019. The updates to both resources were based on feedback gathered from the LEAG and the LESI in 2018–19. Input from LEAG members conveyed that overall the guide and toolkit were very comprehensive. A few comments from members suggested adding some additional information related to action planning or including more resources related to data visualization and using infographics in Excel. The statewide evaluation team updated language in the guide to reflect the meaningful evaluation key principles or other places throughout. In the toolkit, resources were added related to conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis, as well as a magic quadrant template. Additional resources were added to the data visualization section, and a new section on introduction to stakeholder engagement in evaluation was added. Draft

²⁸ Some returning LEAG members formerly participated through a Cycle 8 grantee. In 2018–19, some of the same LEAG members returned but represented Cycle 10 grantees.

versions were reviewed by both TEA and the LEAG, modified to address suggestions, and ultimately finalized in August 2019.

Next Steps for Local Evaluation

The statewide evaluation team has proposed a different approach to the Year 3 LESI for the 2019–20 academic year. The idea is to work with fewer centers, but more frequently using more of a coaching approach to test whether a more intensive coaching approach can result in deeper understanding and implementation by centers. In addition to the written feedback at various points throughout the initiative, the idea is for check-in calls and e-mails between the LESI participants and an assigned LESI liaison that can support the centers in areas of challenges. Another proposed idea for the 2019–20 academic year is to produce short tutorial training videos related to key concepts from the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit. These 10–20-minute videos would focus on the main takeaways from the guide and toolkit to appeal to all sorts of adult learners and perhaps engage them in a way that the written documents might not. The idea is that the evaluation tutorials would be available to centers statewide as a companion to the guide and toolkit, not just the LESI participants (currently only LESI participants can attend the video trainings). This approach allows for Texas ACE to engage in asynchronous professional development about local evaluation, hopefully drawing in a broader set of centers to engage with the evaluation key principles as part of their continuous improvement process.

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Chapter 7. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

TEA solicited a comprehensive evaluation of its 21st CCLC grant program, known as Texas ACE, a program funded through Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to examine the implementation and effectiveness of the grant program based on federal requirements. TEA contracted with AIR in spring 2017 to conduct an evaluation of Texas ACE to assess implementation and outcomes associated with grants in Cycles 8 and 9. The contents of this report relate to implementation of the 21st CCLC program during the 2017–18 programming period.

Six objectives, as specified by TEA, guided the evaluation of the 21st CCLC program. Five objectives were addressed by the current evaluation report, and the remaining objective (Objective 5) was addressed through Best Practices Briefs that summarize emerging best practices based on the results gathered from the data collection and analysis activities undertaken in Years 1 and 2 of the evaluation. The six objectives of the 21st CCLC evaluation are in Table 7.1 with an alignment to the evaluation report chapters.

Table 7.1. Evaluation Objectives

Objective	Report chapter(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 1: Evaluation of the implementation of the 21st CCLC program statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 2: Evaluation of the impact of the 21st CCLC program statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5: The Impact of the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education [Texas ACE] Program on Youth Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 3: Evaluation of the implementation of the 21st CCLC program for a sample of centers Objective 4: Evaluation of the impact of the 21st CCLC program for a sample of centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program Implementation Chapter 4: Youth Experiences in Programming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 5: Analysis of best practices from the evaluation of the implementation and impact of the 21st CCLC program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best Practices Briefs (separate documents not in report)^a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 6: Annual local evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

^aThe briefs highlight specific practices identified through the evaluation that were conducive to the effective implementation of Texas ACE programming and designed to better convey this information to Texas ACE grantees and centers. The Texas Education Agency will disseminate the briefs to the Texas ACE community.

The Texas ACE program is designed to provide students attending schools in need of improvement or students who are at risk, according to a series of academic and social-emotional outcomes, with access to high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities designed to support their positive development. This report focuses on findings from evaluation activities undertaken by AIR to understand how Texas ACE was implemented during the 2017–18 programming period and how student participation in programming was associated with a series of school-related outcomes.

A key theme represented in most chapters of this report was an effort to identify characteristics, approaches, and practices employed by centers that were related to both positive youth experiences while participating in programming and the domain of school-related outcomes examined to assess program effectiveness. In this chapter of the report, steps are taken to synthesize what was learned about potentially promising characteristics, practices, and approaches.

Key Findings From Program Effectiveness Analyses

Sustained attendance in Texas ACE is especially important in terms of supporting desired student outcomes, particularly across multiple programming years. In this report, the issue of attendance in Texas ACE was examined in three primary ways. First, the association between program attendance and student outcomes was examined by exploring how different levels of Texas ACE attendance during the 2017–18 programming period were related to student outcomes when comparing Texas ACE participants with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. The following attendance bands were considered: less than 45 days, 45–59 days, 60–89 days, 90–119 days, and 120 days or more. The goal of these analyses was to identify key attendance thresholds that may be important for participating students to reach if a desired school-related outcome is more likely to be achieved.

This set of analyses focused on average effects across all students enrolled in programming in 2017–18 meeting these attendance thresholds. Results from these analyses were generally mixed, as described in greater detail in Chapter 5, and can be summarized as follows:

- Although increased attendance in programming was generally associated with more positive or, in relation to some outcomes, less negative effects, many of the effects found to exist were quite small and, in some cases, relatively inconsequential. The hypothesized relationship between program attendance and student outcomes seemed to be most supported by evidence of a consistent, positive relationship between participation in Texas ACE and school-day attendance and the earning of CTE credits. For these outcomes, higher program attendance was associated with larger program effects, although overall these effects were relatively small.
- For both disciplinary incidents and student performance on the STAAR Mathematics assessment, lower levels of participation in Texas ACE were first associated with a significant, nondesirable effect (i.e., more disciplinary incidents and lower STAAR Mathematics scores among Texas ACE participants) when compared with similar students not participating in Texas ACE. However, this result changed as participation in Texas ACE increased, ultimately resulting in a significant and desirable association between higher levels of program participation and performance on each outcome. This was particularly the case for students participating in Texas ACE for 120 days or more, who had a disciplinary incident rate that was 21% lower than for similar nonparticipating youth. Significant positive effects also were observed in relation to STAAR Mathematics when students attended the program for 120 days or more, although the effect in question was very small.

In this sense, when considering program effects, taking into consideration all centers in operation during the 2017–18 programming period, efforts to evaluate the program effectiveness of Texas ACE largely resulted in findings that were seen as either not being particularly consequential or following an inconsistent pattern with program attendance associated with both significant positive and negative effects on a given outcome.

Thus, the evaluation team took steps to isolate those centers with a positive effect on student outcomes, both for students attending 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period and those attending 60 days or more during both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. Key findings from these analyses are as follows:

- The percentage of centers with a positive effect on student outcomes varied considerably from one outcome to the next, ranging from only 39% of the centers with a positive effect STAAR Reading scores to 96% of the centers having a positive effect on school-day attendance.
- When examining centers with a positive effect on a given student outcome, there were some instances where performance on a given outcome appeared to continue to improve across multiple years of participation in the program. These results may suggest that students may continue to derive benefits from sustained participation in the program in select centers. This was the case in relation to STAAR assessment scores and disciplinary incidents.
 - For example, students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods scored an average of 29 scale score points higher on the STAAR

Mathematics assessment and 25 scale score points higher on the STAAR Reading assessment than matched students not participating in Texas ACE. After 1 year of participation in programming at the 60 days or more threshold, these average differences were approximately 10 scale score points for each assessment in centers with a positive association between Texas ACE attendance and STAAR assessment scores. In this sense, these results may suggest that students participating in centers shown to have a positive effect on STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores demonstrate more growth on these assessments the more they participate in Texas ACE. A key question that needs to be asked in the subsequent evaluation report concerns what these centers may be doing differently in terms of how they are approaching program design and delivery that may be supporting such outcomes.

- A similar trend also was found in relation to disciplinary incidents. Students attending Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period in centers demonstrating fewer disciplinary incidents averaged an 11% lower chance of incurring an incident relative to similar students not participating in Texas ACE. When examining 2 years of Texas ACE program participation at the 60 days or more threshold, the chance of a disciplinary incident occurring among students attending the program at this level was 17% lower than for nonparticipating students.

These findings related to STAAR assessments and disciplinary incidents are important and suggest two hypotheses that likely warrant further consideration in the future.

1. There is potentially a subset of centers that are designing and delivering programming in a way that are supporting the achievement of desired outcomes, and more can be learned about effective practice by studying these centers specifically.
2. There are certain student outcomes where sustained enrollment in Texas ACE may be cumulative in the sense that students benefit the more they participate in programming across multiple programming years.

Exploring each hypothesis would seem especially valuable in terms of learning more about how positive outcomes can be achieved and the role sustained participation in programming plays in this process.

Key Findings Related to Key Center Practices

There appears to be a pathway from select program practices to key youth experiences in programming to positive youth outcomes. In the past 15 years, the afterschool field has come to rely on quality improvement processes anchored in formal quality assessment tools (e.g., the PQA, the APT-O) to help afterschool programs better understand the practices and approaches that result in developmentally appropriate learning environments for participating youth. When conducting visits to the 20 higher and lower implementing centers selected for inclusion in the site visit sample, Texas ACE programming was observed and scored using the PQA and the APT-O to provide a measure of how well programs were implementing research-supported practices.

As highlighted in Chapter 4, steps were taken to explore how quality scores derived from the PQA and APT-O were related to student-reported experiences in programming that have been connected with positive student outcomes in other studies. Key findings emerging from these analyses included the following:

- Students attending centers with the highest PQA scores were more likely report having more frequent opportunities for agency, having better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and experiencing more engagement and challenge while participating in programming. In addition, the relationship between PQA scores and youth experiences in programming seemed to be stronger in programs serving middle school students, where higher PQA scores also were associated with greater perceptions of what they were doing was relevant, higher scores pertaining to positive affect, and a greater expression on the part of students that they had learned something or gotten better at something as a result of program participation.

- Even more consistent associations were found between scales from the APT-O and student experiences in programming. This was particularly the case in relation to the verbal communication scale, which was positively associated with each of the youth experiences scales examined. Each practice appearing on the verbal communications scale reflects the social dimension of learning and the importance of creating environments characterized by the space needed for these types of interactions to take place in a meaningful and substantive way. The social environment associated with learning activities plays a critical role in shaping students' academic, behavioral, and motivational outcomes (Allen et al., 2013; Patrick et al., 2002; Wentzel, 2002). Similar but not quite as consistent results also were found in relation to the written communication scale of the APT-O.
- Certain types of youth experiences were found associated with certain ways in which students indicated benefitting from program participation. Participation in Texas ACE increased opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students' indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and to feel better about themselves.

These are rather important findings because each of the ways students indicated benefitting from programming were positively related to center-level effect sizes calculated in relation to a series of school-related outcomes described in greater detail in Chapter 5. More specifically, centers with a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence were positively associated with STAAR Mathematics assessment scores, STAAR Reading scores, fewer disciplinary incidents, and greater school-day attendance.

Based on this sequence of results, there appears to be some evidence of a pathway from select program practices to key youth experiences in programming to positive youth outcomes that looks akin to the following:

- Higher PQA and APT-O scores were associated with better youth-reported experiences in programming.
- Certain types of youth experiences in programming, notably more opportunities to experience a sense of agency, better relationships with activity leaders and other youth in the program, and feelings of being engaged in program activities were all associated with students' indicating that the program helped them with their confidence and feel better about themselves.;
- When a greater proportion of Texas ACE participants indicated that the program helped them feel good about themselves or with their confidence, centers were more apt to demonstrate larger effect sizes in relation to STAAR Mathematics and Reading assessment scores, fewer disciplinary incidents, and greater school-day attendance.

This sequence of significant relationships connecting program quality to positive youth experiences in programming to larger effects related to school-related outcomes should be of particular interest to program stakeholders. If anything, this sequence of events may provide an initial template to guide the formation of the Year 4 evaluation plan, where these relationships can be examined in greater detail across multiple samples.

Finally, some of the practices measured by the APT-O were directly associated with larger effects associated with the school-related outcomes examined. Centers with greater adoption of mathematics and verbal communication practices outlined on the APT-O were associated with larger center-level effects related to STAAR Mathematics achievement in particular. This was specifically the case in relation to center-level effects associated with students attending Texas ACE programming during both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods for 60 days or more.

Some additional practices adopted by higher implementing centers warrant further examination in the future. A key part of this report was identifying those characteristics, practices, and approaches that seem to distinguish the higher implementing centers included in the site visit sample from the lower implementing centers. As described in Chapter 3, most of these differences pertained to the following:

- Demonstrating a more central focus on cultivating youth engagement, motivation, and interest in learning
- Parental involvement and family engagement
- Advisory boards that played a more active role in supporting various aspects of Texas ACE program implementation
- Using various forms of data to support program improvement efforts, including findings from local evaluation efforts

There is a need in the Year 4 report to further understand how these distinguishing attributes associated with higher implementing centers potentially influence how centers design and deliver developmentally appropriate and impactful programming.

In addition, the LESI was designed to better support the ability of centers to collect and use data to support program improvement efforts as part of their local evaluation efforts. Activities undertaken by the evaluation team during Year 3 of the project involved refinement of the local evaluation guide, development and rollout of the local evaluation toolkit, and engaging a subset of centers through a process of designing and conducting local evaluation activities to maximize the collection and use of data relevant to supporting local program improvement efforts. Dedicated efforts in Year 4 of the project will develop a series of training and support materials that can be used after the evaluation ends to allow for the adoption of practices described through LESI across the Texas ACE community more broadly.

Recommendations

In light of the findings outlined in this report, it is recommended that TEA focus on a specific set of analyses in the final year of the project oriented at expanding on what has been learned about the connection between participation in Texas ACE and student outcomes and the identification of characteristics, practices, and approaches that seem to be associated with program effectiveness. The recommended analyses include the following:

- Consider focusing future analyses on assessing program effectiveness on students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more across two programming periods. Most of the more interesting and compelling analyses performed to date related to assessing student outcomes involve students participating in Texas ACE across two programming periods at the 60 days or more threshold. Additional work is needed to confirm the robustness and consistency of these results.
- Consider investing in a series of analyses to connect program attendance both with key practices described in the PQA and APT-O and youth experiences in programming. A key finding outlined in this report was the potential pathway from select program practices to positive youth outcomes that goes through key youth experiences in programming. The role program attendance plays in this pathway also should be evaluated by exploring the connection between practices described in the PQA and APT-O and youth experiences in programming and levels of program attendance.
- Consider taking steps to assess if the sequence of events linking center practices, youth experiences in programming, and youth outcomes described in this report is associated with other programming periods examined as part of the evaluation. The data exist to see if the findings related to this sequence can be replicated in relation to student participation in programming during the 2018–19 programming period. Doing so would provide additional evidence on the potential importance of this sequence connecting specific practices to youth experiences and outcomes.
- Consider conducting additional analyses to confirm the relationship between practices associated with higher implementing centers and student outcomes. Given the small number of centers associated with the site visit sample, many efforts to connect practices that distinguish higher implementing centers from lower implementing centers were very exploratory. A need definitely exists to assess if the relationship between center-level practices and outcome described in this report remain viable when considered across the full domain of centers involved in the site visit process during the past 3 years.

Finally, one additional recommendation pertains to the KPIs. The KPIs were found to function well in terms of identifying higher implementing centers, where youth described having more positive experience in programming and which were associated with positive student outcomes. TEA is encouraged to consider how the KPIs could potentially be used to support administration of the Texas ACE program and inform the quality improvement efforts of Texas ACE grantees subsequent to the end of the current evaluation contract with AIR.

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Appendix A. Chapter 2: Additional Data Tables and Figures

Table A2.1. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Goals Reported, by School Level Served

Program goals	Elementary (N = 12)	Secondary (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Address academic needs (including tutoring, homework help)	100%	100%	100%
Prepare for career and college readiness (exposure to colleges and high school graduation rate)	83%	100%	90%
Provide (academic and creative) enrichment opportunities	83%	63%	75%
Facilitate parental involvement (family engagement)	83%	63%	75%
Build social and emotional learning skills	58%	88%	70%
Provide a safe learning environment	42%	50%	45%
Promote sustained attendance	33%	63%	45%
Address behavioral issues	25%	50%	35%
Improve grade-level promotion and graduation rates	25%	38%	30%
Provide learning opportunities students would not otherwise have	25%	13%	20%
Get student interested in and comfortable with learning	17%	25%	20%
Close achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students	17%	13%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple Texas ACE goals. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table A2.2. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Student Target Population by School Level Served

	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Students academically at risk	67%	38%	65%
Students generally at risk (no reason specified)	42%	50%	45%
Students at risk because of disciplinary or behavioral issues or social-emotional learning needs	42%	38%	40%
Students who are economically disadvantaged	17%	38%	25%
English learners	17%	25%	20%
Students at risk because of school attendance issues	8%	13%	10%
Centers have no defined student target population	8%	13%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple Texas ACE goals. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table A2.3. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Students Demographic Characteristics During 2017–18

Student characteristic	Number of students	Percentage of students
Total students	103,387	100%
Grades PK–2	20,754	20%
Grades 3–5	31,256	30%
Grades 6–8	33,311	32%
Grades 9–12	18,066	18%
English learner	23,498	23%
At risk	64,534	62%
Economically disadvantaged	65,646	64%
Eligible for Title I funds	96,840	94%
Special education	8,477	8%
Hispanic	69,708	67%
White	14,539	14%
African American	16,474	16%
Other	2,666	3%

Source. Texas Public Education Information Management Systems (PEIMS) data from 2017–18.

Note. There are differences in the sample sizes reported in Table A2.3 and in Chapter 2, Section 2 because not all of the nearly 14,000 students with records in Tx21st Student Tracking System could be matched with records in PEIMS.

Table A2.4. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Students Achieving State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Passing Standard in Reading, Mathematics, and End-of-Course (EOC) Examinations in 2018

Students achieving STAAR passing standard	Students	Percentage
Reading	39,689	64%
Mathematics	42,326	71%
English I EOC	3,679	57%
Algebra I EOC	5,520	86%

Source. STAAR data from 2017–18.

Table A2.5. Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Students School-Day Absences and Disciplinary Incidents Outcomes During 2017–18

Average number of days or incidents 2017–18	
School-day absences (days)	7
Disciplinary incidents (number)	0.4

Source. Texas Public Education Information Management Systems data from 2017–18.

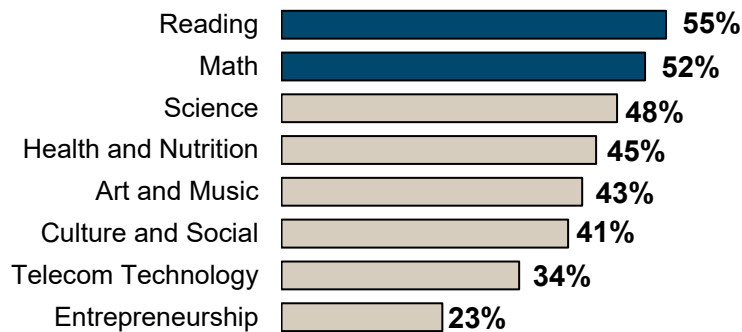
Table A2.6. Summer Participation Days and Hours in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education in 2017–18

	Cycle 8	Cycle 9
Average number of program days in summer session	14	14
Average number of program hours in summer session	63	72
Number of students	11,966	12,882

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Figure A2.1. Proportion of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Participants' Time Spent on Summer Activities Categorized by Subject in 2017–18

Students in Texas ACE spent the most time in reading and mathematics activities.



Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2017–18.

Note. Based on 1,676,199 hours for 460 Cycles 8 and 9 centers in 2017–18. Five centers that operated only during the school year were excluded. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the percentages may not sum to 100%.

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Appendix B. Chapter 3: Site Visit Sample Selection and Additional Data Tables and Figures

Methodology for Identifying Centers for On-Site Data Collection Activities

This appendix first provides information about the key performance indicators (KPIs) for Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) programs and describes the data used to populate the indicators. Next, center performance on key indicators is provided, highlighting the differences between higher and lower implementing centers on each KPI.

Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs were constructed for all Cycle 9 centers using extant administrative data from the Texas 21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st) and Public Education Information Management System as well as data collected from a sample of centers that administered the youth experience survey. The KPIs had two primary purposes:

- To support the identification of higher and lower implementing centers to be part of the site visit sample.
- To populate a KPI report to be used by centers participating in the Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI) to help inform quality improvement efforts (see Chapter 6 for additional details on this effort).

The KPIs were organized into three primary categories of indicators:

- Texas ACE program participation
- Student outcomes among Texas ACE
- Student experiences in Texas ACE

Texas ACE attendance- and student outcome-related KPIs were calculated using data associated with the prior programming period, which included summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year. This was the most recent period for which data were available that would allow the evaluation team to select a sample of centers for site visits to be conducted during the 2017–18 school year. These KPIs were then used to select a preliminary sample of higher and lower implementing centers that were then asked to administer a survey to a sample of students participating in Texas ACE about their experiences in the program. Results from the youth experience survey were used to select the final sample of higher and lower implementing centers that were visited in spring 2018. A full description of the indicators in all three categories is in Table B3.1, including the primary question the KPIs in that category were designed to answer and the rationale for creating indicators in each.

Table B3.1. Summary of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by Category

<p>Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) attendance-related indicators</p>	<p>Primary question: <i>To what extent is Texas ACE retaining youth in Texas ACE?</i></p> <p>Ideally, students will benefit more from Texas ACE programming the more they participate. Keeping students enrolled in programming is thought to be linked both to the underlying quality of a center’s activities and ensuring that students have access to developmentally appropriate activities across time that keep them interested and engaged. These indicators were designed to provide information about the extent to which students are attending programming across time. This set of indicators was based on data provided in the Texas 21st Student Tracking System for the 2016–17 school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of students participating in Texas ACE for a minimum of 10 days in both the fall and spring semesters of the 2016–17 school year ● Percentage of youth enrolled in Texas ACE for 120 hours or more in summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year
<p>Student outcome-related indicators</p>	<p>Primary question: <i>To what extent are students participating in Texas ACE demonstrating improvement on school-related outcomes?</i></p> <p>The charge for Texas ACE programs is to develop and implement programming that will have a positive impact on a series of school-related outcomes. The goal of this set of indicators was to assess the extent to which students participating regularly in the program were <i>improving</i> on school-related outcomes. At the time the American Institutes for Research was undertaking the selection process for the site visit sample, only data pertaining to school-day absences, disciplinary incidents, and performance on end-of-course (EOC) assessments were available. The indicators associated with this category were based on data from Public Education Information Management System and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness obtained by the statewide evaluation team from the Texas Education Agency directly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming for 120 hours or more in summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year that demonstrated fewer school-day absences than in the 2015–16 school year ● Difference in the mean percentage of days absent between the 2015–16 and the 2016–17 school years among youth attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE programming during the summer of 2016 and the 2016–17 school year ● Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming 120 hours or more in summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year with one or more disciplinary incidents after the first day of Texas ACE participation ● Mean number of disciplinary incidents occurring after the first day of Texas ACE participation during the 2016–17 school year among youth attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE programming in summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year ● Percentage of instances where youth participating in Texas ACE for 120 hours or more took an EOC examination and received a score where they met the standard for the course in question

Table Continues

Table B3.1. (Continued): Summary of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by Category

Student experience-related indicators	Primary question: <i>To what extent are students reporting having positive experiences in Texas ACE?</i>
	<p>Taking steps to understand the subjective experiences that youth have while participating in Texas ACE is key to assessing if the program has been successful in ensuring a “goodness of fit” between where students are and what learning supports and opportunities the program is providing. The indicators associated with this category were based on data collected from the youth experience survey administered in spring 2018.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of students completing the youth experience survey who reported they really look forward to attending the program ● Mean scale score summarizing how frequently students could participate in activities that provide the opportunity to experience a sense of agency ● Mean scale score summarizing how students feel about the adults working in the Texas ACE-funded program they attend ● Mean scale score summarizing how students feel about other youth attending the Texas ACE-funded program they attend

Site Visit Sample Selection

Once the KPIs were defined, steps were taken to calculate Texas ACE attendance- and student outcome-related KPIs for the 251 centers funded as part of Cycle 9 based on programming provided during the 2016–17 school year. These initial KPI results were used to select a sample of 40 centers that were asked to collect youth experience survey data in February 2018, along with those centers enrolled in the LESI. The selection process proceeded by taking the following steps:

1. Centers were first divided into two different categories: (a) the grade levels served by the center (elementary school, middle school, high school, and other) and (b) whether the center could be classified as a smaller or larger center based on the total number of youth served during the 2016–17 programming period. Centers were then classified as falling within one of eight groups based on the following categories: (a) elementary school, smaller center; (b) elementary school, larger center; (c) middle school, smaller center; (d) middle school, larger center, and so on. This step was taken because the evaluation team hypothesized that indicator values could be influenced both by center size and the grade level of youth served in the program. The goal was to select 20 elementary school centers, 10 middle school centers, 8 high school centers, and 2 centers from the Other category, evenly split between higher and lower performing centers within a given grade-level category.
2. Centers were then ranked on the program attendance-related indicators and were assigned a mean ranking score within the group they had been assigned based on grade level served and center size. Steps were taken to ensure that centers were doing well on the program attendance-related indicators first before looking at the outcome indicators because it would be expected that youth participation in programming would need to be near the 120-hour threshold to likely demonstrate potential outcomes.
3. Centers were then divided into quartiles based on their mean program attendance indicator ranking. Centers with the best performance on the program attendance indicators were candidates for the higher performing sample. Centers in the bottom quartile were candidates for the lower performing sample.
4. Centers were then ranked on indicators related to school-day absences and disciplinary incidents, and in the case of high school centers, on the EOC completion indicators.
5. Mean outcome rankings were then used to identify the highest performing centers in Quartile 1 and the lowest performing centers in Quartile 4.

6. Some centers performing at the highest and lowest levels were excluded from the initial sample to ensure that some grantees were not overrepresented in the higher and lower performing groups.
7. Completion of this process resulted in the selection of an initial sample of 20 higher implementing centers and 20 lower implementing centers. This sample of 40 centers, along with 14 centers enrolled in the LESI were asked to administer a youth experience survey in early spring 2018 to a sample of students attending Texas ACE in Grades 4–12 in stage 2 of the process. A total of 2,205 surveys was completed, averaging 41 surveys per center.
8. When the youth experience survey data had been collected, each center was ranked on the KPIs derived from the survey and the mean ranking was calculated. Generally, centers were selected from the higher performing list that had the highest mean ranking on the youth experience survey scales and those centers on the lower performing list with the lowest mean ranking on the four youth experience survey scales making up this set of KPIs.

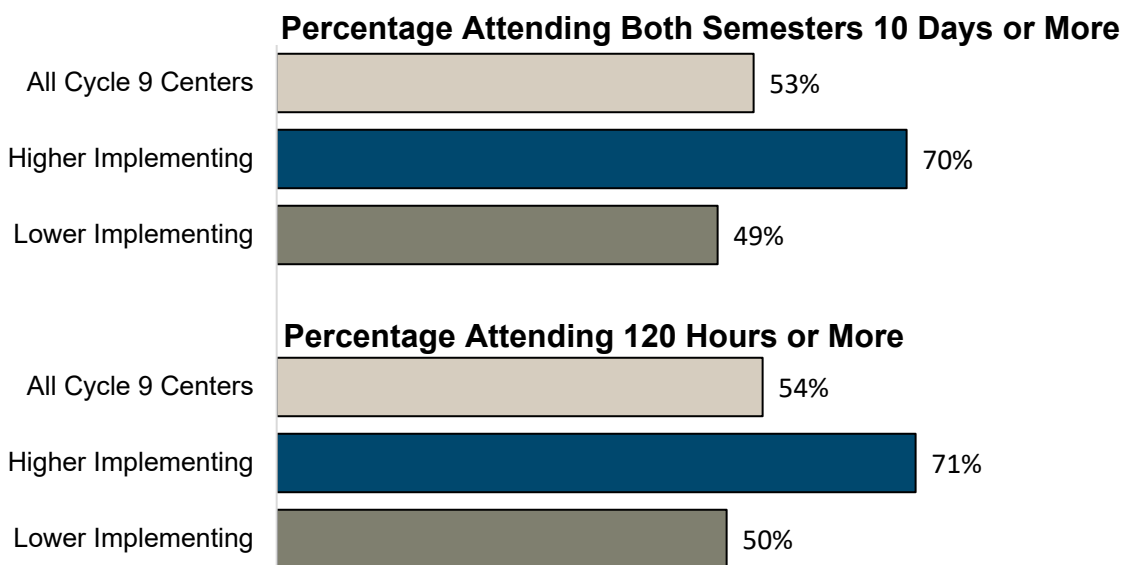
How Did Centers Perform on the Key Performance Indicators?

Completion of the eight-step process ultimately resulted in the selection of 20 centers visited in spring 2018: 10 higher implementing centers and 10 lower implementing centers. The sample included 12 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. In Figures B3.1 and B3.2, steps are taken to highlight how higher and lower implementing centers represented in the final site visit sample compared with the average performance of Cycle 9 centers on the Texas ACE attendance and student outcome KPIs. Again, the intent was to select a site visit sample that maximized how the higher and lower implementing centers differed across the set of KPIs examined.

Extensive research has demonstrated that the longer youth participate in high-quality afterschool programming, the more they benefit (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, & Gladden, 2007). In addition, rigorous outcome evaluations conducted of 21st CCLC–funded programs have demonstrated that, when participating in programming for 60 days or more, certain outcomes are more likely to be associated with significant program effects. This was particularly the case in relation to state assessment results in mathematics, grade-level promotion, cumulative grade point average, credits earned toward graduation, and social and emotional outcomes (Naftzger et al., 2018). This includes a study completed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of previous evaluation of the Texas ACE program, which demonstrated that attending 21st CCLC programming for 60 days as opposed to 30 days during the school year was associated with more substantive reductions in disciplinary referrals, fewer unexcused absences, and a greater likelihood of grade-level promotion (Naftzger et al., 2013). In this sense, there is evidence from both studies conducted outside Texas and from past evaluations of the Texas ACE program that higher levels of program attendance are associated with more positive student outcomes.

As shown in Figure B3.1, on average, 53% of the students participating in Texas ACE during the 2016–17 school year in Cycle 9 centers attended programming in both semesters of the school year for 10 days or more. This level was comparable to what was observed in lower implementing centers represented in the site visit sample, where 49% of the participating students attended 10 days or more in both the fall and spring semesters. However, in higher implementing centers, on average, 71% of the students attended programming for 10 days or more in both the fall and spring semesters of the 2016–17 school year.

Figure B3.1. Mean Percentage of Students Meeting a Given Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Attendance Key Performance Indicator—Cycle 9 Overall and by Higher and Lower Implementing Status for Centers Represented in the Site Visit Sample



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for the 2016–17 programming period.

Similar results were found for the percentage of students participating in Texas ACE for 120 hours or more during the 2016–17 programming period (see Figure B3.1). Although many past evaluations of the 21st CCLC program have shown that 60 days of program participation is an important threshold to consider when assessing how program participation may have impacted student outcomes, the evaluation team decided to assess participation using hours instead of days given the enhanced level of precision provided by examining participation at this finer level of granularity. Analyses conducted by the evaluation team demonstrated that 60 days of participation was roughly equivalent to 120 hours of program participation.

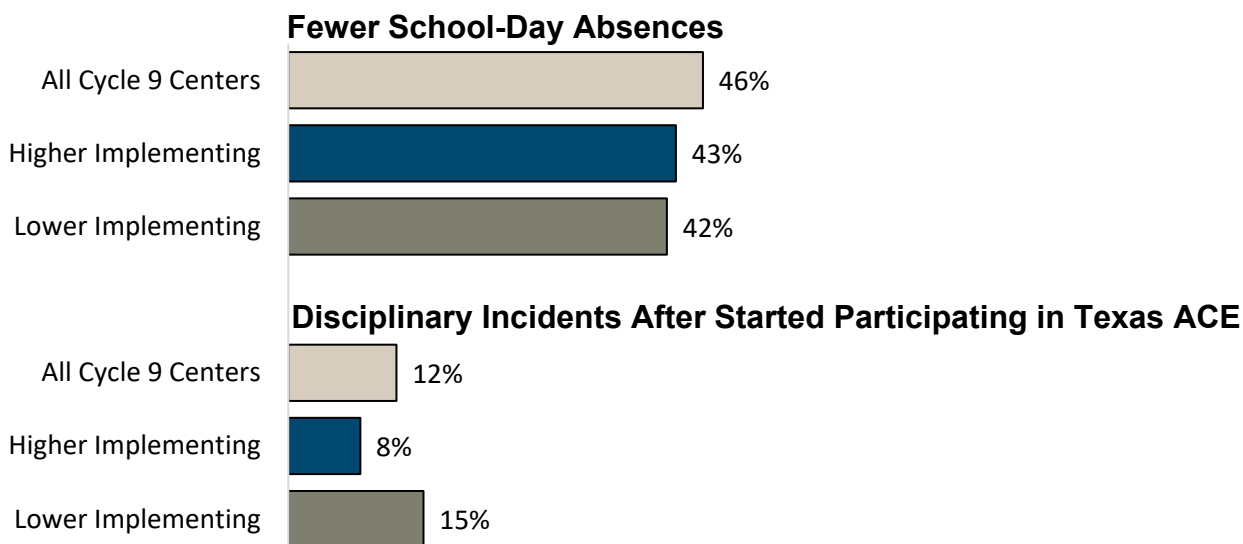
Higher implementing centers selected for inclusion in the site visit sample demonstrated the highest level of performance on this indicator, with an average of 71% of the students participating in Texas ACE during the 2016–17 programming period meeting this attendance threshold. By comparison, for lower implementing centers represented in the site visit sample and for the full complement of Cycle 9 centers, the level of performance was 50% and 54%, respectively.

Overall, these results suggest that the centers identified as higher implementing centers demonstrated a greater capacity to keep students engaged in Texas ACE across time than both the average Cycle 9 center and centers represented in the lower implementing group selected for inclusion in the site visit sample.

Performance on the KPIs related to student attendance and disciplinary incidents are examined next. From the statewide evaluation work completed by AIR across multiple states, the largest annual program effects have been consistently found in relation to improvements in school-day absences and disciplinary referrals among students participating in 21st CCLC programming for 60 days or more (Naftzger et al., 2015). Similar results have been found in previous statewide evaluations of Texas ACE (Naftzger et al., 2013; Devaney et al., 2016).

Figure B3.2 shows whether high-attending Texas ACE participants during the 2016–17 programming period demonstrated fewer school-day absences compared with the 2015–16 programming period. Centers in both the higher and lower implementing groups in the site visit sample demonstrated a lower percentage on this indicator compared with the average associated with all Cycle 9 centers. The differences, however, were not substantial. Across all Cycle 9 centers, 46% of the Texas ACE participants attending 120 hours or more demonstrated fewer school-day absences between the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years on average. By comparison, this percentage was 43% and 42% for centers in the higher and lower implementing samples, respectively. **Explored differently, the differences in the mean number of days absent between the 2 years were nearly zero for each group.**

Figure B3.2. Mean Percentage of Students Demonstrating Fewer School-Day Absences or Incurring a Disciplinary Incident—Cycle 9 Overall and by Higher and Lower Implementing Status for Centers Represented in the Site Visit Sample



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System data for the 2016–17 programming period.

Note. Improved school-day absences were examined by comparing 2015–16 attendance data with 2016–17 data. Disciplinary incidents refer to one or more incidents. Both attendance and disciplinary incidents were calculated for students who participated in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education programming for 120 hours or more.

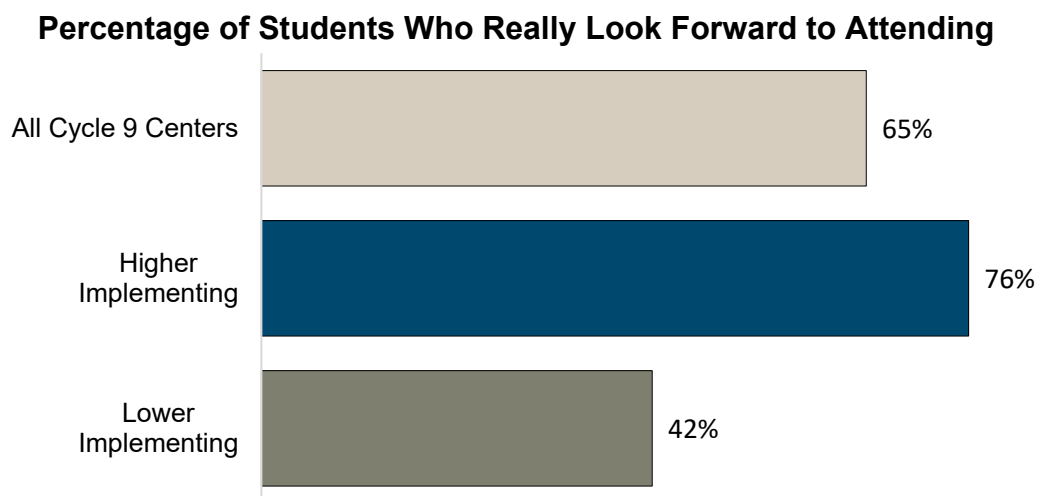
In addition, the percentage of students attending Texas ACE 120 hours or more with a disciplinary incident occurring after they started participating in programming was examined for all Cycle 9 centers and those centers assigned to the higher and lower implementing groups. Figure B3.2 shows that across all Cycle 9 centers, on average, 12% of the students attending 120 hours or more of programming were found to have a disciplinary incident that occurred after they started participating in Texas ACE. In the lower implementing centers, this percentage was slightly higher at 15%. However, in the higher implementing centers, only 8% of the students attending programming for 120 hours or more had one or more disciplinary incidents after starting to attend Texas ACE programming during the 2016–17 school year (see Figure B3.2).

In addition to the results shown in Figure B3.2, the mean number of disciplinary incidents occurring after the first day of Texas ACE participation during the 2016–17 school year among youth attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE programming also were examined. The mean number of disciplinary incidents was highest for students enrolled in the lower implementing centers (.39 incident) and lowest for centers in the higher implementing sample (.15 incident), with the average associated with all Cycle 9 centers falling in

between (.27 incident). **In this sense, as expected, higher implementing centers had fewer disciplinary incidents than lower implementing centers.**

Results for the KPIs based on the youth experience surveys are in Figures B3.3 and B3.4. One of the key questions appearing on the survey asked students to rate the extent to which they looked forward to coming to their Texas ACE program. Response options were (a) Not at all. I don't want to be here; (b) I sort of look forward to it; and (c) I really look forward to it. Figure B3.3, shows the percentage of students who really look forward to attending by the three groups. Centers in the higher implementing sample demonstrated the highest level of performance on this KPI, with 76% of the students indicating they really looked forward to attending. In comparison, among centers in the lower implementing sample, the percentage really looking forward to coming to the program was only 42%, whereas the average percentage across all 54 centers represented in the survey sample was 65%. **In this sense, there was a clear difference in the level of motivation and enthusiasm to attend Texas ACE programming between centers in the higher and lower implementing groups.**

Figure B3.3. Mean Percentage of Students Looking Forward to Attending Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programming—Overall Youth Experience Survey Sample and by Higher and Lower Implementing Status for Centers Represented in the Site Visit Sample



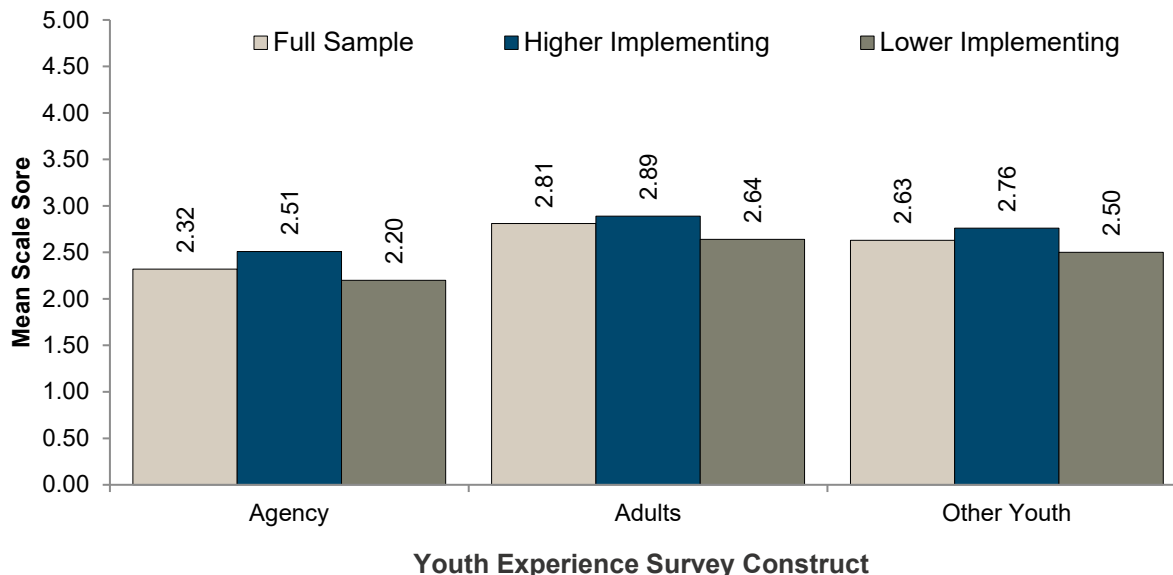
Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 centers, $N = 2,158$ responses to the question, “How much do you look forward to coming to this afterschool program?”

Some of this difference in motivation and enthusiasm to attend programming may have been related to the types of experiences youth had while attending Texas ACE programming. Different types of youth experiences associated with Texas ACE program attendance were measured on the youth experience survey and used to calculate KPIs related to youth experiences in programming. More specifically, one of the components of high-quality afterschool programs is providing youth with the opportunity to experience a sense of agency by allowing choice and autonomy in program offerings (Beymer et al., 2018; Larson & Angus, 2011; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Nagaoka, 2016).

The opportunities for youth agency scale appearing on the youth experience survey was designed to assess the degree to which participating students reported having opportunities for choice and autonomy in program offerings. This scale had seven items that asked about the how often students had the opportunity to engage in various types of decision making related to the program. Responses to the seven items were combined into one overall scale score for each respondent using Rasch analysis techniques (see Appendix C for how scale scores were created and Appendix I for the items appearing the survey). As shown Figure B3.4, students attending centers in the higher implementing sample had a

higher mean score on this survey scale (mean = 2.51), indicating that they reported having these opportunities more frequently than students attending programming in either the lower implementing centers (mean = 2.20) or the full domain of centers included in the youth experience survey sample (mean = 2.32).

Figure B3.4. Mean Scale Score on the Student Experience KPIs Related to Agency and Perceptions of Adult Activity Leaders and Other Youth—Overall Youth Experience Survey Sample and by Higher and Lower Implementing Status for Centers Represented in the Site Visit Sample



Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,204$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 2,205$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scale, and $N = 2,174$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale.

The youth experience survey also contained items designed to assess youth perceptions of both the adult activity leaders providing programming and other youth attending the center. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which statements expressing a positive perception of activity leaders (eight items) and other youth enrolled in the program (five items) were true. As with the opportunities for agency scale, items for each scale were combined into one scale score (see Appendix C for additional details). As shown in Figure 3.4, higher implementing centers in the sample demonstrated the highest mean score on the perceptions of adult activity leaders scale (mean = 2.89), followed closely by the mean score associated with the full youth experience survey sample (mean = 2.81). The mean score associated with centers in the lower implementing sample was noticeably lower at 2.64.

Finally, results associated with the perceptions of other youth attending the center scale followed a similar pattern. The higher implementing sample demonstrated the highest mean score on this scale (mean = 2.76), followed by the full sample (mean = 2.63) and centers associated with the lower implementing sample (mean = 2.50).

Overall, centers associated with the higher implementing sample demonstrated higher levels of performance on each KPI examined, except for the indicators related to improvements in school-day attendance, than either the full sample or the set of centers represented in the lower implementing sample. These results suggest that the 10 centers selected for inclusion in the higher implementing sample appeared to be more successful than the lower implementing sample in keeping students enrolled in Texas ACE during the 2016–17 programming period and in engendering the types of experiences that have been shown to promote positive development in similar types of programs.

Tables B3.2–B2.23 outline additional results from the qualitative data collected from the final 20 centers included in the site visit sample.

Table B3.2. Establishing Links to the School Day, by School Level Served

	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
School-day connections			
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) considered an extension of the school day	83%	75%	80%
Texas ACE incorporated into the school improvement plan	67%	63%	65%
Texas ACE aligned with district education strategy	17%	25%	20%
Site coordinator availability			
Site coordinator is on campus during the school day	100%	100%	100%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple ways that Texas ACE connects to the school day. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.3. Establishing Links to the School Day, by Center Program Implementation Level

	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
School-day connections			
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) considered an extension of the school day	90%	70%	80%
Texas ACE incorporated into the school improvement plan	60%	70%	65%
Texas ACE aligned with district education strategy	10%	30%	20%
Site coordinator availability			
Site coordinator is on campus during the school day	100%	100%	100%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple ways that Texas ACE connects to the school day. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.4. New Staff Orientation, by School Level Served

	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
New staff orientation			
Orientation provided	92%	100%	95%
Use of logic models			
In orientation, logic model is reviewed	50%	25%	40%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple aspects of new staff orientation. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.5. New Staff Orientation, by Center Program Implementation Level

	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
New staff orientation			
Orientation provided	90%	100%	95%
Use of logic models			
In orientation, logic model is reviewed	40%	40%	40%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple aspects of new staff orientation. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.6. Focus of Professional Development (PD) Attended by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Staff, by School Level Served

	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
PD is related to logic models	75%	63%	70%
PD topics for Texas ACE staff			
Lesson planning strategies	67%	0%	40%
Curriculum/content area specific	42%	25%	35%
Classroom management	42%	0%	25%
Programmatic	25%	13%	20%
Student safety and health	17%	13%	15%
Student behavior and discipline	8%	13%	10%
Program assessment	17%	0%	10%
PD topics for site coordinators			
Programmatic	67%	25%	50%
Social and emotional learning	8%	25%	15%
School safety	17%	13%	15%
No Texas ACE PD provided	42%	38%	40%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple aspects of PD. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. General Texas ACE-related PD typically refers to staff meetings, unspecified PD offerings, or PD more generally related to Texas ACE standards; general PD offered by the school or district includes PD that is considered district requirements, acknowledging that some staff receive school-day PD that can be adapted for use in Texas ACE activities, or covering basic school-day standards and expectations. It also is important to note that, in most cases, it was unclear from responses whether specific PD topics were provided by the school/district or Texas ACE, so only the general, nonspecific categories are differentiated between the two categories.

Table B3.7. Focus of Professional Development (PD) Attended by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Staff, by Center Program Implementation Level

	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
PD is related to logic models	50%	90%	70%
PD topics for Texas ACE staff			
Lesson planning strategies	30%	50%	40%
Curriculum/content area specific	40%	30%	35%
Classroom management	30%	20%	25%
Programmatic	30%	10%	20%
Student safety and health	10%	20%	15%
Student behavior and discipline	20%	0%	10%
Program assessment	10%	10%	10%
PD topics for site coordinators			
Programmatic	50%	50%	50%
Social and emotional learning	20%	10%	15%
School safety	10%	20%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple aspects of PD. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. General Texas ACE-related PD typically refers to staff meetings, unspecified PD offerings, or PD more generally related to Texas ACE standards; general PD offered by the school or district includes PD that is considered district requirements, acknowledging that some staff receive school-day PD that can be adapted for use in Texas ACE activities, or covering basic school-day standards and expectations. It also is important to note that, in most cases, it was unclear from responses whether specific PD topics were provided by the school/district or Texas ACE, so only the general, nonspecific categories are differentiated between the two categories. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.8. Reliance on External Partnerships, by School Level Served

Type of partners	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Partners that have direct contact with participants through programming	100%	88%	95%
Partners that offer in-kind services or other indirect assistance	83%	63%	75%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple types of partners. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.9. Reliance on External Partnerships, by Center Program Implementation Level

Type of partners	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Partners that have direct contact with participants through programming	90%	100%	95%
Partners that offer in-kind services or other indirect assistance	90%	60%	75%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple types of partners. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.10. Services Provided by Partners, by School Level Served

Services	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Direct partners	100%	88%	95%
Student programming and services	83%	75%	80%
Enrichment activities	58%	63%	60%
Social and emotional learning activities	17%	38%	25%
Information sessions by partners (e.g., fire safety, bullying, social and emotional learning)	33%	13%	25%
Academic activities (e.g., tutoring assistance, assistance on academic areas of need)	8%	25%	15%
Mentorship programs	8%	13%	10%
Nutrition education programs	0%	25%	10%
Parent programming and services	42%	75%	55%
English as a second language classes	17%	25%	20%
Training on how to work with students	0%	50%	20%
Financial literacy classes	8%	13%	10%
High school equivalency (HSE) classes	8%	13%	10%
Nutrition education programs	0%	25%	10%
Indirect partners	83%	63%	75%
Community involvement activities (e.g., parent events)	25%	38%	30%
Donations	33%	25%	30%
Meals	50%	0%	30%
Youth activity leader training	8%	13%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple services. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.11. Services Provided by Partners, by Center Program Implementation Level

Services	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Direct partners	90%	100%	95%
Student programming and services	80%	80%	80%
Enrichment activities	70%	50%	60%
Social and emotional learning activities	30%	20%	25%
Information sessions by partners (e.g., fire safety, bullying, social emotional learning)	20%	30%	25%
Academic activities (e.g., tutoring assistance, assistance on academic areas of need)	20%	10%	15%
Mentorship programs	20%	0%	10%
Nutrition education programs	10%	10%	10%
Parent programming and services	60%	50%	55%
English as a second language Classes	30%	10%	20%
Training on how to work with students	20%	20%	20%
Financial literacy classes	10%	10%	10%
High school equivalency (HSE) classes	20%	0%	10%
Nutrition education programs	10%	10%	10%
Indirect partners	90%	60%	75%
Community involvement activities (e.g., parent events)	40%	20%	30%
Donations	40%	20%	30%
Meals	40%	20%	30%
Youth activity leaders training	20%	0%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple services. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.12. Advisory Board Decision Making Roles in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), by School Level Served

Types of involvement	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
General guidance and feedback	42%	75%	55%
Operational	67%	100%	80%
Review program data	42%	38%	40%
Coordinate program spending	42%	25%	35%
Act as community or district liaison	17%	38%	25%
Determine student, parent, and/or community needs	25%	25%	25%
Discuss alignment of programming with school day	8%	13%	10%
Planning/organization	33%	75%	50%
Build community awareness of Texas ACE	25%	75%	45%
Identify students in need of Texas ACE programming	17%	0%	10%
Promote Texas ACE among families, teachers, and students	8%	13%	10%
Programming	58%	88%	70%
Provide guidance and feedback on programming, resources, and/or policies	58%	75%	65%
Review and monitor program goals and status	33%	38%	35%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Advisory board roles support design and delivery for programs as well as sustainability. Respondents often cited multiple types of involvement. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.13. Family Engagement Activities, by School Level Served

Activities	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Programming for parent and family member life skills and career development	83%	100%	90%
English as a second language classes	50%	62%	55%
High school equivalency (HSE) classes	25%	38%	30%
Community partners events and workshops	8%	63%	30%
Financial planning and literacy workshops	25%	38%	30%
Enrichment activities	17%	25%	20%
College and career planning events	8%	13%	10%
Programming to help parents support student development	67%	88%	75%
Sessions on how to help students with academics	50%	88%	65%
Hands-on activities with students	33%	50%	40%
Community partners events and workshops	25%	38%	30%
Parenting classes	25%	25%	25%
Information sessions on bullying	17%	13%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple types of activities. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.14. Methods to Engage Family Members in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programming, by School Level Served

Family engagement methods	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Hold student showcases and social events for parents	92%	88%	90%
Create opportunities for one-on-one communication (e.g., phone calls, e-mails, in-person interactions after school)	100%	63%	85%
Work with parent involvement group, parent liaison, or Title I liaison	17%	75%	40%
Have Texas ACE information tables on campus during parent events	17%	50%	30%
Hold parent/family Texas ACE orientation or meetings	33%	25%	30%
Translate materials for non-English speakers	42%	13%	30%
Require parents to attend and/or volunteer at events	25%	25%	25%
Engage family members at school-day events or school-day-related events	33%	13%	25%
Focus on building relationships with Texas ACE parent participants	8%	13%	10%
Identify families that need assistance	8%	13%	10%
Hold Texas ACE registration events	0%	25%	10%
Send out reminders, notification of events, and/or marketing to family members	100%	100%	100%
Flyers	92%	88%	90%
Phone calls	67%	75%	70%
Social media or the Texas ACE website	42%	50%	45%
Text messages	50%	25%	40%
Letters and/or newsletters	42%	0%	25%
E-mail	8%	38%	20%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple engagement methods. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.15. Methods to Engage Family Members in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programming, by Center Program Implementation Level

Family engagement methods	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Hold student showcases and social events for parents	90%	90%	90%
Create opportunities for one-on-one communication (e.g., phone calls, e-mails, in-person interactions after school)	90%	80%	85%
Work with parent involvement groups, parent liaisons, or Title I liaisons	50%	30%	40%
Have Texas ACE information tables on campus during parent events	30%	30%	30%
Hold parent/family Texas ACE orientation or meetings	40%	20%	30%
Translate materials for non-English speakers	40%	20%	30%
Require parents to attend and/or volunteer at events	20%	30%	25%
Engage family members at school-day events or school-day–related events	30%	20%	25%
Focus on building relationships with Texas ACE parent participants	20%	0%	10%
Identify families that need assistance	10%	10%	10%
Hold Texas ACE registration events	10%	10%	10%
Send out reminders, notification of events, and/or marketing to family members	100%	100%	100%
Flyers	90%	90%	90%
Phone calls	60%	80%	70%
Social media or the Texas ACE website	50%	40%	45%
Text messages	40%	40%	40%
Letters and/or newsletters	30%	20%	25%
E-mail	20%	20%	20%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple engagement methods. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.16. Family Member Involvement in Program Planning Efforts, by School Level Served

Family program planning methods	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Distribute parent surveys	83%	100%	90%
Maintain informal communications (e.g., at parent events, afterschool student pickup)	58%	63%	60%
Create family advisory boards	8%	13%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple methods of involvement. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.17. Family Member Involvement in Program Planning Efforts, by Center Program Implementation Level

Family program planning methods	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Distribute parent surveys	100%	80%	90%
Maintain informal communications (e.g., at parent events, afterschool student pickup)	50%	70%	60%
Create family advisory boards	20%	0%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple types of activities. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.18. Participant Perspectives on Features of High-Implementing Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programs, by School Level Served

Features of high-implementing programs	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Periodic review of program data (e.g., program evaluation data, walk-through data)	67%	63%	65%
Effective communication between staff (feeling of solidarity)	42%	50%	45%
Engaging programming	58%	25%	45%
Meaningful relationships with students	25%	50%	35%
Staff professional development	8%	38%	20%
Attentive to student need	33%	0%	20%
Engaged and positive staff	25%	0%	30%
Focus on student safety	17%	0%	10%
Effective lesson planning	17%	0%	10%
Monitor youth activity leader workload	0%	20%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple program features. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.19. Drivers of Program Success, by School Level Served

Drivers of program success	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Focus on student-centered relationships	75%	88%	80%
Presence of a highly collaborative campus environment	58%	50%	55%
Staff temperament (e.g., engaged, positive, patient)	33%	25%	30%
High implementation staff	8%	50%	25%
High implementation programming	25%	25%	25%
Student learning and enrichment opportunities	17%	25%	20%
Support from Texas Afterschool Centers on Education leadership in lesson planning	8%	25%	15%
Parent support	17%	0%	10%
Adequate funding	17%	0%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple program features. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.20. Drivers of Program Success, by Center Program Implementation Level

Drivers of program success	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Focus on student-centered relationships	80%	80%	80%
Presence of a highly collaborative campus environment	60%	50%	55%
Staff temperament (e.g., engaged, positive, patient)	30%	30%	30%
High implementation staff	30%	20%	25%
High implementation programming	20%	30%	25%
Student learning and enrichment opportunities	10%	30%	20%
Support from Texas Afterschool Centers on Education leadership in lesson planning	20%	10%	15%
Parent support	10%	10%	10%
Adequate funding	0%	20%	10%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple program features. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.21. Data Used to Monitor Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Performance, by School Level Served

Student data	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Student feedback (surveys)	100%	100%	100%
Data collected during programming (e.g., diagnostics, measurable goals, observations of growth)	75%	50%	65%
Performance data provided by the school day (e.g., benchmarks, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)	25%	75%	50%
Observed student behavior	25%	50%	35%
Attendance records	17%	13%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple data sources. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Table B3.22. Data Used to Monitor Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Performance, by Center Program Implementation Level

Student data	Higher implementing programs (N = 10)	Lower implementing programs (N = 10)	All programs (N = 20)
Student feedback (surveys)	100%	100%	100%
Data collected during programming (e.g., diagnostics, measurable goals, observations of growth)	70%	60%	50%
Performance data provided by the school day (e.g., benchmarks, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)	50%	40%	30%
Observed student behavior	40%	30%	35%
Attendance records	10%	20%	15%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple data sources. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%. Program implementation level was determined by analyzing Tx21st Student Tracking System data and student engagement survey data.

Table B3.23. Program Implementation Data Used to Monitor Performance, by School Level Served

Program implementation data	Elementary schools (N = 12)	Secondary schools (N = 8)	All schools (N = 20)
Observational/walk-through data	100%	75%	90%
Working with an external evaluator	25%	38%	30%
Program quality assessment and other observational rubrics	25%	25%	25%

Source. Interviews conducted during the spring 2018 site visits, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018.

Note. Respondents often cited multiple data sources. In addition, the questions varied in each interview, and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, the columns may not sum to 100%.

Appendix C. Description of Propensity Score Matching and Rasch Analysis

Propensity score matching (PSM) and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) approaches were used in the advanced statistical analyses described in this report. PSM is a statistical technique designed to mitigate any selection bias that may occur because the programs and activities in question were not randomly assigned. HLM is a process used to account for the nested structure of data. This appendix describes both methods.

In any evaluation of a program where participants are not randomly assigned to participate, the problem of selection is paramount. It is likely that students who participate in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) programming are different from those who do not attend. These differences can bias estimates of program effectiveness because they make it difficult to disentangle preexisting differences between students who attended Texas ACE programming and those who did not from the effect of attending the program. In general, students who attended Texas ACE programming tended to be students who were lower achievers than those who did not, prior to the start of the current academic year. The quasi-experimental approach outlined here is a method for mitigating that existing bias in program effect (i.e., if one were to simply compare the students who attended and those who did not).

PSM is a two-stage process that addresses this problem. In the first stage, the probability that each student participates was modeled on available observable characteristics. By modeling selection into the program, this approach allowed us to compare participating and nonparticipating students who would have had a similar propensity to select into the program based on observable characteristics that were available in the data received from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). In the second stage, the predicted probability of participation was used to model student outcomes while accounting for selection bias using an HLM approach. Steps were taken to balance pretreatment group differences in observed covariates using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009).

Stage 1: Creation of the Comparison Group. The outcome of interest in modeling propensity scores is treatment status (1 for students in the treatment group, 0 for the comparison group). To account for this binary outcome, logistic regression was used to model the logit (or log-odds) of student group assignment status. Examples of student-level variables used to fit the propensity score models are as follows:

- Prior achievement in reading and mathematics
- Prior measures for other outcomes (grade-level promotion, behavior, and attendance)
- Student demographic information
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Socioeconomic status
 - At-risk status
 - English language proficiency
 - Special education status

In addition to the student-level variables, the propensity score model also included school-level variables, such as the following:²⁹

²⁹ For school-level variables, the evaluation team used the school that the majority of Texas ACE participants at a given program attended. In most cases, a center that was based at a specific school drew the majority of its participants from that school, and the evaluation team used the demographics and other characteristics of that school in the PSM model.

- School type
- Total enrollment
- Student race/ethnicity composition
- School locale
- Campus rating
- Number of students identified as economically disadvantaged
- Number of English learners
- Number of students receiving special education services

The propensity score model considered a total of 39 variables. Data were not available for each covariate for all students. To account for this, indicator variables were used to model the relationship between the pattern of missing data and the propensity to participate in the program (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). The propensity score model was fit separately for each grade (Grades K–12) and separately for each definition of treatment (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days). The final propensity score models for each grade were checked to ensure that the analysis sample was balanced across relevant covariates. The propensity score models all produced comparison samples that were balanced with the treatment across all the covariates examined for balance.

Stage 2: Statistical Modeling of Student Outcomes. Outcomes for students in the treatment group were then compared with the outcomes for comparison group students. Steps were taken to balance the pretreatment group differences in observed covariates by using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009). Various strata were used, based on the spread and the overlap of the data. The propensity score logit, along with the pretreatment measure of the outcome, were included in the outcome model to control for within-strata differences and residual bias (Schafer & Kang, 2008). Student outcomes were then modeled using two-level HLMs to account for the nested nature of the data (students within schools) as follows:

Level 1—Students

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \text{Participation}_{ij} + \sum_{s=2}^{15} \beta_s L_{sij} + \beta_{16j} LP_{ij} + \beta_{17j} \text{Pretest}_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

where

- y_{ij} is a student-level outcome (e.g., student mathematics achievement).
- $\text{Participation}_{ij}$ is an indicator of whether the student participated in the Texas ACE program.
- L_{ijs} is an indicator variable for each logit propensity score strata.
- LP_{ij} is the logit propensity score
- Pretest_{ij} is the pretreatment measure of the outcome.
- The subscripts i , j , and s correspond to student, school, and strata, respectively.

Level 2—Center

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$$

The Level 2 equation includes only β_0 because the chosen HLM is a random intercept model; all other coefficients (i.e., participation indicator, logit propensity score stratum, logit propensity score, and pretreatment indicator) at Level 1 are fixed and, therefore, not listed at Level 2. Because the treatment and comparison groups were matched using all the covariates described earlier, it is not necessary to include these variables in the final outcome model.

The two-level model of correlation between program participation and student performance (written in mixed-model format) is as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Participation}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{Pretest}_{ij} + \beta_3 \text{LP}_{ij} + \mathbf{L}_{ijs} + \mathbf{X}_{ij} + u_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

where

- Y_{ij} is the performance of student i in school j .
- β_0 is a constant term showing the average student performance in the comparison group.
- $\text{Participation}_{ij}$ is an indicator of whether the student participated in the Texas ACE program, where β_1 shows the average difference in performance between the treatment and comparison groups.
- Pretest_{ij} is the pretreatment measure of the outcome, where β_2 is the average difference in performance from the prior school year to the current school year.
- LP_{ij} is the logit propensity score, where β_3 is the contribution of the propensity score.
- \mathbf{L}_{ijs} is a vector of variables specifying the matching strata.
- \mathbf{X}_{ij} is a vector of student-level covariates for which the standardized mean difference between the treatment and comparison groups was greater than 0.1 after matching.
- u_j is a school-level random error term, with an assumed normal distribution, with mean zero and variance τ .
- r_{ij} is a student-level error term, also assumed to have a normal distribution, with mean zero and variance σ^2 .

Table C1 provides additional detail on the models run for each outcome and the operationalization of each outcome.

Table C1. Outcomes and Operationalizations

Outcome	Outcome type	Model run	Metric transformation after running the model	Interpretation
State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness scores	Test score	Regression assuming a normal distribution (ran using raw scores)	Transformed into the standardized mean difference effect size metric	Raw metric estimate represents the increase/decrease in points on the examination for the treatment group
School-day attendance	Proportion	Data transformed into the arcsine metric and then run using regression assuming a normal distribution	Back transformed from the arcsine metric to the original proportion metric $[\sin(\text{asin}(\sqrt{.95}) + \text{estimate})^2 - .95]$	Estimate transformed back into the original metric represents the proportion of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Grade-level promotion	Binary	Logistic regression	Transformed into the odds ratio $[\exp(\text{estimate})]$ and then odds ratio percent metrics $[100 * (\exp(\text{estimate} - 1))]$	Odds ratio percent metric represents the percentage of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Disciplinary incidents	Count	Poisson distribution regression	Transformed into the odds ratio $[\exp(\text{estimate})]$ and then odds ratio percent metrics $[100 * (\exp(\text{estimate} - 1))]$	Odds ratio percent metric represents the percentage of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Career and technical education credits	Proportion	Data transformed into the arcsine metric and then run using regression assuming a normal distribution	Back transformed from the arcsine metric to the original proportion metric $[\sin(\text{asin}(\sqrt{.9}) + \text{estimate})^2 - .9]$	Estimate transformed back into the original metric represents the proportion of increase/decrease for the treatment group

Rasch Analysis of Survey and Observation Data

At its most basic level, Rasch modeling techniques yield estimates of an individual respondent’s ability and the relative difficulty of a given item on the instrument in question (Bond & Fox, 2007). Working from the proposition that persons with greater ability will have a greater likelihood of successfully completing a given bank of test items (or find it easier to endorse survey items that demonstrate greater ability) than will less skilled persons, Rasch modeling techniques take person and item difficulty estimates yielded from an instrument, transform them by using a log function, and display them on a logit scale that allows person and item difficulties to be compared directly.³⁰

One benefit of using Rasch approaches is that they result in true interval-level scores that can be used when conducting analyses. To create true interval measures that could be employed effectively in supporting the domain of analyses needed for the report, the research team employed Rasch analysis techniques, specifically the Rasch Rating Scale model (Linacre, 2005) and Many-Facet Rasch Measurement (Linacre & Wright, 2004), to create scale scores for scales associated with the youth experience and end-of-session surveys and the program quality assessment (PQA) observation data, respectively. The use of Many-Facet Rasch Measurement approaches also corrected for empirically derived estimates of rater bias. Each approach is described in greater detail as follows.

³⁰ Item difficulty reflects how positively an item is endorsed. Items with low item difficulty will be frequently and positively endorsed (e.g., a high frequency of strongly agree).

Rasch Rating Scale Model

This model was used to calibrate scales appearing on the youth experience and end-of-session surveys and took the following form:

$$\text{Log}(P_{nix}/P_{ni(x-1)}) = B_n - (D_i + R_x)$$

where

- P_{nix} is the probability of person n of ability B_n being observed in category x of item i with difficulty D_i .
- $P_{ni(x-1)}$ is the probability of person n of ability B_n being observed in category $x - 1$ of item i with difficulty D_i .
- B_n is the ability of respondent n .
- D_i is the difficulty of item i .
- R_x is rating scale structure parameter for category x (indicates how much of the latent construction is covered by a given response category of the rating scale).

Many-Facet Rasch Measurement

This model was employed in calibrating measures related to the PQA observation measures:

$$\text{Log}(P_{nij}/P_{nij(k-1)}) = B_n - D_i - C_j - F_k$$

where

- P_{nij} is the probability of activity n being given a rating of k on item i by rater j .
- $P_{nij(k-1)}$ is the probability of activity n being given a rating of $k - 1$ on item i by rater j .
- B_n is the ability of activity n .
- D_i is the difficulty of item i .
- C_j is the severity of rater j .
- F_k is the difficulty of category k relative to category $k - 1$.

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Appendix D. Chapter 4 Additional Figures, Youth Reported Impacts

The purpose of this appendix is to present the results associated with a series of descriptive and chi-square-based analyses, which included the examination of the relationship between scales derived from the youth experience and end-of-session surveys and which options students taking the youth experience survey endorsed when asked to indicate how they believed they benefitted from program participation. Similar results are presented for analyses examining the relationship between student grade level, classified as elementary school, middle school, and high school and youth-reported program impacts. These results pertain Figures 4.1 and 4.2 and Tables 4.5–4.7 in Chapter 4 and the associated description of findings.

Table D4.1. Percentage of Responses by Response Category: Perceptions of Activity Leaders Scale

In this program, there is an adult here . . .	Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Completely true
Who is interested in what I think about things.	14.9%	31.9%	28.7%	24.5%
Who I can talk to if I am upset.	14.7%	19.5%	24.4%	41.3%
Who helps me when I have a problem.	8.7%	18.9%	27.5%	44.8%
Who I enjoy being around.	6.9%	17.8%	29.6%	45.6%
Who has helped me find a special interest or talent (something I'm good at).	16.3%	23.6%	27.3%	32.8%
Who asks me about my life and goals.	19.2%	24.5%	27.4%	28.9%
Who helps me do better in school.	10.2%	18.1%	28.0%	43.7%
Who I will miss when the program is over.	14.0%	17.0%	21.7%	47.3%

Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,205$ responses to eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scale.

Table D4.2. Percentage of Responses by Response Category: Perceptions of Other Youth Scale

How true are these statements for you?	Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Completely true
Kids here are friendly with each other.	10.2%	34.4%	33.9%	21.5%
Kids here treat each other with respect.	15.0%	37.3%	29.7%	18.0%
Kids here listen to what the teachers tell them to do.	12.6%	35.5%	31.1%	20.8%
Kids here don't tease or bully others.	21.0%	31.9%	23.4%	23.6%
Kids here support and help one another.	11.1%	33.3%	28.2%	27.4%

Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,174$ responses to five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale.

Table D4.3. Percentage of Responses by Response Category: Opportunities for Agency Scale

When you are at this program, how often . . .	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Do you get to choose how you spend your time?	15.1%	17.4%	41.5%	26.0%
Do you get to suggest your own ideas for new activities?	24.6%	19.7%	35.5%	20.3%
Do you get to choose which activities you do?	19.8%	15.0%	33.9%	31.3%
Do you get to help plan activities for the program?	35.5%	21.0%	28.9%	14.6%
Do you get the chance to lead an activity?	35.5%	18.8%	31.1%	14.7%
Do you get to be in charge of doing something to help the program?	35.3%	20.0%	31.5%	13.3%
Do you get to help make decisions or rules for the program?	51.1%	16.7%	22.7%	9.5%

Source. Youth experience surveys administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,174$ responses to seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale.

Table D4.4. Mean Youth Experience Survey Scores by Use of Reading Practices From the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O)

Survey scale	Fewer reading practices	More reading practices	t	p
Opportunities for agency	2.37	2.42	-1.20	> .10
Perceptions of activity leaders	2.75	2.78	-0.72	> .10
Perceptions of other youth	2.62	2.67	-1.25	> .10

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the APT-O.

Table D4.5. Mean Youth Experience Survey Scores by Use of Mathematics Practices From the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O)

Survey scale	Fewer mathematics practices	More mathematics practices	t	p
Opportunities for agency	2.42	2.38	0.80	> .10
Perceptions of activity leaders	2.76	2.77	-0.28	> .10
Perceptions of other youth	2.71	2.61	2.17	< .05

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), $N = 919$ responses to the seven questions asked on the opportunities for agency scale, $N = 920$ responses to the eight questions asked on the perceptions of activity leaders scales, $N = 912$ responses to the five questions asked on the perceptions of other youth scale, and $N = 78$ Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the APT-O.

Table D4.6. Mean End-of-Session Survey Scores by Use of Reading Practices From the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O)

Survey scale	Fewer reading practices	More reading practices	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Engagement	2.90	2.90	0.02	> .10
Relevance	2.82	2.75	1.50	> .10
Challenge	2.22	1.92	4.38	< .001
Positive affect	3.07	3.14	-1.09	> .10
Learned something	2.95	2.98	-0.47	> .10

Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), *N* = 966 responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, *N* = 958 responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, *N* = 955 responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, *N* = 939 responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and *N* = 78 Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the APT-O.

Table D4.7. Mean End-of-Session Survey Scores by Use of Mathematics Practices From the Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O)

Survey scale	Fewer mathematics practices	More mathematics practices	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Engagement	2.90	2.91	-0.18	> .10
Relevance	2.81	2.75	1.21	> .10
Challenge	2.18	1.95	3.35	< .01
Positive affect	3.05	3.16	-1.86	< .10
Learned something	2.97	2.96	0.01	> .10

Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), *N* = 966 responses to the four questions asked on the engagement and the three questions asked on the relevance scales, *N* = 958 responses to the one question asked on the challenge scale, *N* = 955 responses to the two questions asked on the affect scale, *N* = 939 responses to the one question asked on the learned something scale, and *N* = 78 Texas ACE activities observed and scored using the APT-O.

Table D4.8. Results of Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Relationship Between Youth-Reported Impacts and Student Grade Level (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School)

Youth-reported impact	Grade level		
	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-
Feel good about myself	4.034	$p > .10$	
Feel more confident	5.147	$p < .10$	+
Make new friends	4.610	$p > .10$	
Find out what I'm good at	3.469	$p > .10$	
Find out what I like to do	0.101	$p > .10$	
Discover things I want to learn about	7.027	$p < .05$	+
Find out what is important to me	0.841	$p > .10$	
Go to school	2.282	$p > .10$	
Learn thing to help me in school	1.488	$p > .10$	
Learn things that will be important for my future	8.102	$p < .05$	+
Think about classes I might want to take	0.198	$p > .10$	
Think about what I want to do when I'm older	3.398	$p > .10$	
Learn things important to my community	2.875	$p > .10$	
Feel good because I was helping my community	0.471	$p > .10$	

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,152$ responses to the question, “Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . .”

Note. Values in the +/- column indicate if a significant relationship demonstrated a positive relationship between students in higher grade levels, specifically high school, and students endorsing a given area as an area of program impact.

Table D4.9. Results of Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Relationship Between Youth-Reported Impacts and Scales From the Youth Experience Survey

Youth-reported impact	Agency			Activity leaders			Other youth		
	Chi-Sq	Sig.	+/-	Chi-Sq	Sig.	+/-	Chi-Sq	Sig.	+/-
Feel good about myself	1.954	$p > .10$		8.624	$p < .05$	+	6.734	$p < .10$	+
Feel more confident	9.986	$p < .05$	+	27.765	$p < .001$	+	14.095	$p < .01$	+
Make new friends	11.590	$p < .01$	-	2.346	$p > .10$		0.832	$p > .10$	
Find out what I'm good at	5.007	$p > .10$		4.868	$p > .10$		5.182	$p > .10$	
Find out what I like to do	8.716	$p < .05$	-	4.545	$p > .10$		9.923	$p < .05$	-
Discover things I want to learn about	1.702	$p > .10$		1.225	$p > .10$		6.846	$p < .10$	
Find out what is important to me	5.099	$p > .10$		3.243	$p > .10$		1.535	$p > .10$	
Go to school	3.442	$p > .10$		5.894	$p > .10$		0.224	$p > .10$	
Learn things to help me in school	8.979	$p < .05$	-	2.919	$p > .10$		1.744	$p > .10$	
Learn things that will be important for my future	8.244	$p < .05$	+	13.656	$p < .01$	+	2.743	$p > .10$	
Think about classes I might want to take	6.095	$p > .10$		0.249	$p > .10$		2.905	$p > .10$	
Think about what I want to do when I'm older	1.159	$p > .10$		2.717	$p > .10$		4.307	$p > .10$	
Learn things important to my community	1.920	$p > .10$		8.705	$p < .05$		1.191	$p > .10$	
Feel good because I was helping my community	13.171	$p < .01$	+	5.341	$p > .10$		4.731	$p > .10$	

Source. Youth experience survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 2,152$ responses to the question, "Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . ."

Note. Values in the +/- column indicate if a significant relationship demonstrated a positive or negative relationship between scores on the survey scale and students endorsing a given area as an area of program impact.

Table D4.10. Results of Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Relationship Between Youth-Reported Impacts and Scales From the End-of-Session Survey

Youth-reported impact	Engagement			Relevance			Challenge			Affect			Learned something		
	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-
Feel good about myself	4.539	$p < .05$	+	0.467	$p > .10$		0.053	$p > .10$		1.143	$p > .10$		1.467	$p > .10$	
Feel more confident	3.443	$p < .10$	+	0.102	$p > .10$		0.053	$p > .10$		1.041	$p > .10$		0.001	$p > .10$	
Make new friends	0.203	$p > .10$		4.579	$p < .05$	+	4.633	$p < .05$	+	8.609	$p < .01$	+	0.915	$p > .10$	
Find out what I'm good at	2.978	$p < .10$	-	1.635	$p > .10$		0.003	$p > .10$		0.693	$p > .10$		0.003	$p > .10$	
Find out what I like to do	1.616	$p > .10$		1.647	$p > .10$		4.758	$p < .05$	-	0.052	$p > .10$		0.489	$p > .10$	
Discover things I want to learn about	0.749	$p > .10$		0.509	$p > .10$		0.013	$p > .10$		1.396	$p > .10$		0.028	$p > .10$	
Find out what is important to me	7.813	$p < .01$	+	1.775	$p > .10$		0.003	$p > .10$		0.009	$p > .10$		2.224	$p > .10$	
Go to school	1.628	$p > .10$		0.671	$p > .10$		0.655	$p > .10$		0.011	$p > .10$		0.747	$p > .10$	
Learn things to help me in school	4.956	$p < .05$	-	0.775	$p > .10$		1.419	$p > .10$		0.995	$p > .10$		1.856	$p > .10$	
Learn things that will be important for my future	2.379	$p > .10$		1.292	$p > .10$		0.532	$p > .10$		2.063	$p > .10$		0.875	$p > .10$	

Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 900$ responses to the question, “Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . .”

Note. Values in the +/- column indicate if a significant relationship demonstrated a positive or negative relationship between scores on the survey scale and students endorsing a given area as an area of program impact.

Table Continues

Table D4.10 (Continued). Results of Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Relationship Between Youth-Reported Impacts and Scales From the End-of-Session Survey

Youth-reported impact	Engagement			Relevance			Challenge			Affect			Learned something		
	Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.		Chi-square	Sig.	+/-	Chi-square	Sig.		Chi-square	Sig.	+/-
Think about classes I might want to take	0.970	$p > .10$		0.372	$p > .10$		0.665	$p > .10$		0.504	$p > .10$		0.296	$p > .10$	
Think about what I want to do when I'm older	0.061	$p > .10$		2.091	$p > .10$		4.927	$p < .05$	+	3.437	$p < .10$	+	0.042	$p > .10$	
Learn things important to my community	0.004	$p > .10$		0.514	$p > .10$		3.568	$p < .10$	-	0.624	$p > .10$		0.052	$p > .10$	
Feel good because I was helping my community	0.669	$p > .10$		2.554	$p > .10$		1.139	$p > .10$		1.642	$p > .10$		1.210	$p > .10$	

Source. End-of-session survey administered in spring 2018 in 54 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, $N = 900$ responses to the question, “Pick up to three areas where you think the program has helped you the most. This program has helped me . . .”

Note. Values in the +/- column indicate if a significant relationship demonstrated a positive or negative relationship between scores on the survey scale and students endorsing a given area as an area of program impact.

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Appendix E. Chapter 5 Additional Figures and Tables

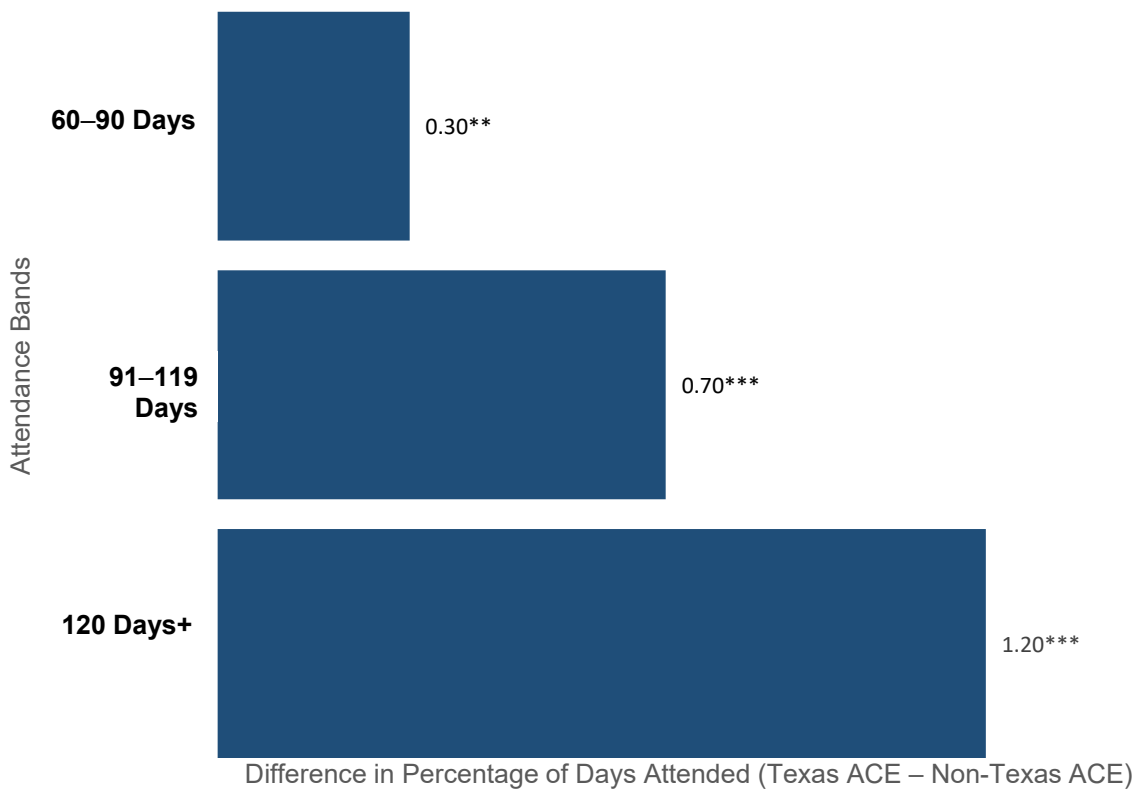
Part A: Annual Program Impact Estimates by Grade Level

Appendix E contains the results of analyses undertaken to assess the following:

- The impact of a single year of participation in Texas Afterschool Centers of Education (Texas ACE) during the 2017–18 programming period, broken down by grade level (Figures E5.1–E5.16)
- Results for similar analyses conducted when students participated in Texas ACE during both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods for 60 days or more (Tables E5.1–E5.4)

Figure E5.1. School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3

Significant, positive effects on school-day attendance occurred when students attended 60 days or more.



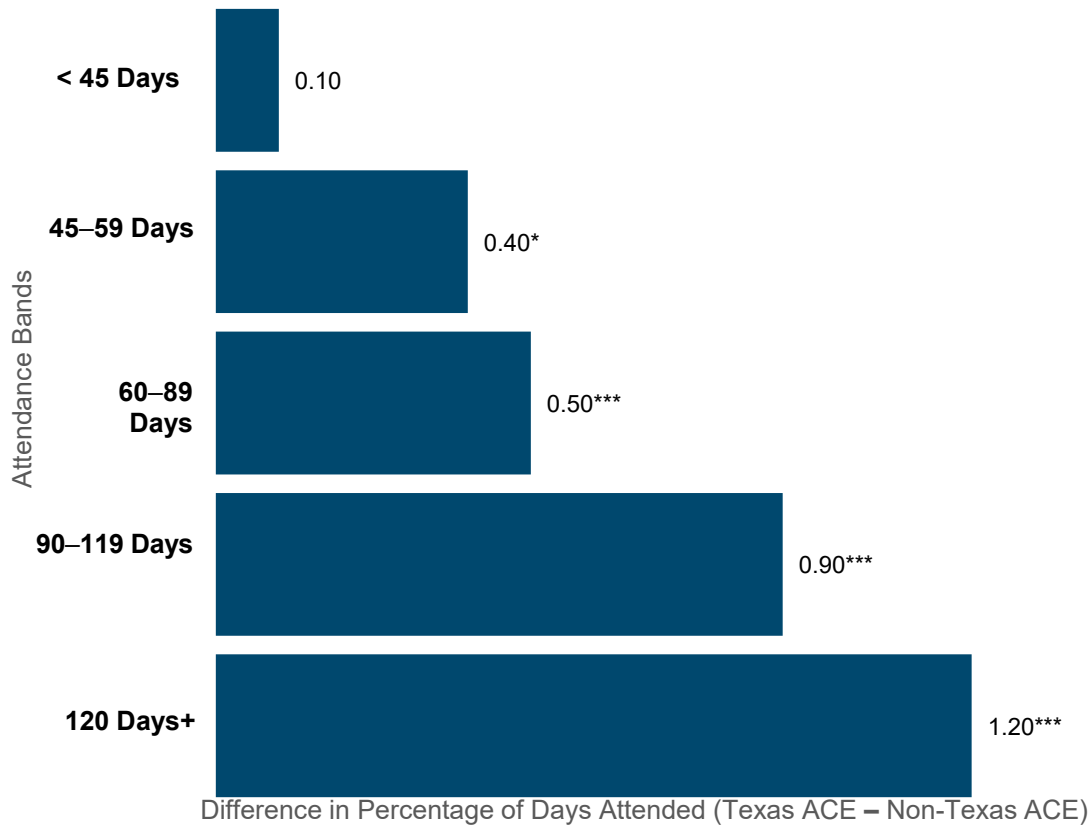
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.2. School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5

Significant, positive effects on school-day attendance occurred when students attended 45 days or more.



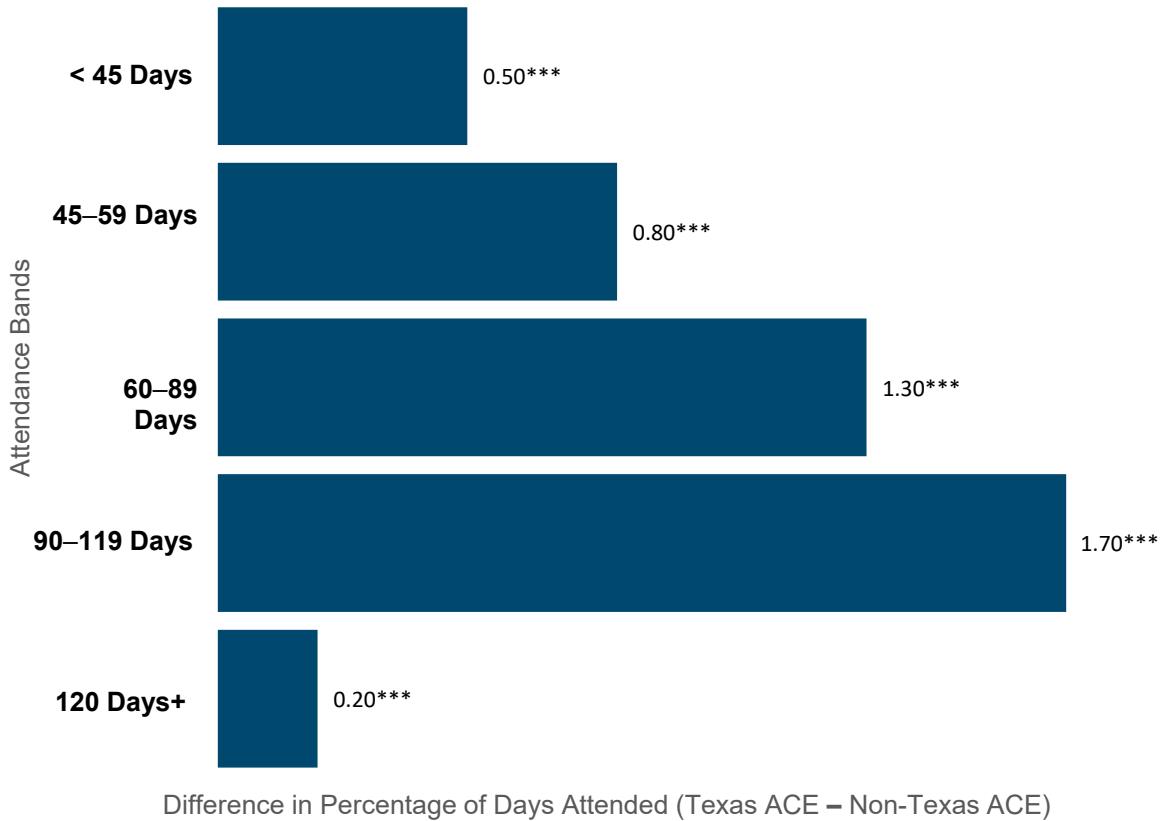
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.3. School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8

Significant, positive effects on school-day attendance occurred when students attended Texas ACE at any level.



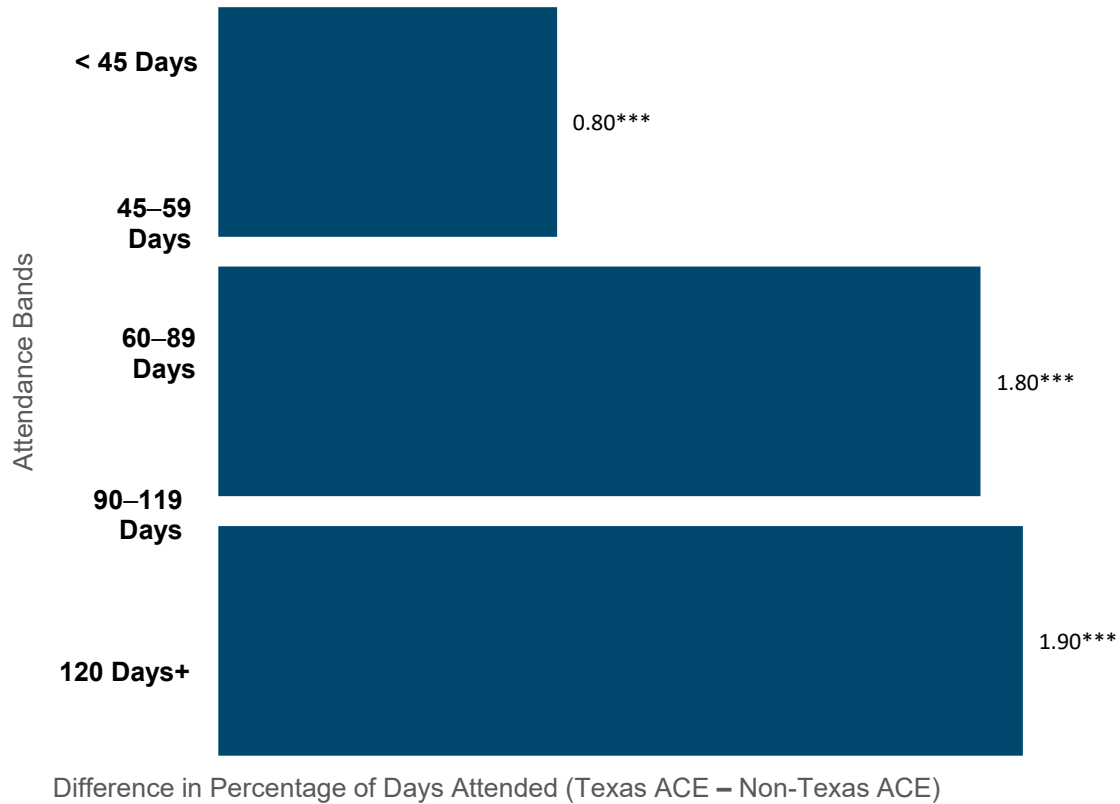
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

***p < .001.

Figure E5.4. School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12

Significant, positive effects on school-day attendance occurred when students attended Texas ACE at any level.



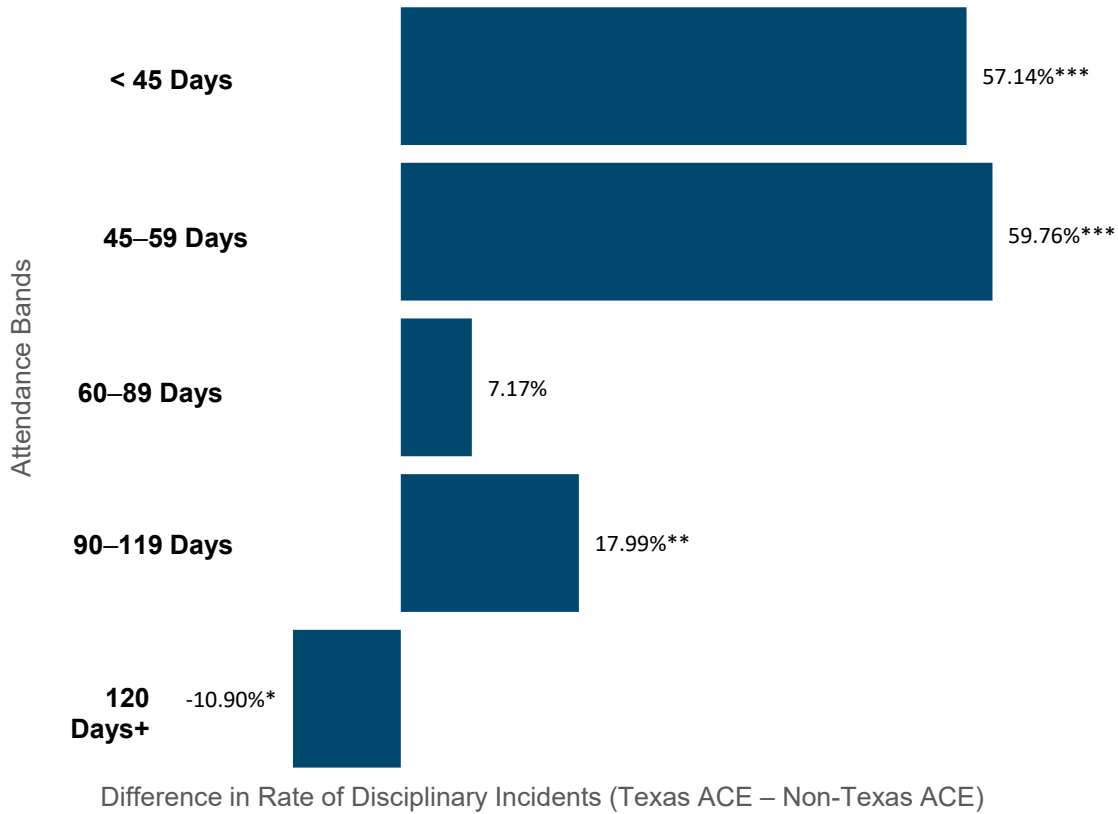
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants.

*** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.5. Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no reduction in disciplinary incidents before participation reached 120 days or more.



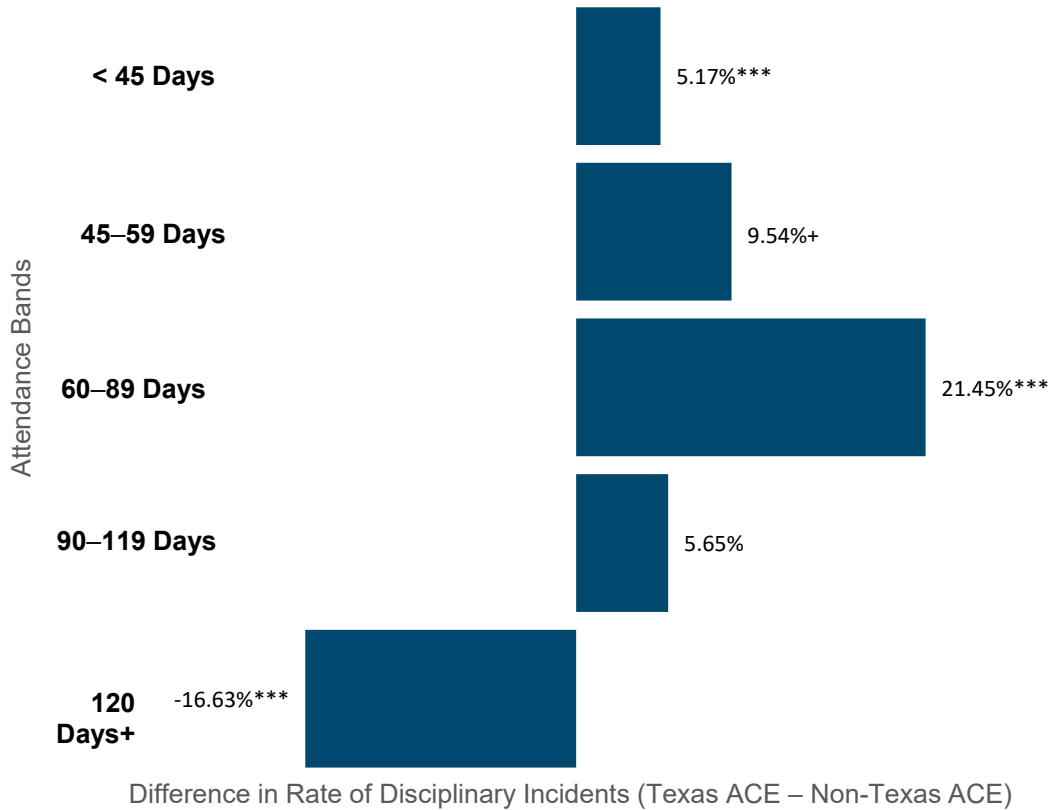
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.6. Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no reduction in disciplinary incidents before participation reached 120 days or more.



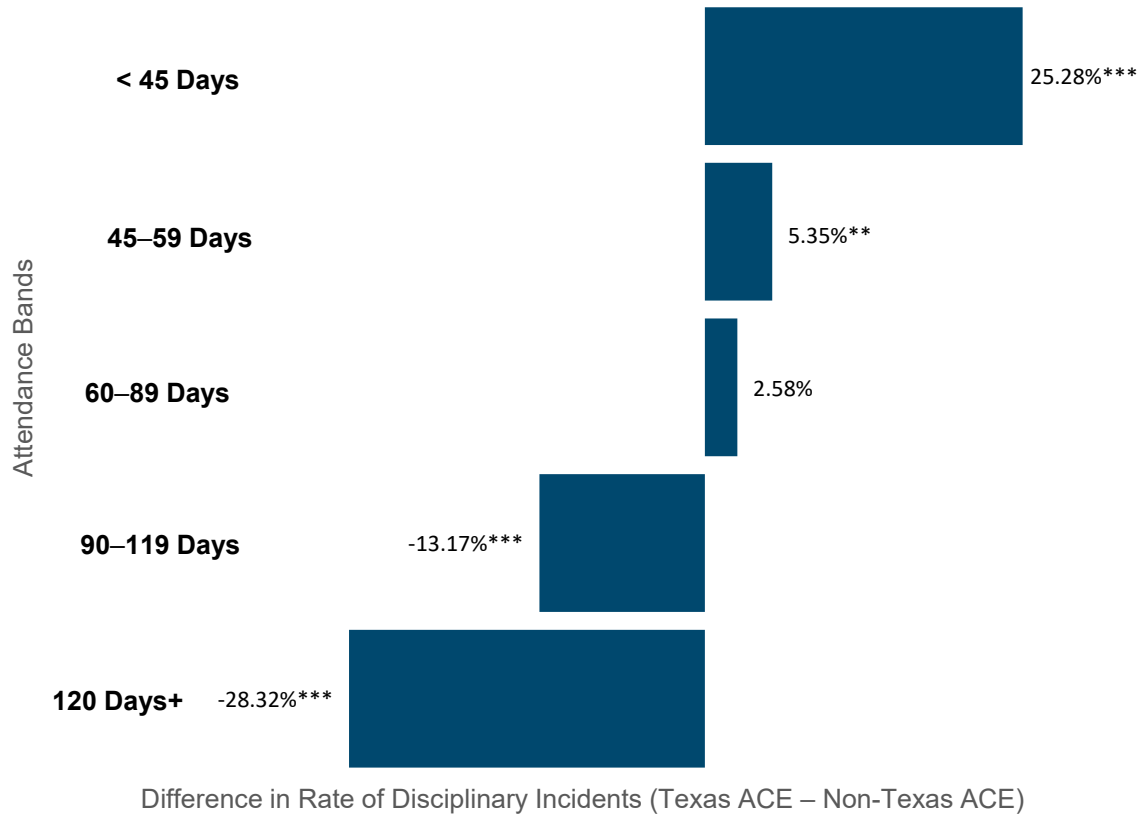
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.

* $p < .10$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.7. Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no reduction in disciplinary incidents before participation reached 90 days or more.



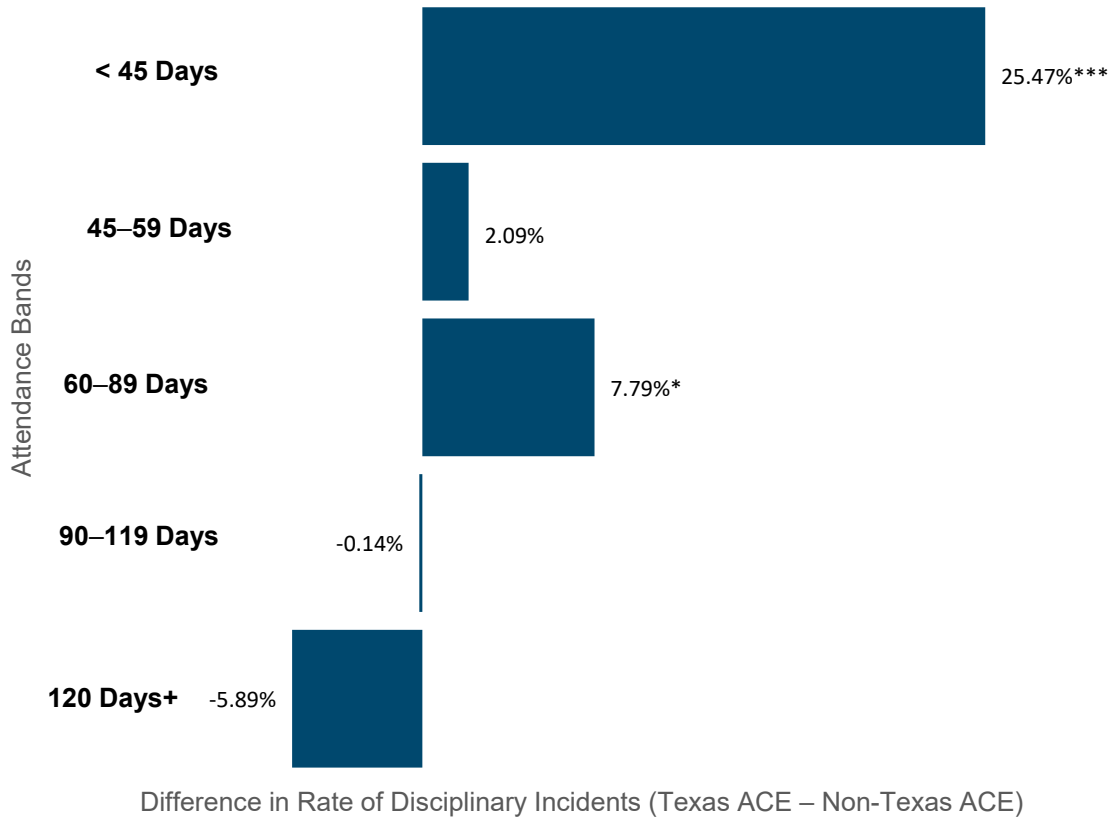
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.8. Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no significant reduction in disciplinary incidents.

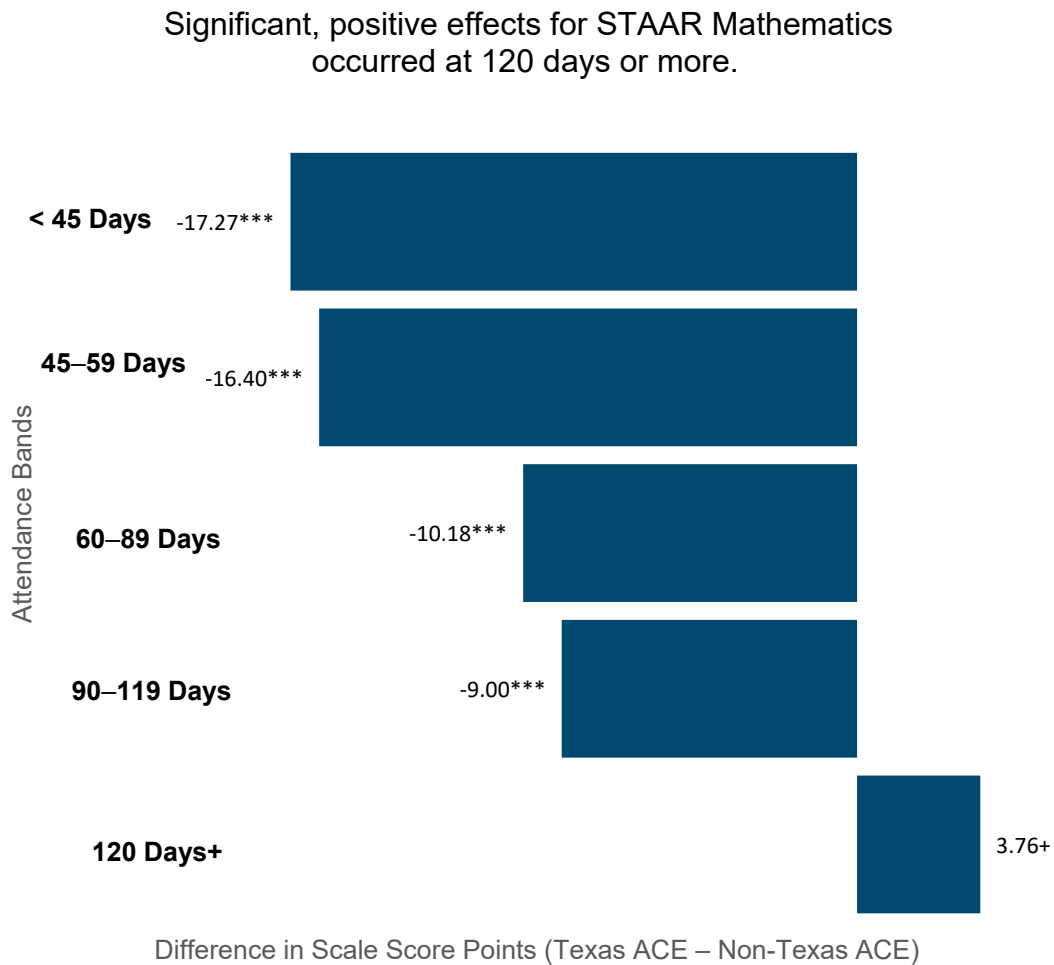


Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.9. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5

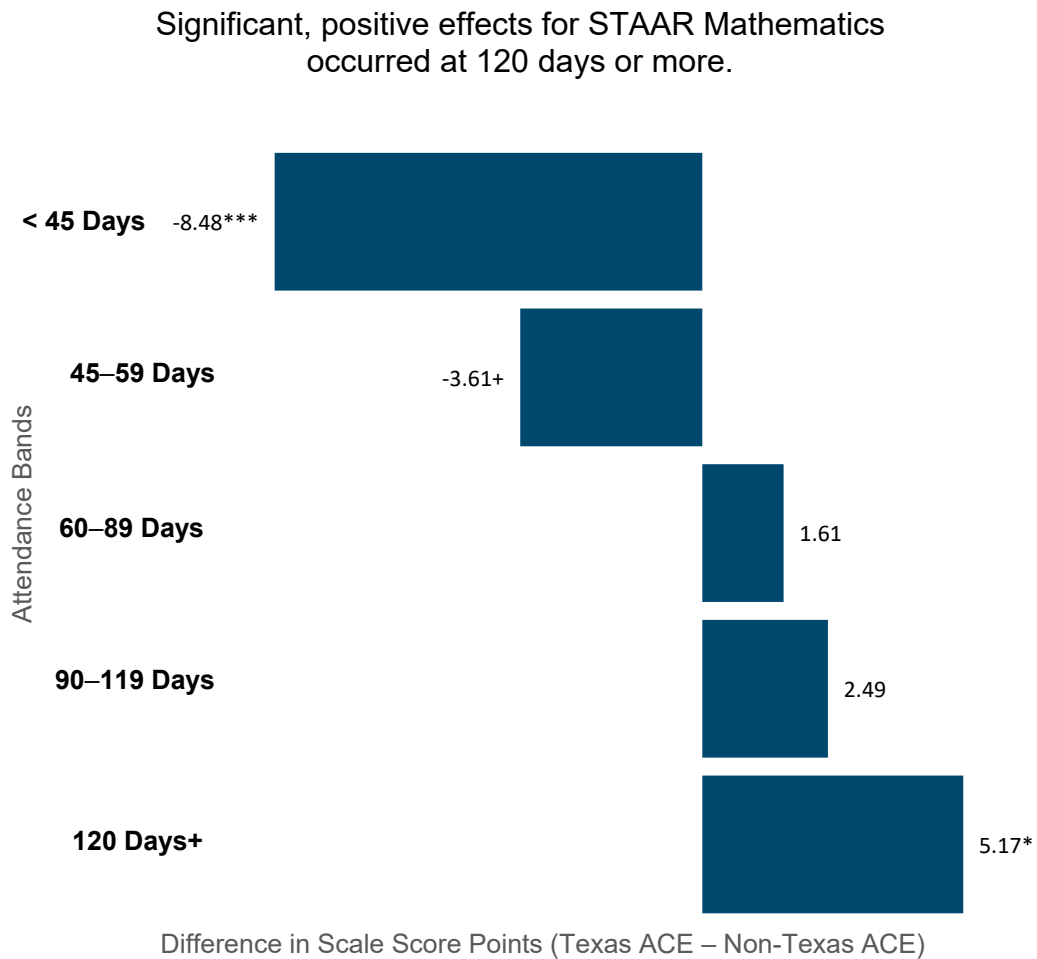


Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.

* $p < .10$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.10. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



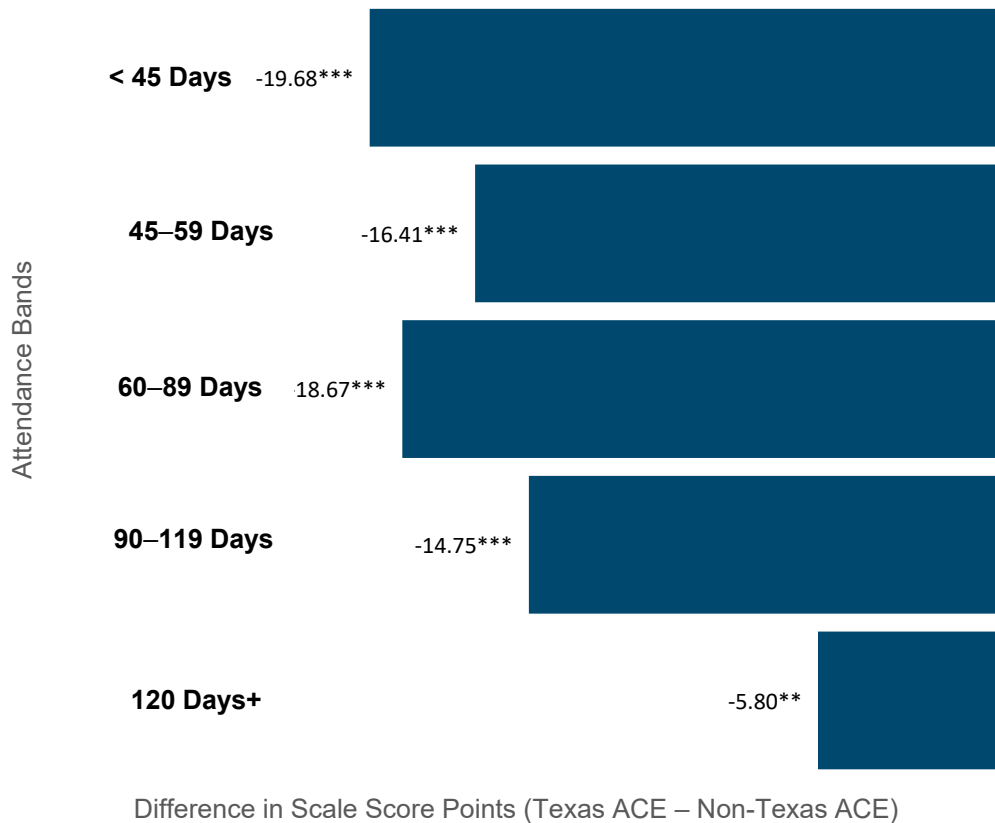
Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.

* $p < .10$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.11. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no positive effects in relation to STAAR Reading achievement.

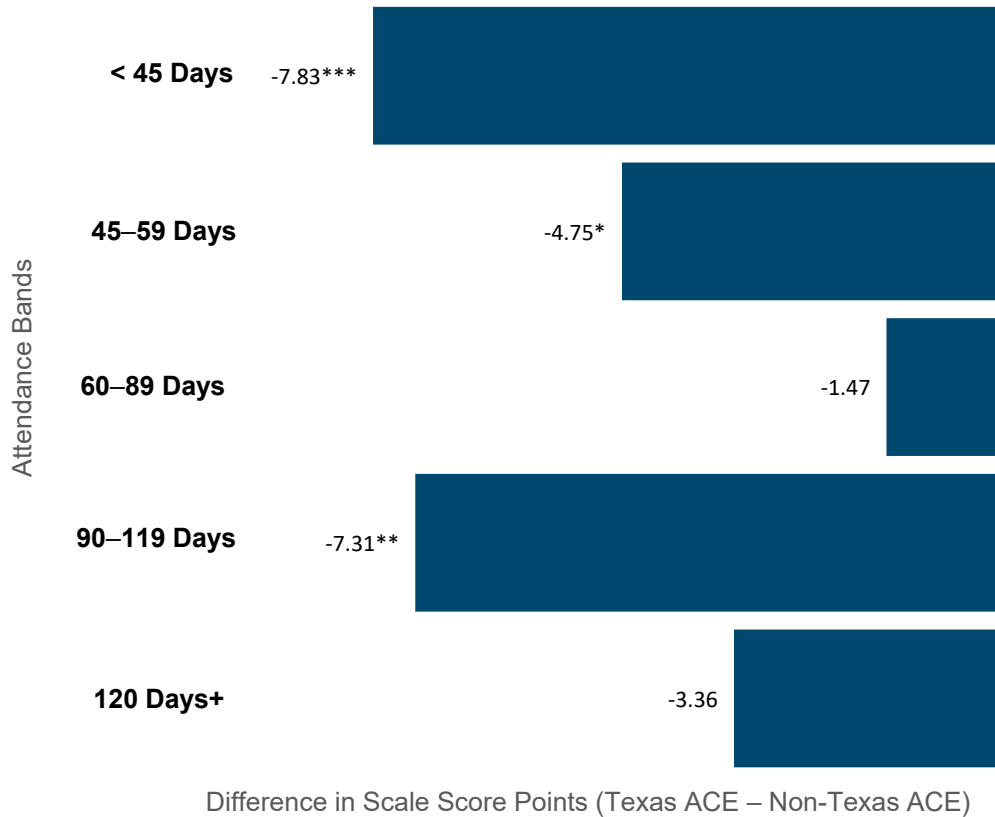


Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s reading performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average
 ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.12. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8

Participation in Texas ACE yielded no positive effects in relation to STAAR Reading achievement.

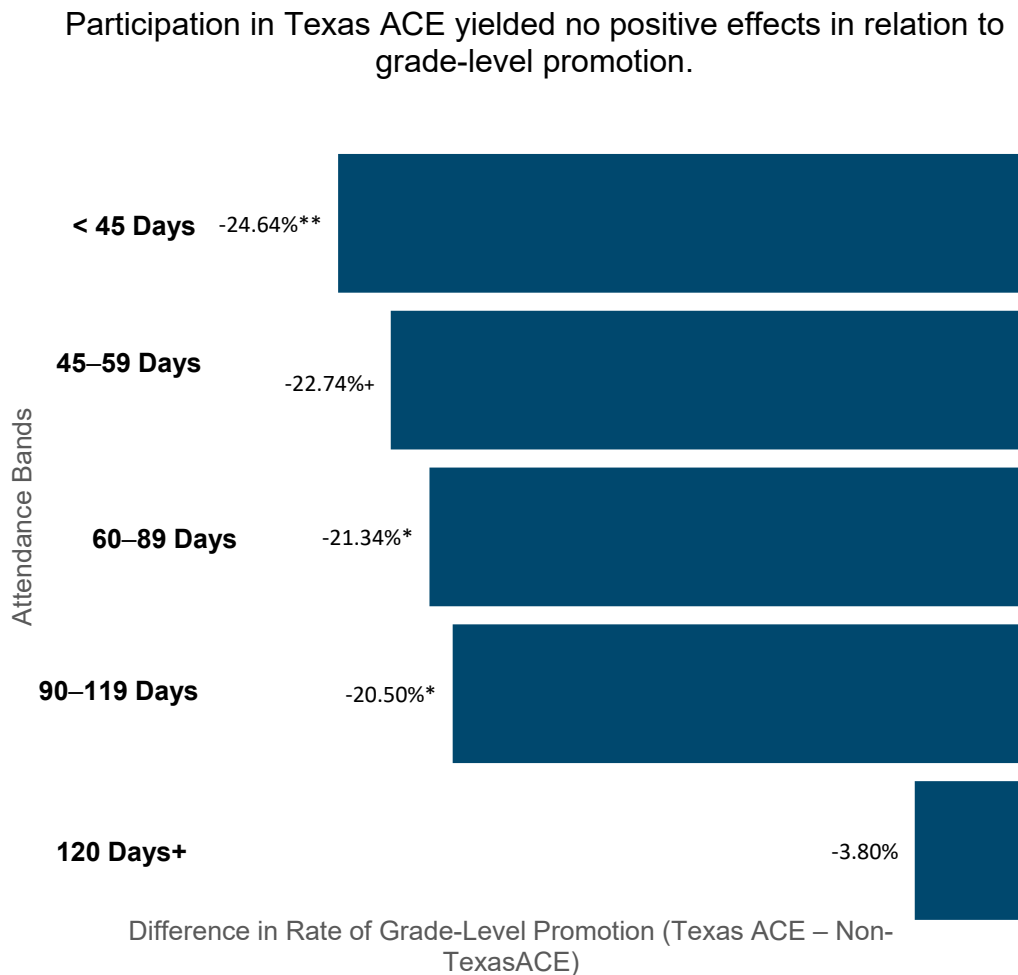


Source. STAAR scores, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year’s reading performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.13. Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3



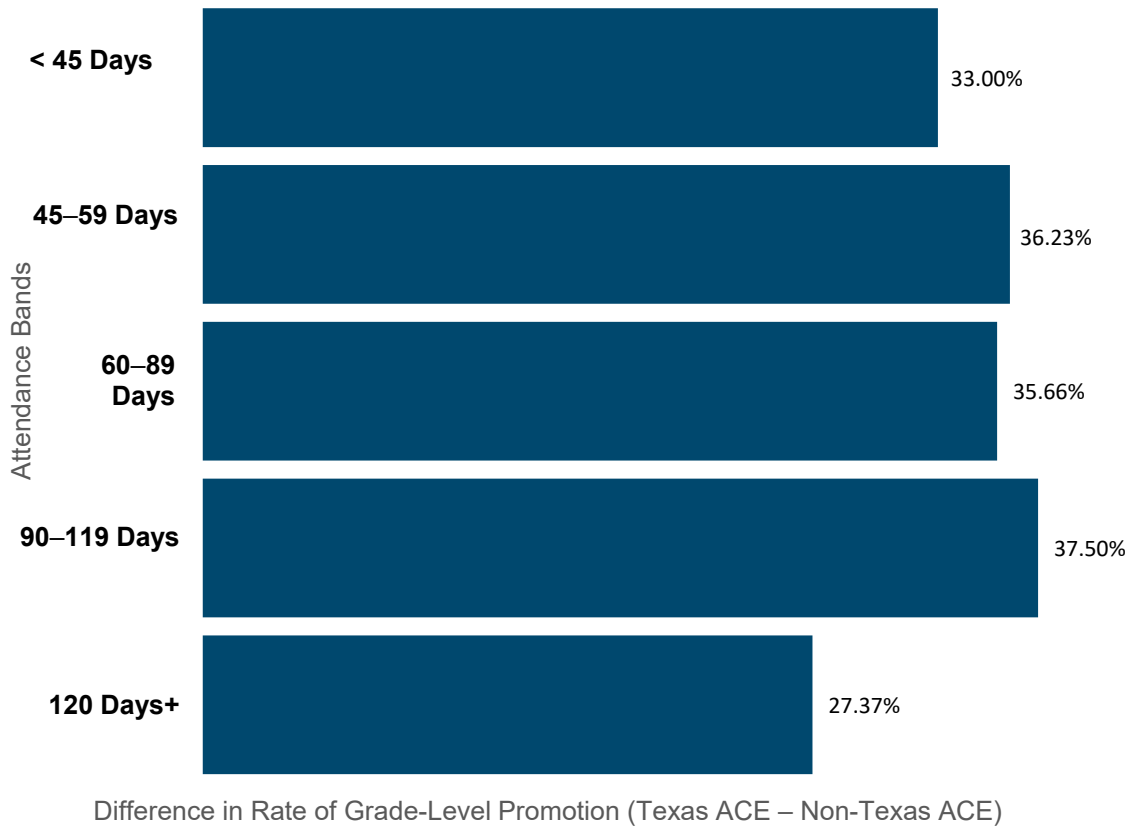
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade-level promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate.

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure E5.14. Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5

Participation in Texas ACE resulted in no significant effects in relation to grade-level promotion.

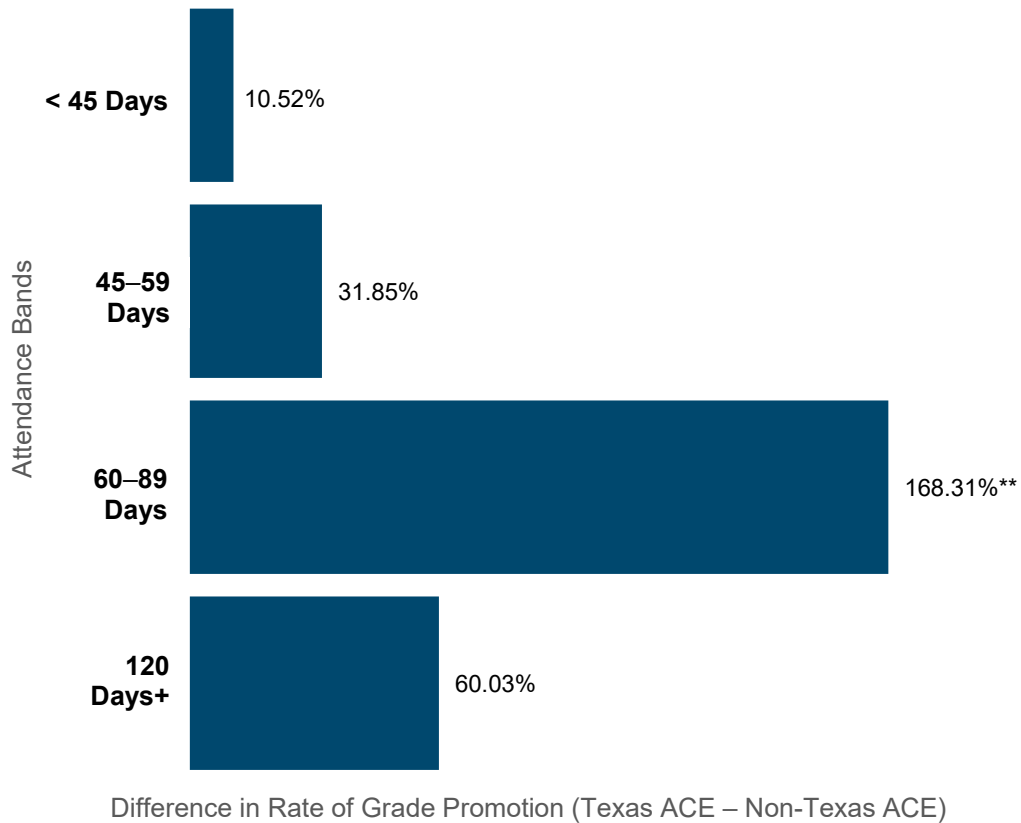


Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade-level promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. Pooled results were not available for students attending 120 days or more in 2015–16 given a failure for the models to converge. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.

Figure E5.15. Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8

Significant, positive effects for grade-level promotion occurred at 60–90 days of Texas ACE participation.



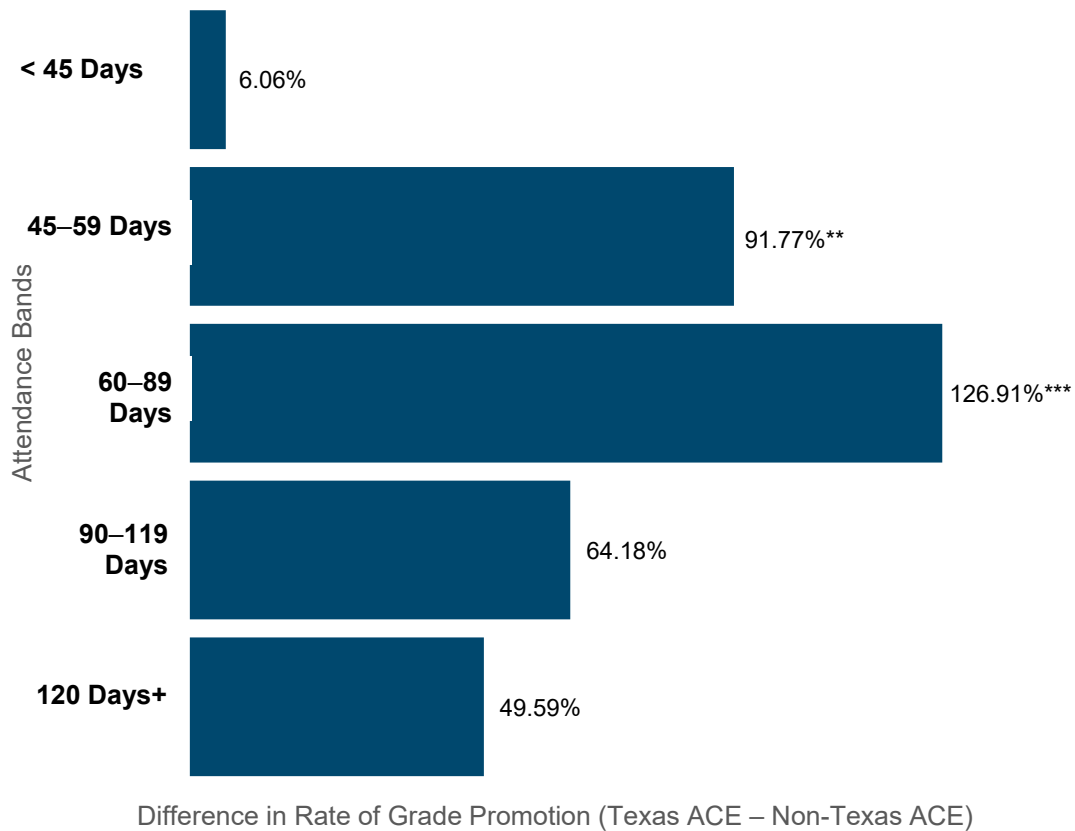
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade-level promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. Results were not available for students attending 90–119 days or more in 2017–18 given a failure for the models to converge. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.

** $p < .01$.

Figure E5.16. Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12

Significant, positive effects for grade-level promotion occurred at 45–89 days of Texas ACE participation.



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE and similar students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade-level promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table E5.1. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More—Outcomes Related to Academic Performance: Grades K–3

Outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
Grade-level promotion	2016–17 & 2017–18	+12.15% chance of being promoted	0.137	> .10
School-day attendance	2016–17 & 2017–18	+0.9 percentage points	0.002	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	2016–17 & 2017–18	+12.40% chance of an incident occurring	0.053	< .05

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Table E5.2. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More—Outcomes Related to Academic Performance: Grades 4–5

Outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	2016–17 & 2017–18	-2.51 points	0.014	< .05
STAAR Reading	2016–17 & 2017–18	-13.49 points	0.014	< .001
Grade-level promotion	2016–17 & 2017–18	+232.14% chance of being promoted	0.41	< .01
School-day attendance	2016–17 & 2017–18	+1.10 percentage points	0.003	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	2016–17 & 2017–18	+9.83% chance of an incident occurring	0.042	< .05

Source. STAAR scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Table E5.3. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More—Outcomes Related to Academic Performance: Grades 6–8

Outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	2016–17 & 2017–18	+0.94 points	0.017	> .10
STAAR Reading	2016–17 & 2017–18	-6.12 points	0.017	< .01
Grade-level promotion	2016–17 & 2017–18	+50.64% chance of being promoted	0.518	> .10
School-day attendance	2016–17 & 2017–18	+2.20 percentage points	0.005	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	2016–17 & 2017–18	-13.65% chance of an incident occurring	0.025	< .001

Source. STAAR scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Table E5.4. Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More—Outcomes Related to Academic Performance: Grades 9–12

Outcomes	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
	School years	Effect	Standard error	p-value
Percentage of career and technical education credits earned	2016–17 & 2017–18	+2.3 percentage points	0.009	< .001
Grade-level promotion	2016–17 & 2017–18	+469.76% chance of being promoted	0.436	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	2016–17 & 2017–18	-8.38% chance of an incident occurring	0.053	< .10

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18.

Part B: Impact of Center-Level Characteristics on Student Outcomes

This section outlines both the process and the results of analyses performed to assess the relationship between a series of characteristics associated with Texas ACE and center-level effect sizes. To conduct these analyses, student-level matching was conducted at the center level; that is, for each center, students were matched to nonattending students who were enrolled in the school or schools that were affiliated with the center. Propensity score matching (PSM) supported this process. This process differed from the PSM analyses undertaken to calculate statewide impact estimates. For the statewide analyses, nonparticipating students across all feeder schools were placed into one large pool. Matching then happened against this pool based on school- and student-level covariates to identify the comparison groups used in the analyses.³¹

When calculating center-level effects, nonparticipants were selected from the same feeder schools as those who attended by the treatment population from a given center. In this sense, the purpose of these

³¹ Feeder school in this report refers the campus(es) that students attend during the regular school day.

analyses was to calculate an estimated effect size using regression for each center to summarize how that center impacted Texas ACE participants on the school-related outcomes examined.

When assessing how a given center characteristic related to these center-level effects, a series of multiple regression models was run, where each center-level effect served as the outcome variables to explore how select center characteristics were related to the center-level effects examined. Separate analyses were run when effect sizes were based on those students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more during the 2017–18 programming period and when effect sizes were based on students participating in Texas ACE for 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods.

Two samples were included in this set of analyses.

- All centers active during the 2017–18 programming period where the calculation of center-level effects was possible ($n = 421$ centers)
- Centers that were involved in the collection of youth experience survey data in spring 2018 with 10 or more survey respondents where the calculation of center-level effects was possible ($n = 48$ centers)

The center characteristics examined in these analyses varied by sample, as described in greater detail in the next section.

Center Characteristics Associated With All Active Centers

For the sample consisting of all centers active during the 2017–18 programming period where the calculation of center-level effects was possible, the domain of center characteristics examined was drawn from the KPIs and variables derived from the Tx21st Student Tracking System and the Public Education Information Management System. Each variable assessed is described in greater detail as follows:

- **Characteristics based on the key performance indicators (KPIs) related to Texas ACE program attendance.** Evidence exists that students may benefit the more they participate in Texas ACE (Naftzger et al., 2013), and there was interest in assessing if the KPIs related to program attendance may be related to the center-level effects constructed using PSM. The hypothesis was that higher levels of performance on the program attendance KPIs would be positively related to center-level effects. Three KPIs relate to Texas ACE program attendance:
 - Percentage of students attending Texas ACE programming in both the fall and spring semesters of the school year
 - Percentage of students attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE during the programming period
 - Percentage of students attending 120 hours or more of Texas ACE across two programming years

Given that there is an association between how a center performs on this set of indicators and the grade level served by the center, with centers serving middle and high school students demonstrating lower levels of performance, centers were classified into quartiles by grade level based on their performance on each indicator. This quartile value was then used in the analyses to assess the relationship between center performance on that indicator and center-level effects. A fourth variable was calculated as well, which represented the average quartile value across all three program attendance indicators for the center.

- **Other participation-related characteristics.** Variables were created to represent both centers with high average student attendance in Texas ACE and high summertime programming days. It is important to note that the definition of high average attendance in Texas ACE varied by grade level. High elementary program attendance was defined as 280 hours or more; high middle school attendance was defined as 128 hours or more; and high attendance for high school youth was defined as 75 hours or more. In the *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*, centers where average student

attendance in Texas ACE was at a higher level had more of an association with positive State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effects.

High summertime programming days were defined as those centers that offered approximately 150 hours or more of programming in summer 2017. In the *2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report*, centers operating at this level during the summer had more of an association with positive effects on STAAR Mathematics assessment scores and a greater association with fewer disciplinary incident referrals than centers offering fewer than 150 hours of summer programming (Arellano et al., 2020).

- **The staffing model employed by the center.** Variables were created to represent two types of staffing models employed by centers operating during the 2017–18 programming period.
 - Centers where 50% or more of the staff were school-day teachers
 - Centers where 50% or more of the staff were college students or paraprofessionals

Findings from the *2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report* demonstrated that centers mostly staffed by teachers had a greater association with fewer disciplinary incidents relative to centers employing a different staffing model (Arellano et al., 2020). The opposite was true for centers staffed mostly by college students or paraprofessionals.

- **Served a higher need population than affiliated school(s).** Variables were created to represent centers that were characterized by students attending Texas ACE programming who were classified as economically disadvantaged, English learners, identified for special education services, and/or were identified as being academically at risk at a higher percentage than the overall school population where these youth were enrolled. In the prior evaluation reports, center-level impact estimates pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics were significantly smaller than in centers where the Texas ACE and school populations were more similar on this set of characteristics (Arellano et al., 2020).

Center Characteristics Derived From the Youth Experience Survey

A different set of center characteristics was assessed in relation to the 48 centers involved in the collection of youth experience survey data in spring 2018 and where it was viable to calculate center-level effects. These characteristics fell within three broad categories: (a) connections to the program, (b) youth experiences in programming, and (c) youth-reported outcomes.

Connections to the Program

- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that their friends were in the program
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that teachers from school they like were in the program
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that activity leaders they like were in the program
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that it was their idea to attend the program

Youth Experiences in Programming

- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that they really look forward to coming to the program
- Mean scale score related to positive youth perceptions of other youth in the program
- Mean scale score related to positive youth perceptions of program activity leaders
- Mean scale score related to opportunities for youth to experience a sense of agency

Youth-Reported Outcomes

- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them feel good about themselves
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them with their confidence
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them develop new interests
- Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating the program helped them make new friends

Center-level effects were calculated for two groups of students attending Texas ACE: (a) those who attended 60 days or more of programming during the 2017–18 programming period and (b) those who attended 60 days or more of programming during the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods. The results are in Tables E5.5–E5.11.

Table E5.5. Center-Level Relationships Between Program Attendance-Related Indicators and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Program attendance-related indicators / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Quartile—Percentage attending both semesters				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	-0.206	> .10	2.071	> .10
STAAR Reading	-1.520	< .10	6.103	< .01
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	-0.001	> .10	-0.009	> .10
Quartile—Percentage attending 120 hours or more				
STAAR Mathematics	1.098	> .10	8.597	< .001
STAAR Reading	0.397	> .10	13.196	< .001
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.001	> .10	0.002	> .10
Quartile—Percentage attending 120 hours or more across 2 years				
STAAR Mathematics	0.674	> .10	8.010	< .01
STAAR Reading	0.560	> .10	12.694	< .001
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.001	> .10	0.000	> .10
Mean quartile value across all attendance indicators				
STAAR Mathematics	0.696	> .10	7.492	< .01
STAAR Reading	-0.222	> .10	13.106	< .001
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	-0.001	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.000	> .10	-0.002	> .10

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18.

Table E5.6. Center-Level Relationships Between Other Participation-Related Characteristics and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Other participation-related characteristics / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
High average program attendance				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	-0.451	> .10	5.022	> .10
STAAR Reading	-0.763	> .10	14.266	< .01
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	-0.001	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	-0.021	> .10	-0.038	> .10
High number of summer days				
STAAR Mathematics	3.055	< .10	5.787	> .10
STAAR Reading	-1.609	> .10	3.083	> .10
School-day attendance	0.004	< .001	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.035	< .05	0.035	> .10

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18.

Table E5.7. Center-Level Relationships Between Staffing Models and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Staffing models / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Mostly staffed by teachers				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	1.350	> .10	8.451	< .10
STAAR Reading	3.362	< .10	-4.828	> .10
School-day attendance	-0.002	< .05	0.001	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	0.012	> .10	-0.029	> .10
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals				
STAAR Mathematics	-1.142	> .10	-6.968	> .10
STAAR Reading	-3.812	< .10	2.046	> .10
School-day attendance	0.001	> .10	-0.001	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.009	> .10	0.024	> .10

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18.

Table E5.8. Center-Level Relationships Between Serving a Higher Need Population and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18) and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Higher need population / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Higher proportion of English learners than in school				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	-2.369	> .10	-19.132	< .01
STAAR Reading	-6.434	< .01	-24.319	< .001
School-day attendance	-0.004	< .001	0.001	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	-0.046	> .10	-0.030	> .10
Higher proportion of students classified as at risk than in school				
STAAR Mathematics	-6.049	< .001	-15.201	< .01
STAAR Reading	-5.990	< .01	-21.858	< .001
School-day attendance	-0.002	< .001	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.003	> .10	-0.036	> .10
Higher proportion of students receiving special education services than in school				
STAAR Mathematics	-5.724	< .01	-7.729	> .10
STAAR Reading	-0.422	> .10	-12.030	< .05
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.000	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.002	> .10	-0.027	> .10
Higher proportion of students classified as economically disadvantaged than in school				
STAAR Mathematics	-3.756	< .05	-11.419	< .05
STAAR Reading	-1.641	> .10	-12.553	< .01
School-day attendance	-0.002	< .01	0.000	> .10
Discipline	0.001	> .10	0.000	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.003	> .10	-0.010	> .10

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18.

Table E5.9. Center-Level Relationships Between Connections to the Program and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Connections to the program / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that their friends were in the program				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	-69.115	< .10	-258.114	< .10
STAAR Reading	-84.075	< .05	-181.813	> .10
School-day attendance	-0.034	> .10	-0.032	> .10
Discipline	-0.672	> .10	-0.223	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.405	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that teachers from school they like were in the program				
STAAR Mathematics	-23.408	< .05	-4.513	> .10
STAAR Reading	-19.437	< .10	-34.890	> .10
School-day attendance	0.004	> .10	-0.001	> .10
Discipline	-0.010	> .10	-0.094	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.074	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that activity leaders they like were in the program				
STAAR Mathematics	-14.268	> .10	14.539	> .10
STAAR Reading	-12.137	> .10	-15.262	> .10
School-day attendance	0.007	> .10	-0.012	> .10
Discipline	-0.094	> .10	-0.072	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.213	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that it was their idea to attend the program				
STAAR Mathematics	-9.985	> .10	-16.768	> .10
STAAR Reading	-11.914	> .10	-73.262	< .10
School-day attendance	-0.001	> .10	0.009	> .10
Discipline	-0.094	> .10	-0.173	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.230	> .10	n/a	n/a

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18; youth experience survey data collected in spring 2018.

Note. n/a = not applicable.

Table E5.10. Center-Level Relationships Between Youth Experiences in Programming and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Youth experiences in programming / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that they really look forward to coming to the program				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	-9.606	> .10	5.292	> .10
STAAR Reading	-5.855	> .10	-23.169	> .10
School-day attendance	-0.001	> .10	-0.002	> .10
Discipline	0.101	> .10	-0.065	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	-0.009	> .10	n/a	n/a
Mean scale score related to positive youth perceptions of other youth in the program				
STAAR Mathematics	-10.457	> .10	7.251	> .10
STAAR Reading	-3.794	> .10	9.519	> .10
School-day attendance	0.001	> .10	-0.002	> .10
Discipline	0.001	> .10	-0.052	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.150	> .10	n/a	n/a
Mean scale score related to positive youth perceptions of program activity leaders				
STAAR Mathematics	-13.570	> .10	0.612	> .10
STAAR Reading	-9.275	> .10	-44.825	> .10
School-day attendance	0.000	> .10	-0.003	> .10
Discipline	0.162	> .10	-0.134	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.075	> .10	n/a	n/a
Mean scale score related to opportunities for youth to experience a sense of agency				
STAAR Mathematics	-7.059	> .10	19.272	> .10
STAAR Reading	-5.565	> .10	9.888	> .10
School-day attendance	0.004	> .10	-0.002	> .10
Discipline	0.182	< .05	-0.112	< .05
CTE course credits earned	-0.205	< .10	n/a	n/a

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18; youth experience survey data collected in spring 2018.

Table E5.11. Center-Level Relationships Between Youth Reported Outcomes and School-Related Outcomes: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18 and Students Attending 60 Days or More in Both 2016–17 and 2017–18

Youth reported outcomes / school-related outcomes	60 days or more— 2017–18		60 days or more— 2016–17 & 2017–18	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that the program helped them feel good about themselves				
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics	18.787	> .10	19.954	> .10
STAAR Reading	28.125	< .10	-89.874	< .10
School-day attendance	0.013	< .10	0.027	< .05
Discipline	0.031	> .10	-0.072	> .10
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	-0.400	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that the program helped them with their confidence				
STAAR Mathematics	25.710	> .10	189.560	< .01
STAAR Reading	32.362	< .10	117.271	> .10
School-day attendance	0.003	> .10	0.035	> .10
Discipline	-0.046	> .10	-0.446	< .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.429	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that the program helped them develop new interests				
STAAR Mathematics	-35.054	< .05	-29.546	> .10
STAAR Reading	-69.294	< .001	10.242	> .10
School-day attendance	-0.001	> .10	-0.026	> .10
Discipline	0.007	> .10	-0.016	> .10
CTE course credits earned	0.336	> .10	n/a	n/a
Proportion of youth survey respondents indicating that the program helped them make new friends				
STAAR Mathematics	-5.455	> .10	-84.001	< .10
STAAR Reading	0.300	> .10	-117.150	< .10
School-day attendance	-0.002	> .10	-0.022	> .10
Discipline	0.016	> .10	0.084	> .10
CTE course credits earned	-0.229	> .10	n/a	n/a

Source. STAAR, 2016–17 to 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17 to 2017–18; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17 to 2017–18; youth experience survey data collected in spring 2018.

Note. n/a = not applicable.

Effects Associated With the Center Characteristics of the Site Visit Sample

Tables E5.12–E5.23 outline mean center effects associated with characteristics derived from site visit data for students attending 60 days or more of Texas ACE in the 2017–18 programming period and those attending 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods.

Table E5.12. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Scores and Centers With Lower PQA Scores: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher PQA score		Lower PQA score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-14.30	9	-6.20	8
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-3.90	9	-1.12	8
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.93	10	0.82	9
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-7.34%	10	-3.20%	9

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.13. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Scores and Centers With Lower PQA Scores: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher PQA score		Lower PQA score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-3.18	8	-9.53	5
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-7.30	9	9.88	5
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.44	8	1.40	5
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-1.97%	8	-10.08%	5

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.14. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Reading Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-14.54	9	-5.93	8
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-5.14	9	0.28	8
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.70	10	1.07	9
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-5.39%	10	-5.55%	9

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.15. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Reading Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-18.85	7	9.80	6
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-8.44	7	6.11	7
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.66	5	0.91	8
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-7.89%	5	-3.33%	8

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.16. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Mathematics Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-7.68	9	-14.51	8
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-.37	10	-5.76	7
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.96	12	0.74	7
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-6.02%	12	-4.52%	7

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.17. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Mathematics Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	2.06	9	-22.90	4
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	6.87	9	-15.63	5
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	1.24	8	0.12	5
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-6.19%	8	-3.33%	5

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.18. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Verbal Communication Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-12.43	9	-8.30	8
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-5.37	9	0.54	8
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.81	9	0.94	10
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-3.80%	9	-6.97%	10

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.19. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Verbal Communication Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-3.18	7	-8.48	6
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	7.01	7	-9.34	7
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.41	6	1.15	7
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-7.19%	6	-3.29%	7

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.20. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Written Communication Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-9.95	7	-10.87	10
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-2.47	7	-2.68	10
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.92	8	0.84	11
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-12.94%	8	-0.01%	11

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.21. Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Assessment of Program Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) Scores and Centers With Lower APT-O Scores on the Written Communication Practices Scales: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher APT-O score		Lower APT-O score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-1.21	7	-10.77	6
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-0.40	7	-1.93	7
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.55	4	0.92	9
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	2.66%	4	-8.54%	9

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.22. Mean Effects Comparing Higher Implementing Centers With Lower Implementing Centers Based on the KPIs: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher implementing		Lower implementing	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-13.83	8	-7.52	9
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-8.34	8	2.52	9
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	0.85	10	0.91	9
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	2.34%	10	-14.14%	9

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

Table E5.23. Mean Effects Comparing Higher Implementing Centers With Lower Implementing Centers Based on the KPIs: Students Attending 60 Days or More in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Center characteristic	Higher implementing		Lower implementing	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading effect (scale score points)	-8.59	9	1.04	4
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	3.16	9	-8.94	5
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	1.03	7	0.56	6
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-10.18%	7	0.85%	6

Source. STAAR, 2017–18; Public Education Information Management System data, 2017–18; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2017–18; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2018 site visit.

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Appendix F. Data Sources

Table F1. Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
Tx21st Student Tracking System	Texas Education Agency (TEA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program characteristics 	The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a descriptive analysis of Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grantee and center program characteristics.
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) staff and youth surveys	Data collection AIR and Gibson Consulting Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth activity leader surveys • Youth experience survey 	AIR conducted independent descriptive analyses of the responses from the 21st CLCC staff survey and youth survey. For each survey, scaled responses were developed from dichotomous (i.e., yes or no) answers to rating scales (e.g., Likert scales of strongly agree to strongly disagree) to analyze staff and youth engagement. Items were then combined to reduce a large set of items to a small number of summary scores for each construct. Thus, one or two scale scores, rather than (for example) five or 10 individual survey items, summarize a construct. After combining the items, Rasch scale scores were created for each construct using Winsteps (Linacre, 2015), a Rasch analysis software program. The scales were examined for item fit and internal consistency.

Table Continues

Table F1 (Continued). Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
<p>Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)</p> <p>State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)</p> <p>Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)</p>	<p>TEA PEIMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students served by the program • Schools that students attend <p>STAAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and mathematics assessment outcomes • End-of-course assessments <p>TAPR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and district information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIR used correlational hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) and multiple regression approaches to explore the relationship between students’ participation levels (in terms of days³²) and associated outcomes such as truancy rates, grade-level promotion, and reading and mathematics achievement. To disentangle preexisting differences between students who attended the 21st CCLC program and those who did not from the effect of attending the program, the evaluation team conducted propensity score matching (PSM) using PEIMS, STAAR, and TAPR data to identify a group of matched comparison students who are similar to students enrolled in the 21st CCLC program. • PSM is a two-stage process that addresses the problem of potential selection bias. In the first stage, the probability that each student participates was modeled on available observable characteristics. By modeling selection into the afterschool program, this approach allowed us to compare participating and nonparticipating students who had a similar propensity to select into the program based on observable characteristics that were available in the TEA data (e.g., prior years’ outcome scores, student- and school-level demographics). In the second stage, the predicted probability of participation was used to model student outcomes while accounting for selection bias using an HLM approach with students nested within schools to account for the clustering data structure. Steps were taken to balance pretreatment group differences in observed covariates using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009).
<p>Locale codes</p>	<p>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 Education Demographic Geographic Estimates for Texas 	<p>Locale codes were used in the descriptive analysis in Chapter 2 to understand the distribution of Texas ACE across four locale types categorized by NCES. “The NCES locale framework classifies all territory in the U.S. into four types of areas—City, Suburban, Town, and Rural. Each area is divided into three subtypes based on population size (in the case of City and Suburban assignments) and proximity to urban areas (in the case of Town and Rural assignments)” (NCES, n.d.).</p>

Table Continues

³² Youth participating in programming was broken up into the following five categories: less than 45 days, 45–59 days, 60–89 days, 90–119 days, and 120 days or more in the 2017–18 programming period. Separate impact estimates were calculated for youth in each attendance group for 2017–18. In addition, impact analyses were conducted for students who participated in programming 60 days or more in both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 programming periods.

Table F1 (Continued). Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
Stakeholder interview and focus group data	Data collection by AIR and Gibson Consulting Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Texas ACE project directors, center coordinators, family engagement specialists, school principals, advisory board members • Focus groups with Texas ACE staff 	Both interviews and focus groups were audio recorded with participant consent. The audio files were then transcribed. The transcripts were coded and analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Gibson Consulting Group staff looked for primary themes that emerged across the varied areas of implementation, including local goals and objectives. Summary percentages presented in the report are based on respondents from a given center who explicitly mentioned a particular theme.

Appendix G. Site Visit Methodology

A statewide sample of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) was initially drawn. Thirty Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) were initially selected for possible inclusion in the site visit sample. The centers were then organized into higher and lower implementing categories based on administrative and student survey data collected and analyzed in January and February 2018. After organizing the sample by location, 20 centers in geographically diverse areas of the state were selected for site visits, including six centers in north Texas/Dallas Metroplex, five centers in central Texas, five centers in the Houston/Gulf Coast region, two centers in south Texas, and two centers in the San Antonio area. The evaluation team conducted 2-day site visits to each center to collect qualitative data related to center operational practices. Site visits occurred from February 20, 2018, to April 16, 2018.

While on-site, members of the evaluation team conducted four observations of afterschool offerings with an attempt to focus on sessions that involved English language arts, mathematics, or science content. They also conducted in-person interviews with the project director, the site coordinator, the family engagement specialist, and the campus principal or assistant principal, and they facilitated group interviews with afterschool activity leaders. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with an advisory board member when possible.^{33,34} Afterschool program offerings were observed by members of the evaluation team using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) for Grades 6–12 or the School-Age Youth Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) for Grades K–5. Researchers also used the Assessment of Afterschool Practices Observation (APT-O) Tool to provide customized ratings of targeted academic skill building. For each afterschool offering observed, evaluation team members checked whether a series of activities related to reading, written communications, verbal communications, and mathematics were present in the activity.³⁵ A total of 80 observations of afterschool activities were conducted and scored using the YPQA or SAPQA observation tools plus the APT-O observation protocol.

A total of 114 interviews were completed, and the audio files were transcribed (with the permission of the interviewees) for analysis. Data from the interviews were imported into NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program. The research team then engaged in a process of iterative coding and analysis. Site visit interviews were coded for primary themes emerging across a variety of areas of implementation, including local goals and objectives. Summary percentages presented in the report are based on respondents from a given center who explicitly mentioned a particular theme. Interview procedures included avoiding frequent prompts to probe for a variety of possible responses. Therefore, the lack of an explicit response does not mean the practice was not occurring at a center, given the possibility of an omission from the respondent.

In addition to the on-site data collection activities and related telephone interviews, the evaluation team administered pencil and paper surveys to all youth activity leaders and 21st CCLC students. Survey packets were provided to site coordinators at the beginning of each site visit, and the surveys were administered to all youth activity leaders and students on either the first or second day of the visit. Detailed instructions were provided to the site coordinators regarding the protocol for administering the two surveys. Both surveys were administered at all 20 centers in the site visit sample. From the 20 sampled centers, 217 completed surveys were received for the youth activity leaders survey, and 616 completed surveys were received for the student survey.

³³ The research team visited some centers that shared a Texas ACE program project director and family engagement specialist. In such cases, both people were interviewed only once at one of the sites.

³⁴ Not all sites had an advisory board, and it was not possible to reach board members for a small number of centers.

³⁵ The APT-O protocol also included seven additional Program Quality Assessment items (scored for activities involving students in Grades 6–12) related to academic climate.

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Appendix H. Additional Documents

Local Evaluation Artifacts

Table H1. Local Evaluation Timeline for 2018–19

When	What
September 2018	Introductory Webinar. Overview of the Local Evaluation Guide, Evaluation Toolkit, and Support Initiative (Note: Webinar participation was highly encouraged, especially for those centers wishing to participate in the Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI))
October 8, 2018	Deadline for centers to nominate two centers to participate in the initiative using this form
October 10–17, 2018	Notification of acceptance into the initiative.
October 2018	Webinar 1. Evaluation Planning + Youth Experience Survey Overview
November 2018	Webinar 2. Selecting and Conducting Program Quality and Youth Experience Survey Administration
December 2018	LESI Consultation (optional): Centers may submit logic model and evaluation plan for feedback
January 2019	Webinar 3. Action Planning and Evaluation Technical Assistance
February 2019	LESI Action Plan Consultation (required): LESI centers submit action plans to the American Institutes for Research for review and feedback
May 2019	Webinar 4. Evaluation Report overview of reporting requirements; best practices for developing the report and presenting data
June 2019	LESI Consultation (optional): Centers may submit draft evaluation reports for review
July 2019	All centers submit evaluation reports as required

Table H2. Participating Grantees and Centers in the Local Evaluation Support Initiative, 2018–19

District	Center 1	Center 2
Communities in Schools Southeast Harris County	Don Jeter Elementary	
Clayton YES	Davis Elementary School	
Regional Education Service Center (ESC) 12	Cranfills Gap ISD	
Regional Education Service Center (ESC) 12	Moody Middle School	R.Q. Sims Intermediate
Greenville Independent School District (ISD)	Crockett Elementary	Lamar Elementary
Harris County Department of Education	North Shore 9th Grade	
IDEA Public Schools	IDEA Montopolis (formerly IDEA Allan)	
Northside ISD	Valley Hi Elementary School	Westwood Terrace Elementary School
CIS of Brazoria County	Fisher Elementary	
East Austin College Prep/Promesa Public Schools	East Austin College Prep Elementary School	
Galveston ISD	Burnet Elementary	Oppe Elementary
Harris County Department of Education	Tice Elementary	
Hooks ISD	Hooks High School	Hooks Junior High
IDEA Public Schools	IDEA Pharr	
Karnes City ISD	Stockdale Junior High	
New Summerfield ISD	New Summerfield ISD	West Rusk Intermediate
Palestine ISD	Palestine Junior High	Southside Elementary
Pearsall ISD	Pearsall High School	Ted Flores Elementary
Texas Southmost College	Lucio Middle School	Rivera Early College High School
YES Prep Public Schools	YES Prep Southwest	
YMCA of Greater Houston	Ermel Elementary School	Ridgemont Elementary School
Quinlan ISD	Thompson Middle School	

Table H3. Affiliations and Roles of Local Evaluation Advisory Group Participants, 2018–19

District affiliation	Cycle affiliation	Role
Austin Independent School District (ISD)	Cycles 9 and 10	Internal evaluator
Texas City ISD	Cycle 10	Independent evaluator
YES Prep Public Schools, Spring ISD; past: Houston ISD, Cy-Fair, Texas Serenity	Cycle 10	Independent evaluator
Greenville ISD	Cycle 9	Project director
Austin ISD	Cycles 9 and 10	Internal evaluator
Fort Worth, Greenville, Birdville	Cycle 9	Independent evaluator
Quinlan ISD	Cycle 10	Project director
New Summerfield ISD	Cycle 10	Project director
Fort Worth ISD	Cycle 9	Independent evaluator
Regional Education Service Center (ESC) 13, Austin Community College	Cycle 10	Family engagement specialist
New Summerfield ISD, Palestine ISD	Cycle 10	Independent evaluator
ESC 12	Cycle 9	Project director
Pasadena ISD	Cycle 9	Project director
Northside ISD	Cycle 9	Site coordinator

Agendas

Local Evaluation Advisory Group Meetings

- April 25, 2019: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG) Year 2
 - Introductions
 - LEAG norms
 - Recap of 2017–18 work—LEAG, Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit and Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI)
 - Discussion of current Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit: Most useful, more explanation and recommended changes to the guide and toolkit discussion
 - LEAG next steps for written feedback
- July 24, 2019: LEAG Meeting 2
 - Introductions
 - » LEAG purpose
 - » Operational principles guiding the LEAG
 - Discussion of the updated Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit: Reactions to the changes; feedback on whether more clarifications are needed
 - LEAG next steps for written feedback

Local Evaluation Support Initiative Training Series

- September 27, 2018: Introduction to the Texas ACE LESI
 - Brief introductions
 - Learn about the Texas ACE LESI

- Why be part of LESI?
- What is my commitment?
- Questions and answers
- October 11, 2018: Expanding the Youth Outcomes We Measure: Youth Outcomes Pilot Survey
 - Welcome and purpose
 - Youth outcome context
 - Youth motivation, engagement, and beliefs survey
 - Youth survey pilot
 - Questions and answers
- October 15, 2018: Training Webinar 1: Evaluation Planning + Youth Experience Survey Overview
 - Brief introductions
 - Quick overview of the Texas ACE LESI
 - Program quality assessment process
 - Measurement selection
 - Assessment and scoring
- November 15, 2018: Training Webinar 2: Selecting and Conducting Program Quality and Youth Experience Survey Administration Brief introductions
 - Review of purpose
 - Check-in from Webinar 1
 - Local evaluation questions
 - Youth experience survey
 - Next steps
- January 24, 2019: Training Webinar 3: Action Planning and Evaluation Technical Assistance
 - Introductions
 - Setting the stage
 - Collaborative action planning process
 - Improvement resources
 - Closing and next steps
- May 23, 2019: Training Webinar 4: Evaluation Reporting
 - Introductions
 - Setting the stage
 - Evaluation reporting best practices
 - Reporting resources
 - Closing and next steps

Texas ACE Local Evaluation Support Initiative: Reference Manual & ToolKit

Support Texas ACE Centers' use of meaningful local evaluation as a means of informing continuous program improvement and sustainability.

About This Guide

This guide was collaboratively developed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the American Institutes for Research, and Diehl Consulting Group, in partnership with the Texas ACE™ Local Evaluation Advisory Group.

How to Use the Guide

The guide offers a framework for conducting high-quality, meaningful, local evaluation. The concepts presented provide a roadmap for planning, conducting, and using local evaluation to drive program improvement and inform sustainability. Programs are encouraged to customize the approaches outlined within the guide to meet their unique needs.

Organizational Structure

The guide consists of a description of the Texas ACE™ evaluation requirements and a recommended framework for conducting local evaluation that is organized around a continuous improvement cycle with these key stages:

- Develop
- Assess
- Review

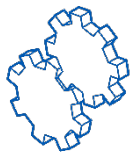
What is the purpose of local evaluation?

Local evaluation provides centers with meaningful information to inform areas for improvement and identify promising aspects of a program to sustain. A **meaningful evaluation** generates actionable and relevant information about center-level processes and outcomes. This information assists centers in understanding areas of their program that are going well and aspects where changes can be made to maximize participant outcomes. Findings also support center efforts to sustain what is working by providing objective results to be shared with internal and external stakeholders.

Meaningful Local Evaluation Key Principles



Collaborative processes. Collaboration among grant management, center-level staff, local independent evaluators, and other stakeholders helps to ensure relevant information is being collected and used. A local evaluation team is recommended to facilitate this process. Membership may include key center staff, partners, and the independent evaluator.



Intentional program design. Programs grounded in a sound theory of change and illustrated by a logic model facilitate shared understanding of intentional connections among needs, program components, processes, and outcomes.



Assessment of implementation. Ongoing assessment of implementation practices guides improvement efforts and facilitates understanding of outcomes. This includes measuring core aspects of fidelity (e.g., adherence, exposure, quality, and engagement).



Locally informed and accessible measures. Measures are most effective for understanding progress on selected performance indicators when they are locally informed, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope.



Focus on center capacity. Evaluation capacity is achieved not only when center staff possess the knowledge and understanding to participate in evaluation planning and implementation (e.g., informing implementation and outcome measures, collecting data), but also when they have access to resources and tools that support evaluation capacity.

Throughout this guide, important information is signified by one or more of the icons described here.



Texas ACE™ evaluation requirement

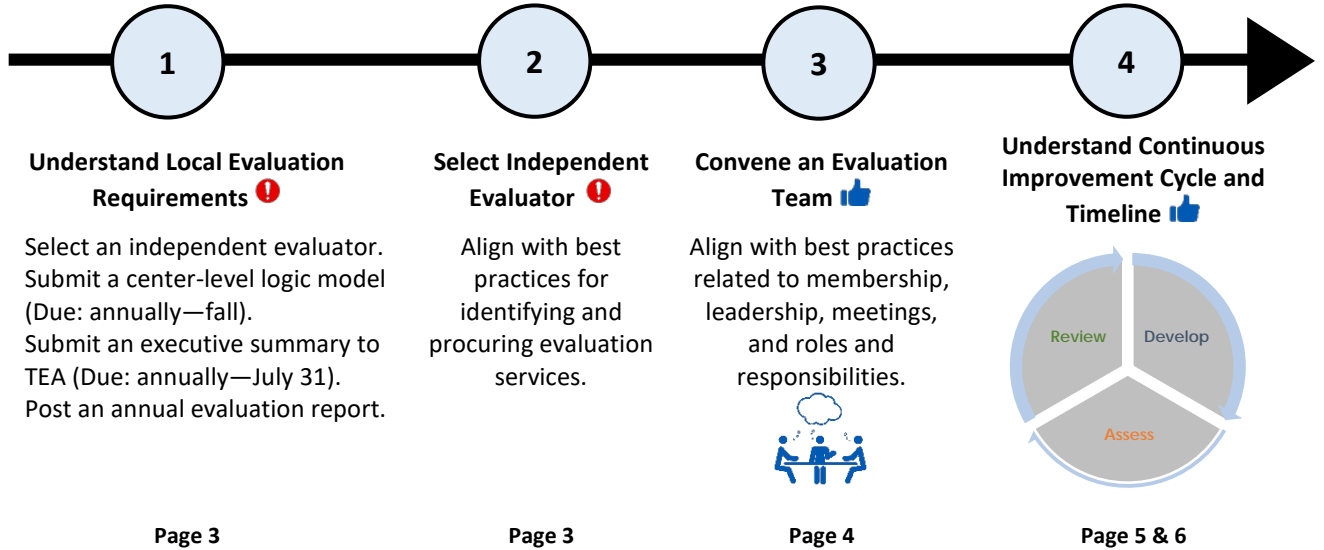


Recommended best practice

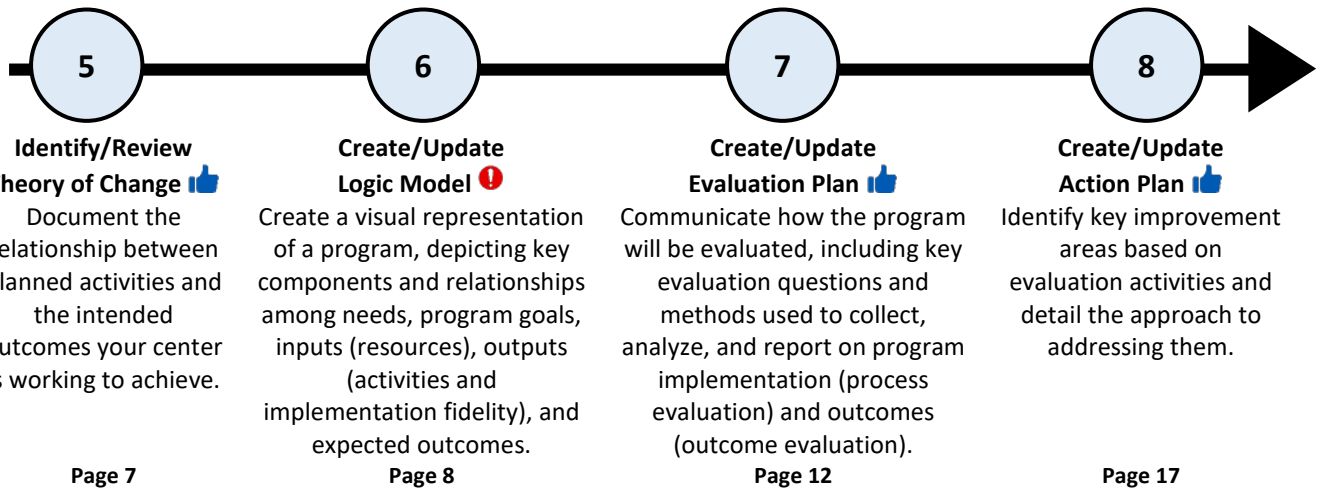


Supplemental resource (Local Evaluation Toolkit)

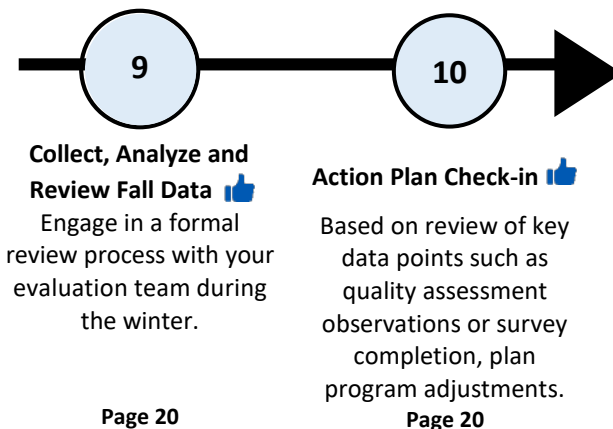
Getting Started



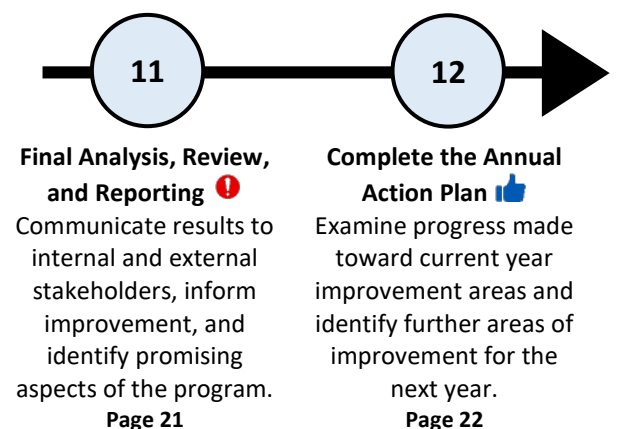
Develop Stage



Assess Stage



Review Stage



Texas ACE Local Evaluation Requirements



Select an independent evaluator

- **Grantees are required to select an independent evaluator (evaluator).** A program evaluator has formal training in research and/or evaluation, as well as experience in conducting program evaluation. Independent evaluators are individuals or organizations with no personal or financial stake in your Texas ACE program or the outcome of the evaluation. Some school districts operate an internal program evaluation office. Grantees may use either their organization's internal evaluation office or a contracted external entity. An internal evaluator must not be involved in the implementation or delivery of the program.
- When selecting an independent evaluator, programs must follow local procurement procedures and grant-related requirements. Conducting a thorough identification and interview process can help identify a high-quality independent evaluator.



Resources to assist with the selection process (e.g., interview questions, roles/responsibilities, example contract template) may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.



Submit a center-level logic model (Due: annually—Fall)

- A logic model is a visual representation of the program, depicting key components and relationships among needs, program goals, inputs (resources), outputs (activities and implementation fidelity), and expected outcomes. A logic model includes the theory of change behind the program and is the foundation of program planning, evaluation, program management, continuous improvement, and communications. Centers have flexibility to select which logic model framework best represents their program, but centers are **required to submit an updated center-level logic model by the end of the fall semester each year.** Recommended best practices for logic model development are included within this guide.



A logic model template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.



Submit an executive summary to TEA (Due: annually—July 31)

- The federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) statute requires that programs undergo evaluation to assess progress toward providing high-quality opportunities for academic enrichment and overall student success. **TEA requires that grantees conduct local evaluation at the center level and submit either a grantee-level executive summary or center-level executive summaries to TEA on an annual basis.** Although centers have flexibility to decide the content of such summaries, elements required for these summaries are included within the review section of this document (page 21).



Post an annual evaluation report

- **Grantees are required to complete a comprehensive annual evaluation report.** Although this report is not submitted directly to TEA, **the report is to be posted on the grantee's website** to assist stakeholders' understanding of results associated with the program. As such, it is recommended that centers create annual reports that effectively communicate information to diverse groups. Although centers have flexibility to decide what goes into this annual report, recommended components are included within the review section of this document (page 21).

Local Evaluation Framework



In keeping with the core purpose and principles of meaningful evaluation, a local evaluation framework grounded in an **overall evaluation and continuous improvement** cycle is recommended. Central to this framework is the establishment of a local evaluation team to facilitate this process and implement various evaluation tasks. Although not required, centers are encouraged to identify a team.

Keys to Building an Effective Local Evaluation Team



Membership: Membership may include the program director, key center staff, community partners, and the independent evaluator. It also may be useful to engage other key stakeholders, such as parents, students, or other volunteers who can offer a more holistic understanding of the program and stakeholder needs. It is crucial that a couple of frontline staff such as youth workers or teachers are included in some way to help strengthen the validity of assessment results and provide a greater likelihood of successful implementation of action plans.




Leadership: It is helpful to designate a leader to facilitate the process. This requires someone who has enough time to manage working with all the stakeholders and ensure everything is done in a timely manner. It does not necessarily need to be a program administrator and could be anyone on the evaluation team who has the capacity to serve as facilitator. It also may be the independent evaluator or another external stakeholder who takes on this role.



Meetings: It is important to create a dedicated meeting schedule, aligned with key evaluation checkpoints, at the beginning of the year to set a plan for convening regularly throughout the year.



Roles/Responsibilities: Clarifying roles and responsibilities of all team members will help to ensure participants understand their unique contributions. As grantees are required to select an independent evaluator, it is important to outline responsibilities within the independent evaluator agreement, if an external contractor is selected, as well as identify responsibilities of all staff and other stakeholders (e.g., community partners, volunteers) involved on the team. Suggested roles and responsibilities follow.

Recommended Roles/Responsibilities  <i>(Align with unique center needs and evaluation expectations)</i>	Independent Evaluator	Project Director	Center Staff	Other Stakeholders
● Oversee and coordinate overall grant and center evaluation.		✓		
● Assist in building the skills, knowledge, and abilities of center staff and stakeholders.	✓	✓		
● Participate fully in the development of the logic model and overall process and outcome evaluation planning and implementation.	✓	✓	✓	✓
● Conduct on-site quality observations.	✓		✓	
● Document results throughout the year to guide decision-making.	✓			
● Participate in action planning to improve operations and quality by identifying improvement needs and challenges.	✓	✓	✓	✓
● Implement action steps identified within the action plan.		✓	✓	✓
● Collect process and outcome data and share with the evaluator.		✓	✓	
● Conduct quantitative and qualitative data analysis and assist centers in understanding results.	✓			
● Produce annual local program evaluation reports for public posting, including a summary of results for submission to TEA.	✓			
● Inform, review, approve, and disseminate local annual evaluation reports and program summaries.		✓	✓	✓

Overview of the Continuous Improvement Cycle 🍷

A continuous improvement cycle involves the *ongoing* collection and *use* of information to *inform* program operations and delivery. There are several different approaches to conducting continuous improvement. The recommended process described in this guide involves three interrelated stages: Develop, Assess, and Review. This approach to continuous improvement accounts for centers operating at different levels of implementation. For example, centers in their first year of programming or undergoing leadership, staffing, or organizational changes may find it helpful to put more emphasis on developing a logic model and evaluation plans. More established centers are able to draw on prior evaluation results and action plans to refine logic models and evaluation plans ensuring planned evaluation activities are relevant and meaningful to the center. Centers are encouraged to adapt the continuous improvement approach to fit the unique needs of their program. These stages are summarized below, followed by a more detailed description.

Develop Stage

The Develop stage provides an opportunity to identify or further enhance programming to ensure intentional connections between program offerings and outcomes. Emphasis on evaluation planning reinforces stakeholders' ownership in the process and facilitates understanding of planned evaluation activities.

- For newer centers or those experiencing change, this stage focuses on creating a center-level logic model that depicts key relationships among needs, inputs, activities (outputs), and outcomes. This stage also focuses on developing process evaluation plans focusing on how the program is being implemented, and outcome evaluation plans examining changes that are expected to occur among participants being served.
- More established centers (operating for more than a year with stable leadership, staffing and organizational structures) focus on refining existing logic models and evaluation plans, while also examining action plans developed from the prior-year review stage.

Assess Stage

The Assess stage involves the collection and analysis of data from your process and outcome evaluation plans. This stage provides an opportunity to better understand program implementation and examine action plan progress.

- All centers examine evaluation data to inform mid-year action plans with a goal of improving center operations and program delivery.
- More established centers also examine progress made on previously developed action plans.

Review Stage

The Review stage involves final analysis and reporting of all process and outcome evaluation data collected. This review includes identifying key findings, areas for improvement, and promising program aspects to continue and expand.

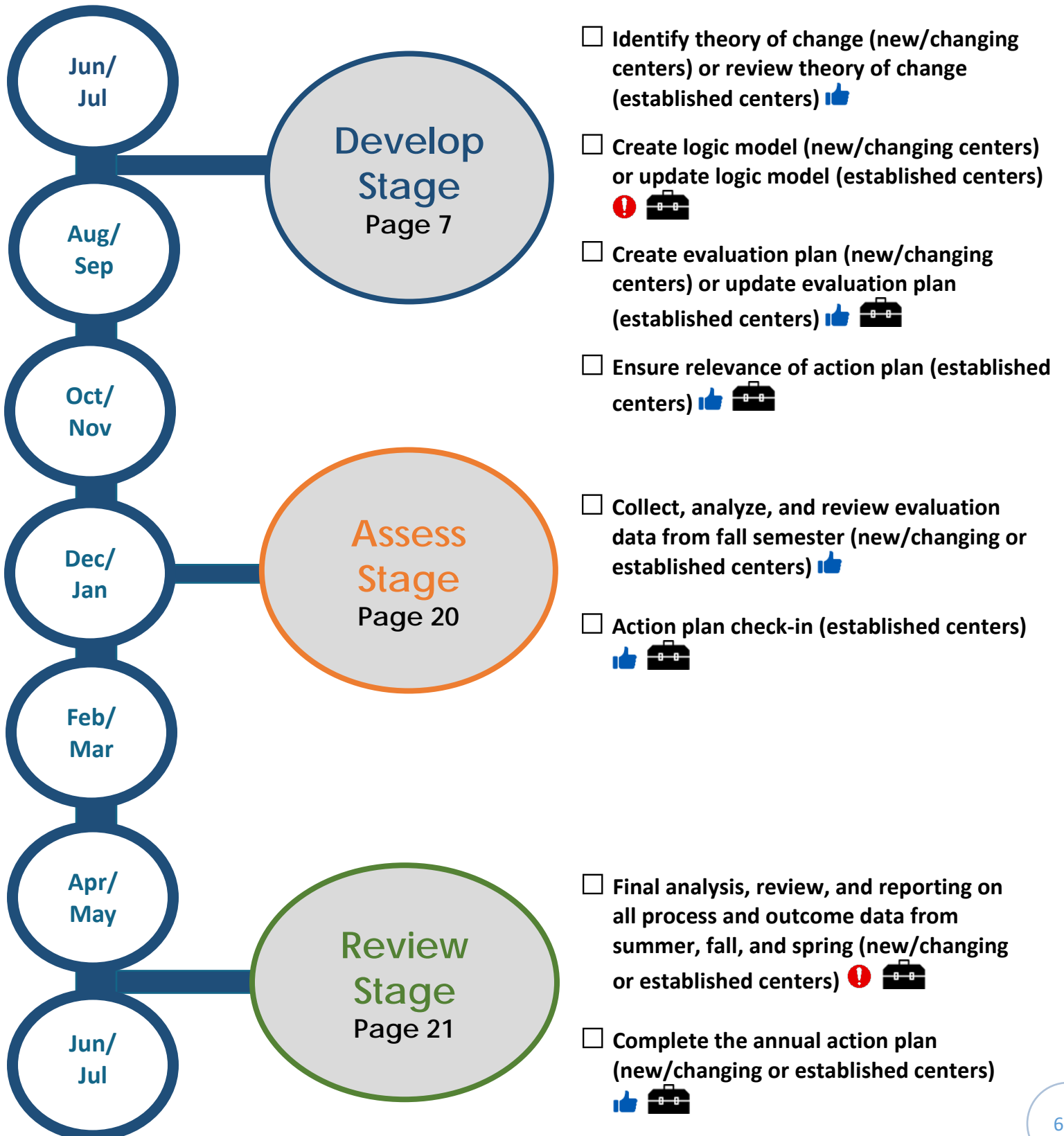
- Centers have an opportunity to reflect on program successes and challenges, while creating specific plans for improving programs and operations.
- Sustainability is informed through continued focus on improvement of implementation and documentation of program achievement to celebrate and share with key stakeholders.



Recommended Timeline and Checklist

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Cycle

Although evaluation and continuous improvement is an ongoing process, the following recommended timeline is provided to assist grantees in understanding timing of key evaluation and improvement tasks. A detailed description of each task is included within each main improvement stage section of the Develop-Assess-Review process.



Develop Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ Identify theory of change (new/changing centers) or review theory of change (established centers) 👍
- ✓ Create logic model (new/changing centers) or update logic model (established centers) ⚠️ 📁
- ✓ Create evaluation plan (new/changing centers) or update evaluation plan (established centers) 👍 📁
- ✓ Ensure relevance of action plan (established centers) 👍 📁

Develop or further enhance programming to ensure intentional connections between program offerings and outcomes.

Identify and Review Theory of Change 👍

A **theory of change** represents the relationship between planned activities and the intended outcomes your center is working to achieve. It addresses the question, “How do we know the activities being implemented as part of our program will lead to the results we are wanting to achieve?” By answering this question, an overall foundation for your center is created.

Example: The theory of change for Texas ACE holds that students in need, who spend 45 or more days in well-structured and aligned afterschool activities, taught by qualified personnel, focused on the four activity components will yield improvement in academic performance, attendance, behavior, and promotion and graduation rates of students.

When establishing your theory, it is helpful to draw on research and best practices from the out-of-school time field. Helpful resources include, but are not limited to, the Texas ACE website, Youth for Youth (Y4Y), National Afterschool Association, and/or National Summer Learning Association. Members of the evaluation team can be assigned to collect this information. Some of your activities already may have been established as evidence-based and having this evidence will give your program more confidence that the activities will lead to the results you are trying to achieve. In addition to examining current research, established programs may further enhance their theory of change by reviewing prior evaluation findings or anecdotal experience from implementation, as well.

Questions to Consider

- How do we know selected activities will lead to the results we are trying to achieve?
- How well are activities aligned with the school day (e.g., shared ownership and understanding of identified student needs, considered an asset to regular school day program, two-way communication/learning between regular day and ACE)?
- What are the unique needs of our participants or community that must be taken into account in our overall program design? (Note: Draw on established needs from your Texas ACE–approved application and review to ensure alignment with your program design.)


Best Practices

- 🕒 Assemble your evaluation team to review research and discuss the theory of change.
- 🕒 Make sure you understand the unique needs of your community and participants so you can align activities to these needs.
- 🕒 Align your center’s theory of change with the school improvement focus and strategies.

Create or Update the Logic Model

A logic model is a visual representation of a program, depicting key components and relationships among needs, program goals, inputs (resources), outputs (activities and implementation fidelity), and expected outcomes. A logic model illustrates the Theory of Change behind the program and is the foundation of program planning, evaluation, and program management. It is also an essential communication tool to assist stakeholders in understanding how needs, activities, and outcomes are connected.

You should expect that each center’s logic model will be different because everything flows from the students and families you serve and their unique needs. As needs vary, resources and activities also differ to best serve participants. Additionally, each center’s unique school partnerships call for distinct instructional strategies. Each of these unique components should be considered in your logic model.

 **Centers are required to submit an updated center-level logic model by the end of the fall semester each year.** There are several logic model formats to choose from that depict the program goals and outcomes. A sample version is provided here. Grantees should feel free to adapt the format to best meet the needs of their center(s).



A logic model template and other resources are provided in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Best Practices

- *Fully engage your evaluation team in the development of the logic model.*
- *Develop a shared understanding of key evaluation terms (inputs, outputs, and outcomes).*
- *Align out-of-school time programming with school improvement plans.*
- *Align family programming with specific needs and desired outcomes.*
- *Use numbering within the logic model to align specific goals, outputs, and outcomes.*
- *A function model is a more detailed approach to describing relationships between program activities and outcomes. Programs may benefit from using this approach to enhance the logic model.*

Logic Model					
Youth, family, and community needs	Center goals	Implementation (process evaluation)			Outcomes (outcome evaluation)
		Inputs (resources/assets)	Program and center activities	Outputs (products/fidelity)	
<i>Underlying problem(s) to be addressed through program and center activities</i>	<i>Broad statement indicating desired direction of change</i>	<i>Materials, human resources, or assets being put into (invested in) the program</i>	<i>Activities conducted to reach students and families</i>	<i>The products of activities and extent to which activities are implemented as designed, expose participants to recommended dosages (e.g., program attendance), are delivered with quality, and engage participants</i>	<i>Conditions that we expect to change as a result of what we are doing (attitudes, knowledge, behaviors)</i>

Considerations When Creating or Updating the Logic Model

Youth, Family, and Community Needs

Needs represent problems, shortcomings (gaps), or conditions that impact desired outcomes. Various data sources (school- and community-related data, school improvement plans, student data) can be used to triangulate the needs of youth and families in your program. You may need to collect more information through focus groups or surveys. Key questions include the following:

- *What are the underlying issues impacting youth and families in our center?*
- *How do we know these are the needs we should be focusing on?*
- *What are the root causes?*

When identifying needs, draw from the information provided in your approved grant application. Also, provide specific evidence and the data source used to determine the need. Needs may change over time so it is important to monitor these over time.

Examples:

- On average, Grade 4 students are not demonstrating reading comprehension skills. Specifically, only 25% of Grade 4 students passed the comprehension portion of the local assessment.
- Parents of students in Grades 3–5 have difficulty helping their child with homework. Specifically, 40% of parents surveyed with students in Grades 3–5 parents reported not understanding how to help their child with the homework.
- A large percentage of middle school youth have chronic school-day attendance issues. Specifically, 85% of these youth attend 10% or less of enrolled days. Further, middle school youth report few opportunities for other aspects of school engagement. Specifically, a focus group with a representative group of students highlighted few activities of interest afterschool and a desire to participate in clubs if programs were available and engaging.

Center Goals

Center goals are broad statements indicating a desired direction of change. For example, increase academic performance, reduce behavior issues, or increase family engagement. Based on the needs identified for your center, the key question is as follows:

- *What areas do we want to impact with our program?*

Goals flow directly from the needs identified for your center. They set the direction of your program and are useful for communicating and organizing the outcomes you are working to address.

Examples:

- Increase reading performance among participating youth.
- Improve parents' knowledge and understanding of academic information.
- Reduce chronic absences among middle school youth.

Inputs (Resources/ Assets)

Inputs refer to materials, human resources and/or assets being put into or invested into the program. Key questions include:

- *What resources do we need to invest into the program to fully address the identified needs and realize our goals?*
- *Are these the right resources to implement the program? How do we know?*

Examples:

- One full-time site coordinator who has experience supervising frontline staff, is certified to teach, and has experience in programs that provide academic enrichment.
- Frontline staff will complete XX hours of training in project-based learning.
- Community partners participating on the Advisory Committee.

Program and Center Activities

Activities include the specific events, lessons, classes, or clubs being implemented as part of your overall program to address the needs of your participants and center goals. Activities are typically student or family activities reported in the Tx21st data system. When describing activities include the frequency with which activities are being implemented and the intended audience.

Examples:

- Afterschool reading instruction and enrichment activity focused on building students’ comprehension skills. Activity will be provided three times a week for 1 hour over 18 weeks to students in Grade 4.
- Parent homework preparation class offered for 2 hours each quarter to parents of students in Grades 3–5. Class will include useful tips for communicating with teachers, understanding what their child is learning, and where to find support for assignments.
- Project-based learning (e.g., coding, cooking, robotics, art) activities for middle school youth will be provided. Activities will be provided from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. 5 days a week during the school year with rotating topics every 6 weeks during the fall and every week in summer. Emphasis will be placed on linkages between afterschool and school-day curriculum to strengthen school engagement and student academic outcomes.

Outputs (Products/ Fidelity)

Outputs involve the products of activities and the extent to which these activities are implemented with fidelity. Typically, there are four approaches to consider when examining fidelity of implementation.

(1) Adherence refers to the extent to which program components are being implemented as designed. This is largely dependent on core implementation characteristics associated with the program.

- For example, as outlined within the Texas ACE application, all activities must be intentionally developed using a comprehensive and coordinated planning tool such as the “Texas ACE Activity/Unit and Lesson Plan Worksheet.” To measure adherence, the evaluation would examine whether or not the program addressed the core components as outlined within the activity/unit and lesson plan tool.

Examples of methods may include a lesson plan checklist and/or an observation tool that assesses if components were taught.

(2) Exposure refers to how much of the program participants received. Exposure can include the number of sessions or contacts, attendance, or the frequency and duration of sessions.

Examples of methods may include participant attendance records and/or observations of session length.

(3) Quality refers to the way the program is being designed and delivered to participants. This may include overall program design features (e.g., policies and procedures), staff characteristics (e.g., training received, knowledge of content, expertise in delivery) or other program attributes (e.g., environment, peer-to-peer interactions, voice in programming). Two approaches to examining quality include:

- **Organizational assessment tools** allow centers to examine structural components of programs that are useful in informing how programs operate.
- **Direct point-of-service (observation-based) assessment tools** are used to directly observe the afterschool environment where students and staff interact in program delivery.

Examples of methods may include organizational and direct point-of-service assessment tools. Procedures for selecting these measures are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit. 📁

Outputs
(Products/
Fidelity)
Continued

(4) Participant engagement refers to how participants respond to the programming being provided. This may include their level of interest in a particular activity, the extent to which they believe it to be relevant and useful, or actual involvement in activities.

Examples of methods may include surveys, focus groups, program observations, and/or attendance.



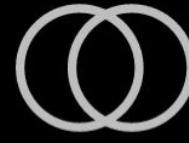
SPECIFIC



MEASURABLE



ATTAINABLE



RELEVANT



TIME BASED

SMART

Although outputs describe how programming is implemented, outcomes represent conditions expected to change as a result of center programming. These often include changes in attitudes, knowledge, and/or behaviors.

The SMART framework is a common approach to creating outcomes and other goals/plans/objectives in an actionable way. This approach recommends creating outcomes that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time based. Key questions to ensure your outcomes are SMART include the following:

- **Specific:** *Does the outcome include a direction and/or magnitude of change?*
- **Measurable:** *Can evidence be gathered to support attainment of the outcome?*
- **Attainable:** *Is the outcome logically tied to the need and activity being offered, and can it reasonably be accomplished?*
- **Relevant:** *Will the outcome yield actionable and meaningful information?*
- **Time-based:** *Does the outcome include a specified time period to accomplish the goal?*

Examples:

- By the end of the school year, 90% of Grade 4 students who attend regularly (that is, attending 45 or more program days) will improve reading comprehension scores on the local reading assessment.
- Annually, 75% of parents will report understanding how to help their child with homework or how to access available academic resources.
- By the end of the school year, 90% of middle school youth who attend regularly (that is, attending 45 or more program days) will be absent for 10% or less of enrolled days.

Outcomes

Create or Update the Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan clearly communicates how the program will be evaluated, including key evaluation questions and methods used to collect, analyze, and report on program implementation and outcomes. Ideally, the evaluation plan should align with the logic model. Generally, there are two types of evaluation.

Process Evaluation

→ focuses on how the program is being implemented, which allows practitioners to make changes in programming over the course of the year.

Outcome Evaluation

→ examines changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in order to understand the extent to which the program is bringing about changes.

Recommended approaches to crafting process and outcome evaluation plans follow.

Creating or Updating a Process Evaluation Plan

Process evaluation examines how a program is being implemented. It is useful in understanding the extent to which activities are delivered with fidelity to the planned program design. Once activities are intentionally selected based on a theory of change, process evaluation is employed to examine the actual implementation of the activities. This helps in understanding if you are doing what you said you would do, what types of adjustments are needed, and any barriers resulting from implementation.

To examine fidelity, centers are encouraged to create a process evaluation plan based on the four questions below. This plan draws from the implementation section of the logic model. Suggested measures and procedures for collecting implementation information follow to illustrate strategies for addressing each.



- ❖ **Adherence:** *Is the program being implemented as designed?*
- ❖ **Exposure:** *To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?*
- ❖ **Quality:** *Is the program being delivered in a high-quality manner?*
- ❖ **Engagement:** *How are participants responding to the program?*

Diving Deeper—Process Evaluation


As centers implement programming, additional questions concerning implementation may emerge. These questions allow for a deeper dive into how to solve issues of particular importance to the center. A framework for annual review and developing these questions is provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.

Best Practices

- *Use a combination of both organizational and point-of-service quality assessments.*
- *Train the independent evaluator and program staff in conducting point-of-service quality assessments.*
- *Use both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a deeper understanding of your program.*
- *Select the most meaningful process measures for your program; you don't have to measure everything!*
- *When assigning data collection roles, find ways to engage other center staff or partners and not place everything on the Site Coordinator.*
- *Align process measures with Texas 21st Student Tracking System Reports.*

Process Evaluation Questions	Suggested Measures	Suggested Procedures
① Adherence: <i>Is the program being implemented as designed?</i>	→ Lesson plan review	Review lesson plans to ensure alignment with the purpose of the activity and curriculum.
	→ Lesson plan checklist	Create a checklist of core components within the lesson plan and have instructors turn the checklist in at regular intervals.
	→ Observation tool	Create a tool outlining core lesson components and conduct an observation at selected times during the activity cycle.
② Exposure: <i>To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?</i>	→ Activity schedule review	Review the activity schedule to ensure activity is scheduled for the recommended frequency.
	→ Participant attendance records	Examine participant attendance records comparing actual attendance with recommended attendance.
	→ Observations of session length	Conduct observations to validate activities are being implemented as scheduled.
③ Quality: <i>Is the program being delivered in a high-quality manner?</i>	→ Staff qualifications review	Review staffing levels by program activity to assess alignment with staff qualifications.
	→ Point-of-Service Assessment: e.g., Weikart Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA), NIOST’s Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-O)	Procedures for selecting point-of-service and/or organizational assessments, as well as guidance for creating or adapting measures are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit. 
	→ Organizational Quality Assessment: e.g., NYSAN’s Quality Self-Assessment Tool, PQA Form B, APT-Q	
④ Engagement: <i>How are participants responding to the program?</i>	→ Participant surveys	Administer participant engagement surveys midway through the year to obtain perceptions of the program.
	→ Participant focus groups	Identify specific target populations of participants and conduct small group discussions to gauge perceptions. A focus group protocol jointly created with your evaluation team is recommended.
	→ Point-of-Service Assessments (participant engagement scales)	Conduct observations using a point-of-service assessment tool that includes some measure of participant engagement. Procedures for selecting point-of-service and/or organizational assessments are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit. 

A written process evaluation plan helps to communicate to all stakeholders the type of information that will be collected, when it will be collected, and who is responsible. Centers are encouraged to create tailored process evaluation plans aligned to their unique needs. A recommended format for documenting this plan follows, along with an example.

 A process evaluation template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Process Evaluation Plan			
Process question	Process measure	Data collection method and timeline	Responsible party
<i>Identify the implementation questions of interest to your program. These may be drawn from the process questions described above and/or additional questions determined to be useful to your program.</i>	<i>Decide what will be reviewed to determine progress on each measure (e.g., materials, specific percentages or numbers). Measures should be directly aligned with the activity or program attribute being assessed.</i>	<i>Specify how your process measures will be collected, including the type of measure and the timeline with which it will be administered.</i>	<i>Identify specific individuals who are responsible for data collection and make sure they are adequately trained.</i>

EXAMPLE			
Process Evaluation Plan			
Process question	Process measure	Data collection method and timeline	Responsible party
(1) Adherence: Is the program being implemented as designed?	1a. Reading and math activities are delivered as proposed within the activity plan.	1a. Reading and math activities will be observed four times each semester.	1a. School day curriculum specialist
(2) Exposure: To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?	2a. Percentage of students attending 45 or more days in programming during fall, spring and summer.	2a. Daily attendance records; Each month, the percentage of students attending programming will be reviewed.	2a. Independent evaluator and site coordinator
(3) Quality: Is the program being delivered in a high-quality manner?	3a. Average subscale scores on the Weikart Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) ≥ 3.0 . 3b. Percentage of quality indicators per subscale of the NYSAN within satisfactory or excellent ranges.	3a. Formal program observation will be conducted two times a year using the YPQA. 3b. During the spring of each year, NYSAN organizational quality assessment will be reviewed and scored.	3a. Independent evaluator and/or designated center staff 3b. Evaluation team
(4) Engagement: How are participants responding to the program?	4a. Percentage of students and parents reporting satisfaction with center activities during the fall and spring of each year.	4a. Stakeholder Survey administered during the fall and spring of each year to youth and families.	4a. Center staff, site coordinator, and independent evaluator

Creating or Updating an Outcome Evaluation Plan

Outcome evaluation examines changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in order to understand the extent to which the program is bringing about desired changes. Although short-term outcomes can be examined throughout the year, outcome evaluation is usually a summative approach which occurs at the end of the year.

Drawing from the **SMART** outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) identified within the logic model, create an outcome evaluation plan that documents: *What data will be collected? Who will data be collected from? How and when will it be collected? How will information be analyzed and reported?*

Components of An Outcome Evaluation Plan

Performance Measure	→ Represents what you will be using to measure your outcome (indicator of change).
Participants	→ Identify which participant groups will be included in the performance measure (e.g., grade levels, lower assessment scores, groups attending at differing rates).
Data Source	→ List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, Tx21st and local data systems, focus group protocols) and the time period covered. When identifying the data source(s), describe how the source adequately represents the area being studied. For surveys, this may include specific information about reliability and validity of the tools. In other cases, this may be an explanation of why the specific source was selected. In all cases, it is critical to ensure clear alignment between the actual outcome and the data source being used. Your logic model should be revisited and used as a reference for this reflection. It is also important to consider the timing of data availability in your planning. Finally, when selecting a data source, examine the quality of data being collected.
Data Collection Procedures	→ List procedures for collecting data. This includes detailing who is responsible, what is being collected, when it is being collected, and strategies to ensure data quality.
Data Analysis and Reporting	→ Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question, as well as who is responsible.


Best Practices

- *Conduct an annual review of your plan and update it as needed.*
- *Select outcomes that are most meaningful to your program.*
- *Make sure the center has capacity to implement the evaluation plan.*
- *Documenting the outcome evaluation plan helps to communicate to stakeholders the type of information being reviewed as part of the evaluation, which builds ownership in the evaluation process.*
- *Understand the quality of data being used in your analysis. Identify strategies to address issues in subsequent years.*

While establishing your evaluation plan, consider the following reflection questions:

- (1) *Ultimately, will the plan address targeted outcomes? If not, what refinements need to be made?*
- (2) *What are the limitations?* Limitations include important considerations to interpreting evaluation findings (e.g., data quality and collection issues such as errors or missing information).
- (3) *What are potential barriers to implementing this plan and what can be done in advance to address these?*
- (4) *How have prior evaluation findings been used to set annual targets and inform outcomes of interest?*

A written outcome evaluation plan helps to communicate to all stakeholders the type of information that will be collected, when and how it will be collected, who is responsible, and how it will be analyzed and reported. Centers are encouraged to create tailored outcome evaluation plans aligned to their unique needs. Plans would include a combination of locally informed outcomes based on focus areas and needs identified by centers (e.g., family engagement, student engagement, social and emotional development), as well as plans to address state outcomes identified within respective cycle grant applications (e.g., school day attendance, core course grades, mandatory discipline referrals). A recommended format for documenting this plan follows, along with an example.

 An outcome evaluation template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Outcome Evaluation Plan					
Outcome	Performance measure	Participants	Data source	Procedures	Data analysis and reporting
Specify your SMART outcome from the Logic Model.	Represents what you will be using to measure your outcome (indicator of change).	Identify who data will be collected from (e.g., grade levels, gender, groups participating at differing rates).	List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, focus group protocols) and the time period the data covers.	List procedures for collecting data. This includes detailing who is responsible, what is being collected, and when it is being collected.	Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question, as well as who is responsible.

EXAMPLE

Outcome Evaluation Plan					
Outcome	Performance measure	Participants	Data source	Procedures	Data analysis and reporting
(1) By the end of the school year, 90% of youth who attend regularly will be absent for 10% or less of enrolled days.	1. Percentage of youth attending ACE programming 45 days or more during the school year and summer of interest who were <u>absent</u> for 10% or less of school days enrolled	1. All youth attending the ACE program who attend 45 or more days during the school year or summer	1. School day attendance records entered into Texas ACE 21st Student Tracking System	Daily, site coordinators record Texas ACE attendance information at the beginning of the program; daily, school staff record day school attendance.	Program and school day attendance will be merged; youth attending 45 or more days in the program (summer and school year) and absent 10% or less based on school days enrolled will be tallied. A percentage will be reported.

Diving Deeper—Outcome Evaluation



As centers implement outcome evaluation plans, additional questions concerning program benefits may emerge. These questions allow for a deeper dive into how to solve issues of particular importance to the center. A framework for annual review and developing these questions is provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.

Create or Update the Action Plan


Action planning is the heart of the continuous improvement process. The action plan is a working document examined during each continuous improvement stage. The plan identifies key improvement areas determined from evaluation activities and details the approach to addressing them.

Centers in their first year of operation will likely wait until midyear to create an action plan. However, it is important for these centers to understand what goes into the document to inform the process evaluation being developed. On the other hand, more established centers will update action plans based on evaluation results from prior years.

Recommended components of action plans include the following:

- Rationale for improvement
- General improvement strategies
- Specific action steps
- Person(s) responsible for tasks
- Measures to monitor progress
- Timeline with completion dates

Similar to creating outcomes, improvement strategies are recommended to be framed with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based) criteria. A template, a description of key terms, and an example for constructing an action plan follow.



 An action plan template may be found in the *Local Evaluation Toolkit*.

Best Practices

- *Make one of your goals “low-hanging fruit,” something that can be addressed more quickly and give the team a quick win.*
- *Action plans are an important tool for communicating with and engaging stakeholders. Include sufficient detail so others who may be unfamiliar with your center understand the plan.*
- *Explore resources that can help the center to successfully implement the action plan.*
- *Set aside time in the program to have ongoing conversations about the action plan and progress toward completion. Be prepared to have honest conversations related to areas of improvement.*
- *Although several needs may be identified, focus on a few areas that can be addressed in the near term.*

TX ACE ACTION PLAN				
Program name:				
Date plan created:				
What successes/assets can support this work?				
Improvement area identified		<i>Rationale/finding that showed this as an improvement need</i>		
Improvement strategy	Specific attainable action steps	Responsible person(s)	Progress measures	Target completion date
What are possible barriers to success?		What could be planned to address barriers?		

Description of Key Terms and Considerations for Action Plan Development

<p>Successes and Assets</p>	<p>Identify areas going well in your program that can be leveraged to support your action plan focus (e.g., staff qualifications/experience, student participation rates/engagement, high scores on point-of-service assessments).</p>
<p>Improvement Area and Rationale</p>	<p>Based on a review of information gleaned from evaluation activities, identify the improvement areas that stand out. In doing so, be sure to include a specific rationale that describes how this need was determined (e.g., specific point-of-service assessment scores, survey results).</p> <p> Tools for determining needs and prioritizing strategies may be found in the <i>Local Evaluation Toolkit</i>.</p>
<p>Improvement Strategy</p>	<p>Use SMART criteria (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based) when creating improvement strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the strategy specific? • Can the strategy be clearly measured? • Is the strategy attainable? Do we have capacity? • Is the strategy relevant? Is it tied to our center’s mission and vision? • Is there a concrete time frame for accomplishing the strategy? 
<p>Action Steps</p>	<p>Create detailed action steps outlining the logical progression for full strategy implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be very clear when specifying your action steps. This clarity will help others understand what you are working to improve and strengthen accountability for the steps to be accomplished.
<p>Responsible Person(s)</p>	<p>For each action step, specify the person(s) responsible for implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include actual names of individuals for each step to the extent possible. • Although the site coordinator will likely be connected with action steps, avoid assigning this position to a large number of steps. Instead, work to diversify responsibilities for plan implementation to engage a broader group of stakeholders and capacity to implement. • As part of planning, make sure those assigned to steps have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the dates with which action steps are to be accomplished.
<p>Progress Measures</p>	<p>Progress measures represent evidence that the action step has been accomplished and ultimately document the extent to which the full strategy has been implemented successfully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each step, ask yourself, “What evidence would represent accomplishment of this step?”
<p>Target Completion Date/Timeline</p>	<p>For each action step, specify the date by which the action step should be accomplished.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with SMART criteria as outlined, make sure timelines are attainable. • Align timelines to scheduled center activities and operations (e.g., advisory meetings, staff meetings, end-of-session programs). It is possible (and reasonable) for some of the timeline to change, but setting those target dates helps with implementation and accountability.
<p>Possible Barriers and Plan</p>	<p>Before finalizing, conduct a review using the SMART criteria outlined previously. Anticipate potential barriers and outline a plan to address these by discussing the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the possible barriers to successfully implementing this plan? • What could be planned to address these barriers?

EXAMPLE

TX ACE ACTION PLAN

Program name	ABC Youth Thrives			
Date plan created	August 15, 20XX			
What successes/assets can support this work?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We received high scores on the supportive environment scale of the YPQA; we have good relationships with youth. • Many staff are certified teachers with a lot of experience in curriculum development. • The project director is invested in quality and wants to find resources. 				
Improvement area identified			Rationale/finding that showed this as an improvement need	
Increase opportunities for youth to engage in various forms of planning during ACE activities, giving them a more active role in their learning.			YPQA planning scale: average score of 2.25 (out of 5.00)	
Improvement strategy	Specific, attainable action steps	Responsible person(s)	Progress measures	Target completion date
Provide staff resources on youth-level planning to help them understand what it is, why it is important, and how to do it in their lesson planning.	1. PD will explore training on “planning,” budget feasibility, etc.	Maria (Project Director—PD)	• Budget allocation for this project	By 10/1/XX
	2. Training online or in person will be set up.	Joe (Site Coordinator—SC)	• Training dates set up	By 10/8/XX
	3. Purchase guidebooks and distribute.	Joe (SC)	• Materials ordered	By 10/12/XX
	4. Hold training.	All Staff	• Training count	By 10/30/XX
	5. In staff meeting, review and share favorites. Document list of favorites as we go.	All staff share, Joe documents	• Staff meeting count • List of activities	By 11/5/XX
Create a new long-term, project-based learning activity where young people plan and implement a project over a month to deepen their engagement and skill-building.	1. Staff meeting to brainstorm project-based learning activities where youth have substantial planning. Select favorite project idea.	Joe (SC)	• Staff meeting count • List of project-based activities	By 11/15/XX
	2. Designate a team leader to oversee this project and identify staff that will be involved.	Shakia (staff) as team leader + relevant staff	• Team created	By 11/20/XX
	3. Develop an overall project timeline. Assign different parts of the project to staff to plan activities.	Shakia + staff	• Project plan	By 11/20/XX
	4. Each staff develop their lesson plan using program’s curriculum template.	All Staff for their sections	• Lesson plans created	By 12/15/XX
	5. Team come together to discuss sequencing and give feedback. Each person makes updates, as needed.	Shakia + staff	• Progress reports	By 12/20/XX
	6. Obtain necessary materials and begin implementing.	Shakia + staff	• Implementation begins	By 1/15/XX
What are possible barriers to success?			What could be planned to address barriers?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget approval when already spent a lot on training at the beginning of the year. • Staff willingness to participate in additional training, when time is limited. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reallocation of funds from next year to support more training this year. • Have one staff member preview materials and report back on what they learned. 	

Assess Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ **Collect, analyze and review evaluation data from fall semester (new/changing or established centers)** 👍
- ✓ **Action plan check-in (established centers)** 👍 📁

Collect and analyze data to assess program implementation and drive program improvement strategies through the use of an action planning process.

Collect, Analyze, and Review Evaluation Data From Fall Semester and Action Plan Check-in 👍

As outlined in your evaluation plans, process and outcome (as available from the fall semester and relevant) performance measures will be collected, analyzed, and reviewed by your evaluation team to address progress toward implementation and outcomes. Some data may be collected and reviewed weekly, monthly, or at the end of the semester. Although information may be available at different times, a formal review process is recommended with your evaluation team during the winter. This will allow adjustments to be made prior to spring semester programming. Ideally, the timing of this meeting corresponds with key data collection plans, such as quality assessment observations or survey completion.

The list of questions from the process evaluation plan would be reviewed and discussed during this stage. New improvement strategies can be identified based on available findings. For established centers, progress toward your action plan should be reviewed and adjustments made.

Example of Potential Questions to Examine:





- *Is the program being implemented as designed?*
- *To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?*
- *Is the program being delivered in a high-quality manner?*
- *How are participants responding to the program?*
- *Are we making progress toward our action plan? Have key action plan benchmarks been achieved? What adjustments in our plan do we need to make?*
- *Overall, what is going well with the program? What areas need improvement? How do we know this?*

Best Practices

- *Make data collection a normal part of the program's work, including in staff roles and discussing regularly at staff meetings.*
- *Plan dedicated time for the evaluation team to get together specifically to review data, ideally on a frequent basis.*
- *Make comparisons (as relevant) to prior years to track trends.*

Review Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ Final analysis, review, and reporting on all process and outcome data from summer, fall, and spring (new/changing or established centers)  
- ✓ Complete the annual action plan (new/changing or established centers)  

Review and reflect on program successes and challenges, to create targeted plans for improving programs and operations.

Final Analysis, Review, and Reporting

The overall purpose of your final analysis, review and reporting is to communicate results to internal and external stakeholders, to inform improvement, and to identify promising aspects of the program to continue and further enhance.

Reporting Tips:




- Reporting formats should succinctly present information in a way that is meaningful to your target audience (e.g., school and program staff, community partners, youth and families). Customize reporting formats to address the needs of your program.
- Emphasis should be placed on communicating evaluation results in a manner that is meaningful to stakeholders. This includes concise reports that use a variety of data visualization strategies. In addition to the required grantee- or center-level executive summary and the annual evaluation report, other report layouts may be useful for communicating information (e.g., one-page fact sheets, highlight documents, slides).



Data visualization resources are provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.

Best Practices

- *Visualize your data with user-friendly charts, graphs, and infographics.*
- *Conduct a stakeholder analysis to determine who should receive information, and brainstorm with your evaluation team the best communication strategies for these target audiences.*
- *Share reports with interested internal and external stakeholders (staff, funders, partners, parents, etc.) to highlight the work being done and create a foundation for sustainability.*

-  Grantees are required to **submit either a grantee-level executive summary or center-level executive summaries to TEA by July 31** and **post the full evaluation report** to their public website, annually.
-  Although centers have flexibility to decide the content of this summary, **required elements to be included within the summary are provided in the section that follows.**
-  In collaboration with the project director, center staff, and stakeholders, **the independent evaluator is responsible for producing annual local program evaluation reports for public posting, including the executive summary or summaries (grantee or center level) for submission to TEA.**

Complete Annual Action Plan

At this point in the continuous improvement process, centers benefit from reviewing all process and outcome evaluation data (as available), examining progress made toward current-year improvement areas, comparing current findings to results from prior years, and identifying further areas of improvement for the next year. These improvement strategies should be documented within the action plan and shared with internal and external stakeholders to clearly communicate improvement strategies. Guidance for developing the action plan was provided earlier (page 17). Although the end of the school year offers a good opportunity for this type of reflection, it will also be important to review and update the action plan during the subsequent Develop stage. This further review ensures improvement strategies identified at year end are still relevant given any planned adjustments for next school year. The annual action plan then becomes a living document that can be used and updated all year long to support improvement efforts.

Executive Summary: Required Elements

Grantees are required to submit an executive summary or summaries to TEA *either* at the grantee or center level. Required elements (noted by letters A–E) and recommended content (noted by supporting text and bullets) follow.

Grantee-level Executive Summary Required Elements and Recommended Content
<p>Overall purpose: The executive summary succinctly highlights the most important process and outcome evaluation findings and presents key information about the grant and the centers being served. The summary also should include common strengths, recommendations, and next steps across all centers served. The summary also may include any unique center attributes deemed important for understanding successes or areas for improvement. An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone.</p>
<p>A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps</p> <p>Share common accomplishments and areas for improvement for the overall grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include common recommended next steps in which centers will engage to address areas for improvement based on action plans developed for your center(s). Unique center successes or next steps also may be highlighted within this section.
<p>B. Brief Grantee and Center Overview</p> <p>Convey the overall context and focus of your grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include a brief summary of the centers being served by your grant (e.g., names, relevant demographics).• Include any unique attributes associated with your grant (e.g., specialized population, specific program focus such as STEM).
<p>C. Implementation</p> <p>Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include relevant process evaluation results across your centers, such as (1) number of students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (2) overall quality, and (3) participant responsiveness.• Where possible (and as applicable), include prior-year results related to center attendance to report on trends.
<p>D. Local Needs and Outcomes</p> <p>Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to local outcomes identified within your original Texas ACE application and/or developed as part of your outcome evaluation plan. Include any limitations deemed important to consider.
<p>E. State Outcomes (by Major Texas ACE Measurement Areas)</p> <p>Display and briefly summarize progress toward major program outcomes required by the state as documented within the respective cycle grant application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize the section by major Texas ACE measurement areas as relevant to your center(s) and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE grant cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement to the next grade level. Note: Refer to the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle.• Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available) and any limitations deemed important to consider.

Center-level Executive Summary Required Elements and Recommended Content *(recommend up to 3 pages)*

Overall purpose: The executive summary succinctly highlights the most important process and outcome evaluation findings and presents key information about the grant and the centers being served. The summary also should include common strengths, recommendations, and next steps across all centers served. The summary also may include any unique center attributes deemed important for understanding successes or areas for improvement. An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone.

A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps

Share key accomplishments and areas for improvement.

- Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include recommended next steps in which your center will engage to address areas for improvement.

B. Brief Center Overview

Convey the overall context and focus of your center.

- Include a brief summary of your center (e.g., location, center demographics, program schedule, program offerings).
- Include any unique center attributes (e.g., specialized population served, specific program focus such as STEM).

C. Implementation

Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings.

- Include process evaluation results, such as (1) number of students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (2) overall quality, and (3) participant responsiveness.
- Where possible (and as applicable), include prior-year results for center attendance to report trends.

D. Local Needs and Outcomes

Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs.

- Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to local outcomes identified within your original Texas ACE application and/or developed as part of your outcome evaluation plan. Include any limitations deemed important to consider.


E. State Outcomes (by Major Texas ACE Measurement Areas)

Display and briefly summarize progress toward major program outcomes required by the state as documented within the respective cycle grant application.

- Organize the section by major Texas ACE measurement areas as relevant to your center and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE grant cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement to the next grade level. Note: Refer to the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle.
- Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available) and any limitations deemed important to consider.

Annual Evaluation Report

Although a required executive summary (grantee or center-level) is to be submitted to TEA, a center-level, one-page fact sheet, executive summary, and report comprise the recommended reporting format for the annual evaluation report. This approach allows information specific to the center to be shared with relevant stakeholders versus an aggregated report that may over- or underestimate specific center findings. With this said, grantee needs and capacity should ultimately guide the best approach to reporting. For example, some grantees may find it more useful to create an aggregated report and include specific center-level reports as appendices versus creating individual center-level reports. Grantees have flexibility to create documents most useful for communicating results to both internal and external stakeholders. A recommended format for a center-level annual evaluation report follows.

Center-level Annual Evaluation Report: Recommended Content	
Overall purpose: The annual evaluation report includes all local program evaluation information to support program improvement and sustainability. The document includes center background information, the most recent logic model and evaluation plans, and summarizes findings for all local and state goal areas. The report concludes with a summary of key accomplishments, recommendations, and next steps developed by the evaluation team.	
I. One-page Fact Sheet	
<i>Create a one-page fact sheet that communicates selected main ideas in an easy and understandable format. Include some of the main findings and basic program information that you want your audience to know. Use a variety of data visualization strategies to quickly and succinctly communicate information.</i>	 <i>Data visualization resources are provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.</i>
II. Center-level Executive Summary (recommend up to three pages) Note: An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone.	
A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps	Share key accomplishments and areas for improvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include recommended next steps in which your center will engage to address areas for improvement.
B. Brief Center Overview	Convey the overall context and focus of your center. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a brief summary of your center (e.g., location, center demographics, program schedule, program offerings). ● Include any unique center attributes (e.g., specialized population served, specific program focus such as STEM).
C. Implementation	Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include process evaluation results, such as (1) number of students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (2) overall quality, and (3) participant responsiveness. ● Where possible (and as applicable), include prior-year results for center attendance to report trends.
D. Local Needs and Outcomes	Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to local outcomes identified within your original Texas ACE application and/or developed as part of your outcome evaluation plan. Include any limitations deemed important to consider.
E. State Outcomes (by Major Texas ACE Measurement Areas)	Display and briefly summarize progress toward major program outcomes as documented within the respective cycle grant application. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organize the section by major Texas ACE measurement areas as relevant to your center and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE grant cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement, to the next grade level. Note: Refer to the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle. ● Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available) and any limitations deemed important to consider.

III. Summary of Strengths, Recommendations and Next Steps <i>(recommend up to two pages)</i>	
A. Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize major accomplishments for the year, recommendations, and planned action steps based on information from the action plan, as determined by the evaluation team.
IV. Program Overview <i>(recommend up to two pages)</i>	
A. Theory of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a summary of your program and the theory of change identified through planning.
B. Logic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the program logic model being used during this reporting period.
V. Process (Implementation) Evaluation Plan and Results <i>(recommend up to five pages)</i>	
A. Process Evaluation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the process evaluation plan being used for this reporting period. Note: Depending on plan length, centers may want to provide a brief summary and include the full plan in an appendix.
B. Process Evaluation Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include relevant process evaluation results from surveys, quality assessments, focus groups, and other methods used to collect information. Where possible (and as applicable), include prior-year results to report on trends.
VI. Outcome Evaluation Plan and Results <i>(recommend up to five pages)</i>	
A. Outcome Evaluation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the outcome evaluation plan being used for this reporting period. Note: Depending on plan length, centers may want to provide a brief summary and include the full plan in an appendix.
B. Outcome Evaluation Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include local and state outcome results as aligned with the evaluation plan. Where possible (and as applicable), include prior-year results to report on trends.
VII. Appendix	
Include any additional information deemed relevant to the report. In some cases, centers may want to include evaluation plans within the appendix versus displaying them in the full report.	



Texas ACE Local Evaluation Toolkit

(A RESOURCE SUPPORTING THE USE OF THE
TEXAS ACE LOCAL EVALUATION GUIDE)

Purpose: This toolkit includes resources to support centers in their efforts to plan and conduct local evaluation and engage in a continuous improvement process.

Using This Toolkit: The toolkit aligns directly with information presented in the *Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide*. Details for completing the templates and using the resources are in the guide. As applicable, page numbers from the guide are included at the beginning of the resource to assist with this alignment. The resources provided in this toolkit may be customized to best meet the needs of Texas ACE.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Resource 1. | Guide to Hiring an Independent Evaluator |
| Resource 2. | Sample Independent Evaluator Agreement Template |
| Resource 3. | Program Quality Assessment Decision Guide |
| Resource 4. | Measurement Guidance |
| Resource 5. | Logic Model Resources and Template |
| Resource 6. | Local Evaluation Planning Guide: Diving Deeper |
| Resource 7. | Process Evaluation Plan Template |
| Resource 8. | Outcome Evaluation Plan Template |
| Resource 9. | Texas ACE Action Plan Template |
| Resource 10. | SWOT Analysis |
| Resource 11. | Magic Quadrant |
| Resource 12. | Introduction to Data Visualization |
| Resource 13. | Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement in Evaluation |



Resource 1. Guide to Hiring an Independent Evaluator¹

*The guide to hiring an independent evaluator aligns with **pages 3 and 4 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. The guide may be helpful in selecting an independent evaluator for your program.*

A program evaluator is someone who has formal training or experience in research and/or evaluation. Organizations are required to follow local procurement practices when contracting for evaluation services, and the following discussion points and questions might be helpful when making selections.

- **Evaluation philosophy.** Look for an evaluator who believes the evaluation should be a collaborative process with the evaluator, program managers, and staff. In this philosophy, program managers and staff are experts in the program, and evaluators work closely with them throughout the process. The evaluator provides program support in documenting program activities, developing performance measures, collecting additional data, interpreting evaluation findings, and making recommendations for program improvement. The purpose of evaluation in this context is to improve the program, not to make judgments on calling the program a success or failure. Ask the candidates to describe what they see as the end result of an evaluation and how relationships are managed when conducting an evaluation.

- **Education and experience.** There are very few university degree programs in program evaluation, thus program evaluators often have backgrounds in the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, criminal justice, public administration, or education. Most evaluators have some degree of formal training in research methods, often through graduate-level coursework. For example, someone with a master's degree or doctorate in education or the social sciences should have the research knowledge necessary to conduct evaluations. Evaluators should have expertise in qualitative methods, such as interviewing and focus groups, as well as quantitative methods for analyzing surveys and attendance data. Evaluators also differ in their familiarity with different kinds of databases and computer programs. It is critical to find an evaluator that has

Considerations: Ask the candidates to describe how they were trained as an evaluator. Did they complete courses specific to evaluation or research methods? What kinds of methods (qualitative, quantitative, or both) are they comfortable with? Did they work alongside an experienced evaluator prior to stepping out on their own?

¹ Materials are adapted from Orchowski, S., Carson, T., & Trahan, M. (2002). *Hiring and working with an evaluator*. Washington, DC: Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Local_Evaluator_Guide_330863_7.pdf. Information was further adapted with permission from the Michigan Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program.

the kinds of experience you need, so be sure to ask about specific experience doing a wide range of evaluation-related tasks that might be needed in your evaluation.

- **Content knowledge.** Although evaluation has a great deal in common with conducting research, there are many differences between research and evaluation. A qualified evaluator must have not only research skills but also specific experience in working with programs like yours. Some may have worked in a program, as a project director or site coordinator, before becoming an evaluator. Ask candidates whether they have evaluated similar programs with similar target populations. If so, they may have knowledge and resources that will save time and money. If they have worked with programs that are somewhat similar but may have differed in the group served (e.g., they have not evaluated afterschool programs but have worked with early childhood programs), they may still be a reasonable choice as long as you help them understand the unique context of your program and its participants.

Considerations: Carefully review each evaluator's résumé to determine if they have experience conducting evaluations of programs like yours. Ask the candidates to describe their previous work.

- **Oral communication skills.** Evaluators must be able to communicate effectively with a broad range of people, including parents, program staff, other evaluators, community members, the media, and other stakeholders. They should be able to speak plainly and explain scientific jargon when necessary. Someone who cannot clearly explain evaluation concepts to a lay audience is not a good candidate. An evaluator needs to be able to connect comfortably with program staff and participants. It can be helpful to ask candidates to share an example of how they would communicate some evaluation findings to staff.

Considerations: Determine if the candidates are someone you would feel comfortable working with. Ask the candidates to explain their approach to presenting and communicating information to various stakeholders.

- **Writing skills.** An evaluator must have strong writing skills. The process of rewriting evaluation reports takes time, and the scientific integrity of evaluation results can be threatened if the report must be rewritten by someone other than the evaluator. Have candidates bring writing samples, including evaluation reports, articles, and PowerPoint slides for presentations that they have developed to share findings.

Considerations: Ask for samples of each evaluator's work. Review the materials to be sure they are written clearly, without a great deal of jargon, and in a way that would be understandable to those receiving the information.

→ **Cultural competency.** An evaluator's approach must demonstrate respect for the various cultures of the communities where the evaluator works. Mutual respect along with understanding and acceptance of how others see the world is crucial. Genuine sensitivity to the culture and community will increase the comfort level of program staff, participants, and other stakeholders to encourage their involvement. It also will ensure that data collection tools are appropriate and relevant, thus increasing the accuracy of findings.

Considerations: Ask the candidates tough questions, especially if you work with a population that has historically been stereotyped or treated unfairly. Ask the candidates what experience they have with the population you serve. Keep in mind that no one is without assumptions; however, being aware of and confronting assumptions with honesty is a critical skill for evaluators to be able to achieve cultural sensitivity.

→ **Budget and cost.** Ideally, you should ask candidates to prepare a written proposal for your evaluation, including a budget. To get good proposals, provide candidates with clear information about the program's objectives, activities, and audience. Be explicit about the deliverables expected from the evaluator, as outlined in the Texas ACE requirements so that both parties agree about the level of effort required to complete the work.

Considerations: Present the candidates with expectations for the job requirements and cost. Be clear about the required elements. Allow them time to consider and negotiate. Be open to what additional ideas they may have to supplement the required elements.

→ **Time and access.** Make sure that candidates have the time to complete the necessary work. Site visits and regular meetings will be necessary. The more contact the evaluator has with your program, the better the evaluator will understand how it works and the more opportunities the evaluator will have to monitor data collection activities. Regular meetings also let you monitor the evaluator's performance and stay on top of the timeline.

Considerations: Ask the candidates what their other professional commitments are and how much time they will be able to devote to your project. Compare their responses to your estimates of the time needed to do the work. Develop a timeline together with your chosen evaluator that describes various stages of the evaluation process, including site visits and data collection (e.g., analysis, report writing).

→ **Data ownership and control.** Organizations should follow their own local contracting policy and data-sharing agreements. It is essential that project staff review, in advance, all evaluation reports and presentations before they are released to the funder or other audiences. This process ensures that program staff are aware of the results and have an opportunity to

Considerations: This point is a nonnegotiable. Be sure to be clear with the candidates about data ownership.

correct any inaccuracies. As part of the written data-sharing agreement or contract, be sure to include a requirement that the evaluator review data and reports with you prior to all public dissemination of results. In addition, it is important to establish that the evaluator will be working for the project, not the funder.

- **References.** Ask for references and check them. Be sure that references include directors of programs that each candidate has worked with and ask about specific experiences with the candidate, such as how well the evaluator worked collaboratively with staff and how the evaluator navigated any challenges that arose during the evaluation.

Finally, keep in mind that an important part of an evaluator’s job is to assist in building the skills, knowledge, and abilities of staff and other stakeholders. It is critical that all parties can work well together. Make sure to invite finalists to meet the local evaluation team, program staff, and others with whom they will be working to see who best fits with individual styles and your organizational culture. If the fit is good, your evaluation is off to a great start. Sample interview questions are provided in the box.

Sample Interview Questions	
Philosophy/Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you describe your overall philosophy to evaluation?• Describe what you see as the end result of an evaluation.• How do you manage relationships when conducting evaluation?
Training/Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What type of training do you have as an evaluator? Did you complete any courses specific to evaluation or research methods?• What types of methods (qualitative, quantitative, or both) are you most comfortable with?• Have you evaluated similar programs with similar target populations?• Describe your previous work as an evaluator. What specific experiences do you have doing a wide range of evaluation-related tasks?
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an example of how you would share some evaluation findings with different stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff, community members).• What is your approach to presenting and communicating information?
Cultural Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What experience have you had with the population our program serves?
Time Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much time will you be able to devote to this project?• What other professional commitments do you have that may impact the time you are able to devote to this project?



Resource 2. Sample Independent Evaluator Agreement Template²

The sample local independent evaluator template aligns with **pages 3 and 4 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. Although some grantees may have their own contract agreements to draw from, others may find the template useful in constructing agreements for evaluation services.³ It also may be useful when deciding on roles and responsibilities for internal evaluators. When using the template, text in **red** should be customized to meet specific grant needs and the level of evaluation service purchased based on the local evaluator cost guidelines outlined for your grant cycle. Items in **red** are suggestions and should not to be included in the final document. Also, the included content is based on including all required and recommended evaluation activities outlined within the Local Evaluation Guide.

Independent Evaluator Service Agreement Between [Texas ACE Grantee (Grantee)] and [Evaluator/Agency Name]

Charge

The independent evaluator (evaluator), [Evaluator/Agency Name], has been engaged by the [Texas ACE Grantee (grantee)] to evaluate the implementation of the Texas ACE (aka 21st Century Community Learning Centers/21st CCLC) grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Contact Information

[Evaluator/Agency Name] can be contacted at [address, phone, fax, email].

[Evaluation contact name] will be the evaluation contact for the program. [Grantee] can be contacted at [address, phone, fax, email]. [Grantee contact name] will be the contact for the program.

Audiences

The primary audiences for this evaluation are as follows: [List audiences with which the evaluator and/or grantee will share evaluation data, i.e., school districts, TEA, potential new funders, parents/students/community].

² Adapted with permission from the Michigan Department of Education.

³ All contracted services paid with federal 21st CCLC funds must comply with the procurement standards and other relevant requirements in the TEA's *General and Fiscal Guidelines* and federal regulations.

Reporting and Dissemination

The evaluator will be responsible for collaborating with the project director and center staff to plan the evaluation, draft, and edit evaluation reports as outlined in the next section. The grantee will be responsible for completing the reporting requirements indicated by TEA, with evaluator support. It is understood that the evaluation report will be as concise as possible, but additional information can be provided by the evaluator upon request. Required and recommended reporting guidance is provided in the *Local Evaluation Guide*.

The evaluator will release the evaluation report to the grantee with the understanding that the grantee will submit the report to the TEA by the due date and disseminate the report, along with any accompanying statement, to other key stakeholders. The evaluator will work with key grantee members to help interpret the data. The evaluator may be requested to assist in presenting findings and facilitating discussions with key stakeholders in understanding the report. In all cases, the evaluator will review data and reports with the grantee prior to all dissemination of results. The grantee may choose to endorse or not endorse the report depending on its judgment of the quality and appropriateness of the report by inserting a statement at the beginning of the document or attaching a separate letter.

Evaluation Activities

Activities that are included in the evaluation are as follows:

- Assist in building the skills, knowledge, and abilities of center staff and stakeholders in implementing center-level evaluation activities.
- Participate fully in the development and planning of a center-level logic model and overall process and outcome evaluation. This includes meeting with the project director to review the TEA's evaluation requirements and creating a project plan and timeline for identifying evaluation methods and implementing the evaluation activities. Also, determine what additional data will be collected along with data collected through TX21st and state-level evaluations made available to local evaluators, as applicable. These data should include a review of the needs assessment used to inform the program.
- Participate fully in implementation of the evaluation plan and lead collection of data as specified in the plan on the agreed-on timeline.
- Conduct on-site quality observations. Quality assessment strategies and frequency of observation will be identified by the local evaluation team.
- Document process and outcome results to guide decision making.
- Participate in action planning to improve operations and programming by identifying improvement needs and challenges.
- Conduct quantitative and qualitative data analysis and assist centers in understanding the results.
- Produce an annual executive summary for submission to the TEA and a local program evaluation report for public posting by the grantee. Required and recommended reporting guidance is provided in the *Local Evaluation Guide*.

Resources

It is expected that sufficient resources will be made available to the evaluator by the grantee for this evaluation based on the allowable funding levels provided in the cycle grant application. The grantee key staff and district staff will be available to collaborate with the evaluator to provide support for the evaluation. The grantee may authorize the evaluator to request access to the TX21st System (TEA data tracking system), provided that the evaluator specifies how the data will be secured and used. The local evaluator will attend relevant conferences, meetings, and conference calls to understand and collect data. If costs are incurred for conferences, the grantee will pay the additional costs (e.g., hotel, registration). The total cost of the evaluation of the *[number of] program sites* for the time period of August 1, *[year]*, to July 31, *[year]*, will be *[total amount of contract]*. Additional years of evaluation may be negotiated upon receipt of future funding and mutual consent. Payments will be made to the evaluator in the amount of *[list payment schedule—amount & dates]*, [\[link payment increments to deliverables\]](#).

Grantee Evaluation Deliverables

The evaluation deliverables for *[school year]* include the following:

[Note: Customize the deliverables to address your evaluation needs.]

Deliverable	Due date/process
1. Participate on a local evaluation team and assist in informing action planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning (August/September) Middle (December/January) End of Year (May/June)
2. Develop center-level logic model(s) in partnership with the local evaluation team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due annually at the end of the fall semester (TEA requirement)
3. Complete and update process and outcome evaluation plans in partnership with the local evaluation team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> August/September (annually)
4. Implement evaluation activities as outlined within the evaluation plans (e.g., quality assessment observations, surveys, focus groups).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on evaluation plans
5. Submit either a grantee-level or a center-level executive summary to the grantee for submission to the TEA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluator to submit summary to grantee by <i>[date]</i> Due annually on July 31 by grantee (TEA requirement)
6. Submit an annual evaluation report to the grantee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluator to submit report to grantee by <i>[date]</i> Grantee to post report annually (TEA requirement)

Evaluation Use

The evaluator will present the evaluation reports and findings in such a manner that *grantee* members will understand and be able to use the data to inform decisions and program improvement. The Presentation of findings may include but are not limited to the following:

- [One-on-one meetings with project director, site coordinators, school representatives, others]
- [Group meetings with site coordinators, center staff, school staff, others]
- [Workshops designed to understand and use data resulting in action plans]
- [Site visits during program time]
- [Formal presentations to key stakeholder groups, such as the advisory group, boards of education, community groups, others]

Access to Data and Rights of Human Subjects

It is understood that the grantee will make available to the evaluator all data and reports required by the evaluator to fulfill contract requirements. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations allow local evaluators to have access to student data if the evaluation is designed to

conduct studies for, or on behalf of, educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of developing, validating, or administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, and improving instruction, if such studies are conducted in such a manner as will not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by persons other than representatives of such organizations and such information will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purpose for which it is conducted, and contractual partners with *[Name of District]* schools. (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act , FERPA).

In the implementation of this evaluation, the evaluator will take every precaution to adhere to the three basic ethical principles that guide the rights of human subjects as derived from the [Belmont Report](#): respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Evaluation data will be collected in a manner representing these principles, and evaluation reporting will be done with respect to human dignity, providing constructive feedback without bias. The evaluation will be conducted adhering to the [American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles](#), which include systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare.

Signatures

This evaluation agreement has been reviewed by both the *[grantee fiscal agent]* and the local evaluator. The signatures and dates signify that the agreement is satisfactory to all parties, and there are no conflicts of interest on behalf of the evaluator in conducting this evaluation.

[Evaluator Contact & Agency Name]

Date

[Grantee Fiscal Agent & Agency Name]

Date



Resource 3. Program Quality Assessment Decision Guide

*This decision guide aligns with guidance provided on **pages 12–14 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. The information is intended to assist centers in understanding the types of quality assessment tools available and identifying measures that best address the unique needs of their program.*

Approaches and Benefits of a Quality Assessment Process

Centers are encouraged to conduct quality measurement to assess point-of-service and/or organizational quality of their programs. Point-of-service measures often are collected through observational assessment, and organizational measures often are done through surveys or interviews. This program quality assessment process often is a collaborative process to understand implementation of various components of the program and used to develop an action plan to support program improvement.

Point of service measures examine the environment where youth experience the program. These measures tend to focus on staff practices related to creating a caring, nurturing, and supportive environment; structuring activities to support youth skill building; providing opportunities for positive youth interactions; and providing youth with sufficient autonomy to be active participants in their own learning and development. They examine the relationships between staff and youth, the relationships among youth, and the nature of the activities to determine if they are engaging and youth centered.

Examples of common constructs associated with **point-of-service** measurement:

- Safety
- Relationships
- Environment and Climate
- Programming and Activities
- Youth Participation and Engagement

Organizational measures focus on the adoption of effective organizational processes that help ensure the creation of developmentally appropriate settings for participating youth. For example, these measures are more likely to describe criteria for effective management and financial practices, staff development, and sustainability. They also look at how the program works with various external partners, such as families, schools, and community organizations.

Examples of common constructs associated with **organizational** measurement:

- Management and Governance
- Staffing and Staff Development
- Community Partnerships
- Coordination/Alignment With School
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Program Sustainability and Growth

Both point-of-service and organizational measures yield information beneficial to centers by outlining strengths and areas of need in the program. Centers benefit by using findings from their assessments to create action plans for improvement. This program quality assessment process generates a cycle of continuous quality improvement where programs use quality data to inform change in their programs.

Benefits: Research has shown that a focus on creating a high-quality program increases youth engagement and participation, which then increases the likelihood of youth improving on desired outcomes, such as academic or social emotional skills.⁴ Program quality assessment measurement tools are fairly common in out-of-school programs, but the program quality and youth development dimensions that are included in the available measures is diverse. What is universal is the importance of focusing on the process of quality improvement, not specific quality scores. By creating a low-stakes environment, staff are encouraged to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses, which makes the assessment a more accurate representation of a center's current state and makes the data more meaningful and more likely to lead to program improvement through reflection and action planning. In addition, professional development trainings and resources often are aligned to support centers in making changes. Even the initial collection of these program quality data can help staff in understanding best practices and give them tangible ideas that they can begin to use immediately to make the program operate more effectively and make their jobs easier. In short, a focus on quality assessment and improvement provides a more pleasant and beneficial experience for everyone involved in the program.

⁴Naftzger, N., Manzeske, D., Nistler, M., Swanlund, A., Rapaport, A., Shields, J., . . . Sugar, S. (2013). *Texas 21st century community learning centers: Year 2 evaluation report*. Naperville, IL: American Institutes for Research.



Key Steps in the Process

Step 1. Select the program quality assessment measure

Centers will need to establish which measurement tool works best for them for measuring program quality. The following quality assessment decision guide will assist centers in identifying measures that best address their program needs. Although programs might already have a measure they are using, it is suggested that centers use the guide to examine criteria associated with selecting a robust assessment measure and the necessary processes for centers to do this assessment well.

Quality Assessment Decision Guide

Overview of Common Quality Assessment Tools

The following common program quality assessment tools are reviewed in this Decision Guide. This list is not exhaustive, and programs may have their own locally developed tool.

- Weikart Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA, SAPQA, or Form B)
- NIOST’s Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-O or APT-Q)
- NYSAN’s Quality Self-Assessment Tool (NYSAN)
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)
- Dimensions of Success (DoS) STEM focused tool

Questions for the Local Evaluation Team to Discuss

→ ***When our center thinks about program quality this year, do we want to work on point-of-service or organizational quality?***

Typical Point-of-Service Topics	Typical Organizational Topics
✓ Safety	✓ Management and Governance
✓ Relationships	✓ Staffing and Professional Development
✓ Environment and Climate	✓ Community Partnerships
✓ Programming and Activities	✓ Coordination/Alignment with School
✓ Youth Participation and Engagement	✓ Parent and Family Engagement
	✓ Program Sustainability and Growth

→ **Does our center already have a program quality assessment tool that is being used?**

<p><i>If yes, does our tool meet the criteria of a robust measurement tool? Note: The purpose of these criteria is to encourage centers to reflect on best practices associated with program quality measurement. Some criteria may be unique to a point-of-service or organizational assessment.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assesses the implementation of the program and/or the quality of service delivery, not specific outcomes. ○ Meets the purpose of collecting information for self-assessment and program improvement. ○ An observation data collection method is included for point-of-service assessment. ○ It has levels of quality and is not solely a checklist (i.e., how standards are framed). For example, rating on positive relationships may be on a 3- or 4-point scale, rather than only marking yes or no on the existence of these relationships. ○ Data collection process recommends a team process with various stakeholders, not solely program leadership or external assessors. ○ Training on how to use the tool is available. ○ Additional resources are aligned to the tool (e.g., toolkits, trainings, planning tools). ○ Evidence backs up the measurement constructs and the technical properties of the instrument to see how strong and rigorous it is. 	<p><i>If the current measure does not meet most criteria of a robust measurement tool, centers may want to consider revising the current tool or selecting a new tool.</i></p>
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→ **What content areas related to point-of-service does our center most need to address? What is our center's preferred method and capacity for data collection?**

- **Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA or SAPQA)**
 - <http://cypq.org/assessment>
 - Content
 - Domains: Engagement, Interaction, Supportive Environment, Safe Environment
 - Scales: Emotional Safety, Healthy Environment, Emergency Preparedness, Accommodating Environment, Nourishment, Warm Welcome, Session Flow, Active Engagement, Skill-Building, Encouragement, Reframing Conflict, Belonging, Collaboration, Leadership, Adult Partners, Planning, Choice, and Reflection
 - Method: observation, either self-assessment or external assessment
 - Training options available: 1-day PQA Basics training or 2–4-hour online modules. Also, 2 Day External Assessor training available for becoming reliable assessors. Regional trainings nearby might be an option if you contact them.
 - Approximate Costs: ~\$4,500 for 1-day live Basics training for 25 people or \$110/person for online Basics; measures are free to download

- **NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-O)**
 - <https://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt>
 - Content
 - Domains: Learning and Skill Building, Program Organization and Structure, Supportive Social Environment
 - Program features assessed: stimulating engaging/thinking, quality activities; targeted skill building; youth positively engaged; individualized needs; responsibility and leadership; positive behavior; conducive space for learning; flexible approaches; organization; connections with school; staff support; welcoming environment; supportive staff–youth relationships; positive peer relationships; and connections with families
 - Method: observation
 - Training options available: 1-day on-site training or online modules; 2-day training available for full suite of tools (with Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes measures).
 - Approximate Costs: ~\$8,750 for 1-day live APAS training for 20 people (can include all measures) or \$200/person for APT Online Training or \$600/person for full APAS Online Training (with all measures); measures are included with training costs or free with permission

- **School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)**
 - <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers> and <https://www.ersi.info/sacers.html>
 - Content
 - “Basic Needs”: Protection of Health and Safety, Positive Relationships, and Opportunities for Stimulation and Learning
 - Subscales: Space and Furnishings, Health and Safety, Activities, Interactions, Program Structure, Staff Development, and Special Needs
 - Method: observation, ask some questions
 - Training options available: 5-hour online or live option (contact for information)
 - Approximate Costs: \$149 for online introductory course, measure is \$21.95, with \$8.95 for scoring sheets

- **Dimensions of Success (DoS) STEM focused tool**
 - <https://www.thepearinstitute.org/dimensions-of-success>
 - Content
 - Categories: features of learning environment, activity engagement, STEM knowledge and practices, youth development in STEM
 - Dimensions: Organization, Materials, Space Utilization, Participation, Purposeful Activities, Engagement With STEM, STEM Content Learning, Inquiry, Reflection, Relationships, Relevance, and Youth Voice
 - Method: observation
 - Training options available: DoS certification training involves a 2-day live webinar training, completion of video calibration exercises, a 1-hour live calibration session, and successful completion of two practice observations in the field. In-person training for state networks or organizations can be arranged as needed for an additional cost.

- Approximate Costs: The DoS certification process costs \$375 per person and includes 2 days live webinar training, training materials (electronic; printed for a \$50 fee), personalized calibration feedback and a 1-hour calibration call, feedback on two practice field observations, certification for 2 years, access to online database for data uploading/storage, quarterly reports on request, and ongoing assistance

→ **What content areas related to organizational elements does our center most need to address? What is our center's preferred method and capacity for data collection?**

- **Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment - Form B**
 - <http://cypq.org/assessment>
 - Content
 - Domains: High Expectations, Youth-Centered Policies and Practices, Access
 - Scales: Staff Qualifications, Program Offerings, Youth Influence on Activities, Youth Influence on Policy, Staff Development, Supportive Social Norms, High Expectations, Program Improvement, Staff Availability, Schedules, Barriers to Participation, Communication With Families, Organizations and Schools
 - Method: interview with staff
 - Training options: 1-day PQA Basics training or 2–4-hour online modules. Regional trainings nearby might be an option if you contact them.
 - Approximate Costs: ~\$4,500 for 1-day live Basics training for 25 people or \$110/person for online Basics; measures are free to download

- **NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-Q)**
 - <https://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt>
 - Content
 - Domains: Learning and Skill Building, Program Organization and Structure, Supportive Social Environment
 - Program features assessed: stimulating engaging/thinking, quality activities; targeted skill building; youth positively engaged; individualized needs; responsibility and leadership; positive behavior; conducive space for learning; flexible approaches; organization; connections with school; staff support; welcoming environment; supportive staff–youth relationships; positive peer relationships; and connections with families
 - Method: questionnaire self-assessment
 - Training options: 1-day on-site training or online modules; 2-Day training available for full suite of tools (with Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes measures)
 - Approximate Costs: ~\$8,750 for 1-day live APAS training for 20 people (can include all measures) or \$200/person for APT Online Training or \$600/person for full APAS Online Training (with all measures); measures are included with training costs or free with permission

- **NYSAN's Quality Self-Assessment Tool (NYSAN)**
 - <http://networkforyouthsuccess.org/qsas/>
 - Content
 - Essential elements: Environment and climate; administration and organization; relationships; staffing and professional development; programming and

activities; linkages between day and afterschool; youth participation and engagement; parent, family, and community partnerships; program sustainability and growth; and measuring outcomes and evaluation.

- The elements represent a mix of activity-level, program-level, and organizational-level concerns.
 - Method: primarily interview, with some observation, exclusively for self-assessment
 - Training options: contact NYSAN for more information
 - Approximate Costs: measure is free to download; training webinars free; contact for more information

→ **How do these tools compare on the essential criteria for program quality assessment tools?**

Robust Measurement Tool Criteria						
Tool	Improvement purpose	Self-assessment	Recommends team process	Observation	Survey/ Questionnaire	Levels of quality
APT	x	x	x	x	x	x
DoS	x	x	x	x	—	x
NYSAN	x	x (exclusively)	x	—	x	x
SACERS	x	x	—	x	—	x
YPQA	x	x	x	x	x	x

Available Training and Resources Aligned to the Tool		
Tool	Tool training available	Aligned resources
APT	Yes	Training on leadership, youth learning and enrichment, and relationship building. Is aligned to the Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes youth measures
DoS (STEM)	Yes	Planning tools
NYSAN	Yes	Supplemental tools on STEM, summer learning, college and career readiness and global learning
SACERS		—
YPQA	Yes	Youth Work Methods Trainings on things like youth voice, planning and reflection, active learning, building community, and more. Supplemental versions of the tool available (e.g., school age, STEM, academic skill building). Also has a planning process and tools.

Technical Properties Comparison							
Tool	Score distributions	Interrater reliability	Test-retest reliability	Internal consistency	Convergent validity	Concurrent validity	Validity of scale structure
APT	—	x	—	—	—	x	—
DoS	<i>was not included in this study</i>						
NYSAN	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SACERS	—	x	—	x	x	x	—
YPQA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Source: Yohalem, N., & Wilson-Ahlstrom, A. (with Fischer, S., & Shinn, M.). (2009). *Measuring youth program quality: A guide to assessment tools* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

→ *Does our program have the necessary components in place to conduct a program quality improvement process well? What do we need to do to build our team to get ready?*

<p>Requirements for assessment process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Available facilitator to coordinate the process ○ Available staff to participate in data collection ○ Dedicated staff time for training and data collection (when not leading programs)—critical to success of the process, and it is ideal to pay staff for the time they dedicate to this process ○ Staff knowledge and skills in data collection
<p>Requirements for action planning process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge about how to analyze and report the data ○ Staff knowledge and skills in data analysis and interpretation ○ Staff time for training and participating in action planning
<p>Requirements for implementation process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resources to support implementation of action plan (e.g., training, toolkits) ○ Staff meetings for ongoing discussions of action plans and progress monitoring ○ Commitment to continuous improvement for future development of program

Step 2. Prepare for program quality assessment process

- Once the program quality assessment measure has been selected, the center will need to reach out to the organization that supplies the measurement tool to arrange all necessary components to use the measure. Instructions on how to obtain necessary permissions were provided earlier for the example measures used.
- Preparation also includes purchasing training and associated materials. Validated measures often have training available on how to use the measure so that the entire evaluation team can conduct this assessment to the best of their abilities. Training is available online or in person for various measures. Importantly, training cost may be incurred by centers, so this may be an important consideration when selecting the tool. All arrangements for obtaining training can be made with the organization that owns the measure.

Step 3. Receive training in program quality assessment measure

All local evaluation team members who will be using the program quality assessment measure should obtain training in the measure, whether online or in person. Training should focus on understanding the core concepts in the measure, as well as the process of data collection. Importantly, training cost may be incurred by centers, so this may be an important consideration when selecting the measurement tool. This ensures that participants understand exactly what is being measured and feel prepared for the process. It also ensures that the data collected are accurate and meaningful.

Step 4. Conduct assessment and scoring meeting

Most point-of-service quality assessment measures are collected through observations. Organizational assessments are more likely to rely on interviews or surveys. Observations or survey input should be included from everyone on the evaluation team because they all have perspectives that can give a more holistic view of the program. This often culminates in a scoring meeting, where the evaluation team meets to develop consensus on final scores summarizing where the program is at this time.

Step 4. Develop an action plan

Using the quality assessment scores, bring the evaluation team back together to develop an action plan, using the Action Planning template in this toolkit. Centers should select improvement areas and strategies that are framed with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) criteria. The team should outline a clear plan for all the necessary components for how they will work together to achieve these goals. It is suggested that one goal be a “low-hanging fruit,” something that can be addressed more quickly and give the team a quick win.

Step 5. Implement the action plan

→ Explore resources that can help the center successfully implement the action plan and accomplish all strategies. Available trainings and toolkits often are aligned with validated quality improvement measures. Staff can benefit greatly from access to these resources. Set aside time in the program to have ongoing conversations about the action plan and progress toward completion.



Resource 4. Measurement Guidance

*This measurement guidance aligns with information provided on **pages 12–16 of the Local Evaluation Guide** and is intended to assist centers in decision making and preparations for their local evaluation planning.*

Selecting Measures for Local Evaluation

Centers are encouraged to select measures to use in their local evaluation efforts that best align with their center goals. Many existing measures have been developed that could support a center’s process or outcome evaluation efforts, but sometimes instruments do not fit well with what the team is hoping to measure. Therefore, it is an option to adapt or create custom measures that better suit the center’s needs. Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages. This information is outlined, along with tips for customizing or developing measures to support your center’s evaluation planning process.

<u>Standardized Measures</u>	
<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Has typically undergone psychometric analysis, making it more rigorous ✓ Is more likely to have reliability, or consistency in responses ✓ Is more likely to have validity, or certainty that it is measuring what it intends to ✓ Already completed and requires no time to develop ✓ May have comparison data to see how your participants compare to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May not measure exactly what you want to measure ✓ May be a longer measure than is desired ✓ May use more technical terms that aren’t clear to your participants ✓ May charge for administration and be cost prohibitive for centers

Locating Standardized Measures

- + You for Youth: <https://y4y.ed.gov/tools/>
- + From Soft Skills to Hard Data: Measuring Youth Program Outcomes: <http://www.readyby21.org/resources/soft-skills-hard-data-measuring-youth-program-outcomes>
- + Afterschool Youth Outcomes Inventory: <https://pasetter.org/initiatives/youth-outcomes>
- + Measuring Youth Program Quality: <http://www.cypq.org/content/measuring-youth-program-quality-guide-assessment-tools-2nd-edition>
- + See **Resource 3** for more information on standardized quality assessment tools

Considerations:

Outcome measures are the most difficult to create and therefore it is wise to use existing measures. It is better to use entire sections of rather than change quality assessment tools. Satisfaction surveys of stakeholders may be the easiest for centers to customize.

Examples of When You Might Want to Customize

- Quality Assessment: The quality assessment tool you chose is very long and takes a long time to complete. You want to make it less overwhelming for your team to participate in the assessment, as well as be more targeted on specific areas of quality.
- Social and Emotional Outcomes Youth Survey: A wide variety of social and emotional outcomes can be measured. You locate a survey that has many skills identified as a focus for your program. However, the instrument includes skills you don't focus on and is missing some that are really important.

<u>Custom or Adapted Measures</u>	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Measures exactly what you want to measure✓ May be able to have a shorter measure that takes less time for participants to complete✓ Piloting the measure can help further tailor the measure specifically to your needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Adapting or changing existing measures at all removes all existing validity/reliability✓ Takes time to develop, especially if developing a completely new measure✓ Can be difficult to work out conceptually what is desired to be measured, achieving clear definitions and indicators✓ Should undergo a pilot to test that how the instrument performs✓ Ideally requires support from someone with more advanced measurement design skills

Considerations:

There is a difference between measures that are open source and those that have a copyright. Explore if the measure is open source and can be used freely or adapted to meet the program's need. Contact the owner of the measure to obtain necessary permissions to use as is or adapt.

Steps for Developing Custom or Adapting Existing Measures

<i>Step</i>	<i>Developing custom measures</i>	<i>Adapting existing measures</i>
<i>Establish clear goals</i>	Start with clear goals about what you hope to accomplish and cover with the measure, making sure everyone on the team agrees and can stay focused on this purpose. This will help limit debates later.	Start with a discussion of your goals compared with the existing measure. Establish what is not working with the measure and be clear on why adapting is the best path forward, after weighing the pros and cons.
<i>Outline core components</i>	Develop detailed definitions of any key concepts so that it is clear what you are examining. This may need additional refinement later but focusing on having consistent definitions early will allow for clarity throughout the process.	Discuss all the concepts in the measure one by one, outlining what can be kept and what areas need to be changed. Also outline what key concepts are missing.
<i>Craft indicators</i>	Craft a list of all key indicators that are specific and clear about what you are measuring, have observable actions or behaviors, and are measurable and quantifiable.	For any concepts that are missing, craft detailed indicators for what you want to cover.
<i>Develop questions</i>	Working from your list of indicators, develop each individual question for your measure. This may require many meetings or drafts of versions to be passed around to all team members. → <i>Best Practice Tip: Test out the questions with some of your participants to see how it sounds to them.</i>	Work through the list of changes. Develop new items using your new indicators. Remove extraneous items. Make any minor adaptations, cautious of any possible confusion. → <i>Best Practice Tip: It can be better to simplify by reducing the number of items or entire sections rather than changing wording or scale to a yes/no, so as to not lose meaning.</i>
<i>Pilot the measure and refine</i>	Before launching the measure for use across the center or grantee, pilot it with a small group of stakeholders. After collecting data, discuss what suggestions they have for changing the measure and make the appropriate changes.	Vet the adapted measure with relevant stakeholders and participants to make sure any changes are clear. Refine the measure accordingly after the feedback.



Resource 5. Logic Model Resources and Template

*A logic model is a common tool for depicting your program focus, implementation plan, and outcomes. It describes your program and guides the evaluation. Additional resources to support logic model development are provided in this resource as a supplement to guidance provided on **pages 8–11 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. A logic model template also is provided. Please refer to the guide for a description of the concepts in this template. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in completing the logic model requirements for your grant evaluation.*

Selected Logic Model Resources

<i>Logic Model Development Guide</i> from W.K. Kellogg Foundation	A comprehensive 71-page guide that outlines the process for developing a theory of change and logic model for your program and using those tools to develop an evaluation plan	http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide
<i>Theory of Change Basics</i> from ActKnowledge	A brief overview of the rationale and process for creating a theory of change model to guide program design	http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToCBasics.pdf
<i>Logic Model Workbook</i> from Innovation Network	A step-by-step guide including templates for designing a program’s logic model and using it to evaluate results	http://www.pointk.org/client_docs/File/logic_model_workbook.pdf
<i>Extension Logic Models</i> from the University of Wisconsin	A description of logic models and a selection of templates and examples	https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/
<i>Developing a Logic Model: Teaching and Training Guide</i> from the University of Wisconsin	A detailed description of logic models including training materials and a framework for development	https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/files/2016/03/lmguidecomplete.pdf

Logic Model					
Youth, family, and community needs	Center goals	Implementation (process evaluation)			Outcomes (outcome evaluation)
		Inputs (resources/assets)	Program and center activities	Outputs (products/fidelity)	



Resource 6. Local Evaluation Planning Guide: Diving Deeper

*This local evaluation planning guide supports process and outcome evaluation planning outlined on **pages 12–16 of the Local Evaluation Guide.***

Benefits of Annual Evaluation Planning

Guidance for constructing local process and outcome evaluation plans is provided in the *Local Evaluation Guide*, and templates for developing these plans are provided in this toolkit. As centers develop these plans, it is important to ensure that plans are reviewed annually and adjusted to examine evaluation questions that may need further exploration. Specifically, collaboratively reviewing prior evaluation results and deriving local evaluation questions for further study allows for a deeper dive into how to solve issues of particular importance to a center. Through this process, questions most meaningful to all center staff can be explored, which allows center staff to engage more fully in the evaluation process and increase the overall likeliness of the findings being used to drive program improvement and sustainability.

This guide outlines a process for identifying local evaluation questions that a center may want to examine during the current school year. The questions can be embedded within your process evaluation plans or used to supplement or expand on your outcome evaluation plan for the year.



Key Steps to Developing Local Evaluation Questions

Step 1. Review prior evaluation results to identify key findings and areas for further study

- Organize all evaluation results by your center-level goals. This review largely depends on data available to the center (e.g., site visit reports; staff, student, and family interviews and/or surveys; student academic and behavioral information).
- Discuss the following questions:
 - (1) What do we know about our program? *List up to five key findings from the review. A key finding is defined as a result that stands out as especially meaningful or important to the evaluation team. It could be a positive or negative result. For example, 80% of the program staff report students are satisfied with the program, but only 50% of the youth reflect this same level of satisfaction.*
 - (2) What do we want to know more about? *Based on the key findings generated, list any initial questions that may warrant further exploration. For example, why are staff and youth reporting different levels of satisfaction?*

Step 2. Prioritize either process or outcome evaluation questions for further study

- Based on the list of initial questions identified, narrow the list down to two (or more) initial evaluation questions.
- When prioritizing questions, consider the following criteria:
- extent to which the question can be addressed this school year
 - center's capacity to collect data to examine the question
 - meaningfulness of the question in relation to the needs being addressed by the center, including program improvement or sustainability efforts

Step 3. Refine and specify the evaluation questions

- Refine and specify the evaluation questions in measurable terms.
- Tips for creating good evaluation questions:**
- ✓ Use SMART criteria from the *Local Evaluation Guide*
 - ✓ Focus on something specific, not a general idea
 - ✓ Clearly define key terms within the question to ensure consistency with interpretation
 - ✓ Avoid broad questions by limiting the scope of the question to areas deemed most important
 - ✓ Ensure that it is measurable
 - ✓ Link the question to program improvement or sustainability to ensure that the question is useful to the center

Step 4. Develop an evaluation plan for each evaluation question identified including core methods for examining the evaluation question (*Note: Local evaluators have expertise in this area and will be instrumental to the successful design and implementation of the evaluation plan*). **Key aspects of evaluation plans are described here. The evaluation plan on page 14 of the *Local Evaluation Guide* can be adapted for this purpose.**

- **Identify the Evaluation Question:** *Identify the evaluation questions of interest to your program from Step 3.*
- **Process/Outcome Measure:** *Decide what will be reviewed to determine progress (e.g., materials, specific percentages or numbers). Measures should be directly aligned with the activity or program attribute being assessed.*
- **Data Collection Method and Timeline:** *Specify how your measures will be collected, including the type of measure and the timeline with which it will be administered.*
- **Responsible Party:** *Identify specific individuals who are responsible for data collection and make sure they are adequately trained.*

Examples of process and outcome evaluation plans are provided on the following pages.

Step 5. Implement the evaluation plan

Depending on the proposed methodology, provide adequate training to program staff on evaluation activities and initiate data collection.

Step 6. Communicate and use results

Once data are collected, convene the evaluation team to review results and identify areas for program improvement and aspects of sustainability. Results should be included within the required annual evaluation report and communicated to key staff. Further, results should be used to inform the planning for the subsequent school year.

Example: Diving Deeper With Process Evaluation

→ A key finding identified from an annual program review: 80% of the program staff reported that students are satisfied with the program, but only 50% of the youth reflected this same level of satisfaction. (Data Source: Center Annual Survey)

Evaluation Question: → Why do center staff report that Grades 3–5 youth have a higher level of overall program satisfaction than youth themselves report?

Process Measure: → Staff and youth perceptions of the program

Method and Timeline: → A qualitative design will be used to better understand differences in perceptions. Staff-level interviews and youth focus groups will be conducted to explore these differences after the first 4 weeks of programming.

Responsible Party: → The local evaluator will conduct interviews with program staff and focus groups with identified youth. Data will be shared with program staff to understand differences, and an improvement strategy will be added to the annual action plan based on lessons learned.

Example: Diving Deeper With Outcome Evaluation

→ A key finding identified from an annual program review: Regularly attending third-grade students are not meeting proficiency targets on the STAAR Math Assessment (Source: STAAR Math Assessment).

Evaluation Question: → Why are third-grade students who are attending regularly not meeting proficiency targets on the STAAR Math Assessment?

Outcome Measure: → Reasons students are not meeting proficiency targets

Method and Timeline: → A mixed quantitative and qualitative design will be used to better understand these findings. STAAR math data will first be explored for all regularly participating students. Data for all students who did not meet proficiency will be disaggregated to explore any trends, such as specific areas where students may be struggling the most (e.g., multiplication facts). Staff-level interviews and review of lessons will be examined to explore the alignment of programming with areas where students are not making progress. All data will be examined prior to the start of next year's programming.

Responsible Party: → The local evaluator will disaggregate data and provide a written report to the program director. The program director will collaborate with the site coordinator to review lessons and conduct staff interviews. Based on findings, an improvement strategy will be added to the annual action plan based on lessons learned.

In summary, the development of local evaluation questions provides centers an opportunity to take a deeper dive into specific program areas of interest. Ultimately, discussing the results of these locally derived questions can inform program improvement and sustainability efforts.



Resource 7. Process Evaluation Plan Template

*The process evaluation template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 12–14 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your local process evaluation plan.*

Process Evaluation Plan			
Process question	Process measure	Data collection method and timeline	Responsible party



Resource 8. Outcome Evaluation Plan Template

*The outcome evaluation template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 15–16 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your local outcome evaluation plan.*

Outcome Evaluation Plan					
SMART outcome	Performance measure	Participants	Data source	Procedures	Data analysis and reporting



Resource 9. Texas ACE Action Plan Template

*The Texas ACE Action Plan template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 17–19 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your action plan.*

TX ACE ACTION PLAN				
Program name:				
Date plan created:				
What successes/assets can support this work?				
Improvement area identified		<i>Rationale/finding that showed this as an improvement need</i>		
Improvement strategy	Specific attainable action steps	Responsible person(s)	Progress measures	Target completion date
What are possible barriers to success?		What could be planned to address barriers?		



Resource 10. SWOT Analysis

*The SWOT Analysis Resource aligns with guidance around action planning provided on **pages 17–19 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this tool in developing your action plan.*

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the group, community, or effort, and what are the opportunities and threats facing it?

Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>Start by listing positive characteristics of the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advantages does the program have? • What resources/assets exist? • What do the youth say? 	<p>Identify weaknesses from both your own point of view and that of others, including those you serve or deal with.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you improve? • What is missing? • Would you attend this program?
External	Opportunities	Threats
	<p>A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at the strengths and ask whether these open up any opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could you take this program to the next level? • What partnerships are present? • What does the program do in the community? 	<p>Cast a wide net for the external part of the assessment. No organization, group, program, or neighborhood is immune to outside events and forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What obstacles may the program face? • Could there be budget issues? • Could any of the weaknesses threaten sustainability?

Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats



Resource 11. Magic Quadrant

*The Magic Quadrant Resource aligns with guidance around action planning provided on **pages 17–19 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this to assist in developing your action plan.*

Magic Quadrant⁵

1. Start by asking the group, “What do we need to reach our goal or make our decision?”
2. Discuss what it means for your program to choose activities in each quadrant.
3. Decide as a group which quadrant you wish your future activities to be in.
4. Jot down ideas on sticky notes about steps that may help reach your goal. Post the sticky notes on the magic quadrant at the appropriate levels of impact and effort.
5. Discuss decisions and implications.

Magic Quadrant Example⁶



⁵ Gray, D., Brown, S., & Macanufo, J. (2010). Impact & effort matrix. In *Game storming: A playbook for innovators, rulebreakers, and changemakers* (p. 241). Sebastopol, CA: O’Reilly.

⁶ Public Profit. (2014). *Dabbling in the data: A hands-on guide to participatory data analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.publicprofit.net/Dabbling-In-The-Data-A-Hands-On-Guide-To-Participatory-Data-Analysis>

		Effort	
Impact		High Impact/Low Effort	High Impact/High Effort
		Low Impact/Low Effort	Low Impact/High Effort



Resource 12. Introduction to Data Visualization

This introduction to data visualization supports recommendations provided on pages 21–25 of the Local Evaluation Guide.

What is Data Visualization?

Data visualization is an approach to ensure that data are presented effectively for easier interpretation, therefore leading to greater usability. This growing practice is based on brain science of what the human brain can process and retain and is becoming popular across all fields that report data findings. In education and youth development, it is a particularly powerful tool to optimize program staff’s ability to understand and use the data for program improvement. It also is critical for telling the story of successes to a wider audience to enhance sustainability efforts.

Benefits

Good data visualization increases the likelihood of

- ❖ The data getting read
- ❖ Diverse audiences understanding the data
- ❖ The story getting told more
- ❖ People retaining what they learned from the data
- ❖ Findings being used
- ❖ Data being used to improve the program
- ❖ Having a participatory evaluation

Principles

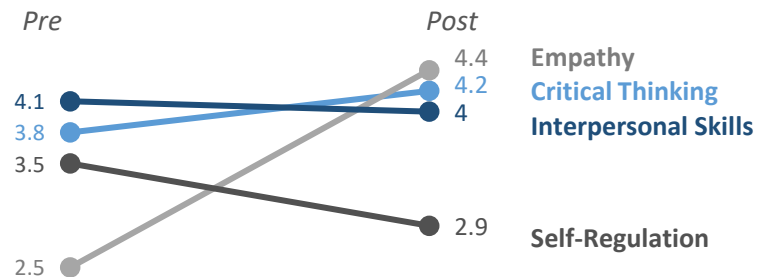
Data visualization should

- ❖ Be simple and clear
- ❖ Provide streamlined information
- ❖ Use engaging formats with less text and more visuals
- ❖ Reduce clutter and any excess
- ❖ Explicitly name findings and conclusions
- ❖ Have strategic and bold use of images, color, and so forth
- ❖ Use plain language, with high readability and clear visibility
- ❖ Tell a story

Examples

Students built social-emotional learning skills in empathy and critical thinking in pre-post testing.

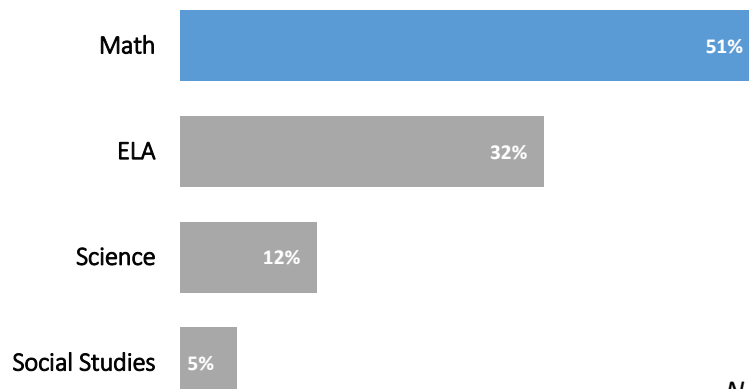
Self-regulation is an area of opportunity for the program's improvement efforts.



N = 417

Math was most often named as students' favorite school subject.

Science is notably low despite recent focus on STEM.



N = 263

Data Visualization Resources

Charts



- + How to Build Data Visualizations in Excel: <https://stephanieevergreen.com/how-to/>
- + Data Visualization Checklist: <https://stephanieevergreen.com/updated-data-visualization-checklist/>
- + Data Visualization Tutorials
 - + <http://stephanieevergreen.com/how-to/>
 - + <https://stephanieevergreen.com/qualitative-viz/>
 - + <https://depictdatastudio.com/tag/tutorials/>
- + Data Visualization Chart Selection Tools
 - + <http://stephanieevergreen.com/qualitative-chart-chooser/>
 - + <https://depictdatastudio.com/charts/>
 - + <https://policyviz.com/2014/09/09/graphic-continuum/>
- + Book: *Effective Data Visualization*: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/books/>
- + E-Book: *Great Graphs*: <https://depictdatastudio.com/book/>
- + Book: *Storytelling With Data*: <http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/book/>
- + Tableau software and the book by Daniel G. Murray, *Tableau Your Data*
- + Tamara Munzner, *Visualization Analysis and Design* (CRC Press)

Graphics and More



- + Graphic design: <https://www.canva.com/>
- + Icons: <https://thenounproject.com/>
- + Dashboards: <https://stephanieevergreen.com/dashboard-conversation/>
- + Fonts: <https://www.fontsquirrel.com/>
- + Color: <https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel/> or <http://instant-eyedropper.com/>
- + High Resolution Photos: <https://www.pexels.com/> or <https://pixabay.com/>
- + Book: *Presenting Data Effectively*: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/books/>

Reports



- + Evaluation Report Layout Checklist: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/evaluation-report-layout-checklist/>
- + Better Evaluation Reporting and more: <http://communitysolutions.ca/web/resources-public/>
- + 1-3-25 Reporting Model: <http://stephanieevergreen.com/the-1-3-25-reporting-model/>
- + Evaluation Reporting Guide: <https://www.kauffman.org/evaluation/evaluation-reporting-guide>
- + Book: *A Short Primer on Innovative Evaluation Reporting*: <http://communitysolutions.ca/web/evaluation-reporting-guide/>

Presentations



- + The Potent Presentations Initiative: <http://p2i.eval.org/>
- + Audience Engagement Resources: <https://www.sheilabrobinson.com/resources/audience-engagement-resources/>
- + Rad Presenters podcast: <http://www.radpresenters.com/>
- + Book: *Audience Engagement Strategy*: <http://www.eval.org/d/do/1210>
- + Valerie M. Sue and Matthew T. Griffin, *Data Visualization and Presentation With Microsoft Office* (Sage)



Resource 13. Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement in Evaluation

*This introduction to stakeholder engagement in evaluation supports a variety of recommendations and processes described throughout the **Local Evaluation Guide**.*

What Is Stakeholder Engagement in Evaluation?

This beneficial approach ensures inclusivity and participation of key voices beyond the local evaluation team in various parts of the evaluation. By facilitating spaces for stakeholders to play a more active role throughout the evaluation cycle, and especially in the data analysis stage, you ensure that your evaluation is meaningful and representative of your entire program community. The strategies and resources presented here offer support for how to facilitate activities specific to evaluation but also may be useful for other goals as well.

Benefits

Good stakeholder engagement increases the likelihood of

- ❖ Diverse stakeholders reviewing the data
- ❖ Discovering key insights
- ❖ Making meaning from data
- ❖ Ensuring data are valid and representative of known realities
- ❖ Data being used to improve the program
- ❖ Having a participatory evaluation

Principles

Stakeholder engagement should

- ❖ Value stakeholder voice
- ❖ Be inclusive of diverse stakeholders to weigh in
- ❖ Offer engagement opportunities at various time points in the evaluation
- ❖ Allow time and space for thoughtful reflection and idea generation
- ❖ Make evaluation more meaningful and fun

Throughout the Evaluation

Engaging stakeholders throughout the evaluation is about more than just sending surveys or using stakeholders to collect data. It means facilitating activities to involve people in diverse ways and offer input on the evaluation process itself. It involves finding opportunities for quick input whenever decisions are being made, such as during evaluation planning or later action planning, so that power in what happens is shared. It means taking the time to present ideas to all relevant stakeholders and adapting based on what they say.

- + Creative Ways to Solicit Stakeholder Feedback & Creative Ways to Solicit Feedback from Children and Youth: <https://www.publicprofit.net/Creative-Ways-To-Solicit-Stakeholder-Feedback>
- + *A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions*: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2009/12/a-practical-guide-for-engaging-stakeholders-in-developing-evalua.html>
- + Book: Michael Quinn Patton, *Facilitating Evaluation*. Sage Publications, 2018

Data Analysis Stage

Participatory data analysis is becoming a best practice to allow for deeper engagement of meaning-making related to collected data.

This specific evaluation step allows the chance to bring in a large group of stakeholders to dive into data, analyze, and interpret findings. It requires time for thoughtful reflection to develop key insights and is much more powerful than just the evaluator or evaluation team coming up with all the conclusions. This then arms everyone with the best possible information for taking action.

- + *Dabbling in the Data: A Hand's-On Guide to Participatory Data Analysis*: <http://www.publicprofit.net/Dabbling-In-The-Data>
- + Data Parties: <http://communitiesolutions.ca/web/resources-public/>
- + Data Placemats: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ev.20181> and https://www.slideshare.net/InnoNet_Eval/data-placemats-40494596
- + Participatory Analysis: Expanding Stakeholder Involvement in Evaluation: https://www.innonet.org/media/innovation_network-participatory_analysis.pdf



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Appendix I. Site Interview Protocols and Surveys

- Activity leader survey
- Youth experience survey (English and Spanish)
- Community board member interview
- Family engagement specialist interview
- Parent/guardian passive consent (English and Spanish)
- Principal interview
- Project director interview
- Staff focus group
- Site coordinator interview

Activity Leader Survey: Daily Activities

The survey you are being asked to complete is part of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation being conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) in order to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of the project is to better understand how centers funded by 21st CCLC support positive youth outcomes and the role program quality and youth experiences in programming play in this process.

This survey asks about the types of things youth did in the activities you led in today's Texas ACE program and some questions related to your background and role in the program. If you led more than one activity in today's program, you will be asked to complete a separate survey for each activity.

It is important to note that this effort is not an evaluation of you or your program specifically. All responses you provide in taking this survey will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. No identifiable survey results will be made to anyone outside the study team at AIR.

There are no foreseeable risks to you based on your participation in this survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey is voluntary. You can opt not to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Neil Naftzger at nnaftzger@air.org, 630-649-6616 or Brenda Arellano at barellano@air.org, 312-690-7371. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant in this data collection effort, you may contact the chair of AIR's Institutional Review Board (which is responsible for protecting the rights of study participants) at IRBChair@air.org, toll free at 1-800-634-0797, or c/o AIR, 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20007.

Activity Leader Survey: Daily Activities

Activity Name:

1. Please indicate how you would classify this activity (please select one option).

- Tutoring
- Homework Help
- Academic direct instruction
- Academic enrichment
- Nonacademic enrichment
- Sports/Physical activity
- Community/Service learning
- Youth Leadership
- Other

2. Please indicate if any of the following content areas were part of the activities you provided today.

- Reading/Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Computers/other technology
- STEM/STEAM (intentional integration of more than one STEM/STEAM content areas)
- Art
- Music
- Languages other than English/Cultural or social studies
- Entrepreneurship
- Health/nutrition
- English language acquisition
- Other

3. Please answer the following questions about what youth did today in *this activity*.

To what extent did youth do the following in this activity today?	No programming time was spent doing this	Less than half of the programming time today was spent doing this	Most programming time today was spent doing this
a. Youth primarily worked alone on tasks related to the activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Youth primarily worked in small groups on tasks related to the activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Youth received <i>direct instruction</i> ¹ in a particular academic content area (e.g., math, science, reading, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Youth worked on a project that required them to make or build things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Youth worked on a group project that will take multiple sessions to complete	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¹ In this survey, the term *direct instruction* refers to the following set of activities:

- Group Instruction - These activities largely mirror typical school-day classroom instruction with the activity leader or teacher spending the bulk of the activity teaching a lesson with an explicit academic focus to a group of participating students.
- Tutoring - Tutors or teachers *directly* work with students individually and/or in small groups to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to concepts addressed during the school day.

To what extent did youth do the following in this activity today?	No programming time was spent doing this	Less than half of the programming time today was spent doing this	A majority of programming time today was spent doing this
f. Youth participated in activities that allowed them to explore and discover new things on their own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Youth learned or practiced a skill that is not related to a specific school-day content area (e.g., learning tae kwon do, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Youth participated in a competition, contest, or game	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Youth participated in whole group discussions you facilitated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Youth delivered a presentation to the whole group or an external audience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Youth went on a field trip	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Youth listened to a presentation from a speaker or special guest from outside the program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Youth planned future activities or projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Youth participated in an activity that was designed to make a contribution or be helpful to others or the community (e.g., service learning project)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Which of the following best describes your primary role in the program?

- I teach (co-teach) or lead (co-lead) regular program activities (e.g., group leader).
- I assist with activities (e.g., assistant group leader).

5. What is your highest level of education?

- Less than high school
- Completed high school or GED but did not go any further
- Some college, other classes/training not culminating in a degree
- Completed two year college degree
- Completed four year college degree
- Some graduate work
- Master's degree or higher

6. Do you hold a teaching credential or certificate?

- Yes
- No

Texas ACE Evaluation: Youth Experience Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out more about afterschool programs like your Texas ACE program and how kids like you feel about these programs. We care about what you think about this program, and your answers will help make afterschool programs better for kids in Texas. We need your honest feedback. The questions on the survey ask about what you experienced in this afterschool program today. This is not a test. There are no "wrong" answers. Please choose the answer that best describes your experience today. This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to answer all of the questions.

This survey is voluntary. You only have to take the survey if you want to but your parent(s)/guardian(s) know you may be taking this survey. This survey does not have your name on it, so everything you write is confidential, which means that no one (not your parents, teachers, school staff or other students) will be allowed to know how you answer these questions.

Your answers will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law—no one in the program or your family will know what you answered.

Please answer each question by checking the boxes or filling in the circle next to the answer. You can skip questions you don't want to answer and you can stop taking the survey if you don't want to finish it.

I understand that this survey is voluntary, and I am choosing to take it: *(check if yes)*

Texas ACE Evaluation

Youth Experience Survey

1. Please answer these questions about TODAY'S AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
a. How challenging were today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Were you good at today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Were today's activities interesting?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Were today's activities important to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Were today's activities important to your future goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Could you see yourself using what you were learning in today's activities outside this program?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Did you work with other kids during today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
h. Did you enjoy today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Did you have to concentrate to do today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Do you feel like you learned something or got better at something today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Did you feel in control of the situation today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Do you feel you worked hard during today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Did you feel like you were making a difference for others during today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Was it easy to pay attention during today's activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
o. How HAPPY were you feeling in the program today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. How EXCITED were you feeling in the program today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. How FRUSTRATED were you feeling in the program today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r. How BORED were you feeling in the program today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s. How STRESSED were you feeling in the program today?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Evaluación del programa Texas ACE: Encuesta sobre las experiencias de los niños

El objetivo de esta encuesta es obtener más información sobre los programas extracurriculares como el programa Texas ACE al que asistes, y sobre qué opinan de ellos los niños como tú. Nos interesa lo que piensas sobre este programa, y tus respuestas servirán para mejorar los programas extracurriculares en beneficio de los niños de Texas. Necesitamos tus opiniones sinceras. Las preguntas de la encuesta se refieren a las experiencias que tuviste en este programa extracurricular hoy. Esta encuesta no es un examen. Ninguna respuesta es incorrecta. Escoge la respuesta que describa mejor las experiencias que tuviste hoy. Tardarás entre 10 y 15 minutos en responder a todas las preguntas de esta encuesta.

Esta encuesta es voluntaria. Solo tienes que responderla si quieres hacerlo, y si tu padre, tu madre o tu(s) tutor(es) saben que quizá la estás respondiendo. La encuesta no lleva tu nombre, de modo que todo lo que escribas es confidencial. Eso significa que nadie podrá enterarse de las respuestas que des a estas preguntas (ni siquiera tus padres, tus maestros, el personal de la escuela ni otros estudiantes).

Tus respuestas serán confidenciales hasta donde lo permita la ley. Ninguna persona del programa ni de tu familia se enterará de lo que respondiste.

Responde a cada pregunta llenando el círculo correspondiente a la respuesta. Puedes saltarte las preguntas que no quieras responder y dejar de realizar la encuesta si no quieres terminarla.

Entiendo que esta encuesta es voluntaria y he decidido responderla: *(llenando el círculo aquí si estás de acuerdo)*

Evaluación del programa Texas ACE

Encuesta sobre las experiencias de los niños

1. Responde a esas preguntas sobre las actividades extracurriculares de hoy.

	Nada	Un poco	Algo	Mucho
a. ¿Qué tan complicadas fueron las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. ¿Te fue bien en las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. ¿Fueron interesantes las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. ¿Fueron importantes para ti las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. ¿Fueron importantes para tus metas futuras las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. ¿Te imaginaste poniendo en práctica fuera de este programa lo que aprendiste en las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. ¿Trabajaste con otros niños durante las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Nada	Un poco	Algo	Mucho
h. ¿Disfrutaste de las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. ¿Tuviste que concentrarte para realizar las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. ¿Te parece que aprendiste algo o que mejoraste en algo hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. ¿Sentiste que tenías el control de la situación hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. ¿Crees que trabajaste duro en las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. ¿Te pareció que tuviste un efecto importante en otras personas durante las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. ¿Te fue fácil prestar atención durante las actividades de hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Nada	Un poco	Algo	Mucho
o. ¿Qué tan feliz te sentías en el programa hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. ¿Qué tan emocionado te sentías en el programa hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. ¿Qué tan frustrado te sentías en el programa hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r. ¿Qué tan aburrido te sentías en el programa hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s. ¿Qué tan estresado te sentías en el programa hoy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TX ACE Evaluation-Spring 2019

Advisory Board Member Interview Questions

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to understand your role as an Advisory Board member for the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program you help oversee. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of how Advisory Boards are supporting ACE programs. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your site will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the 21st CCLC program. For example, I'll ask questions on your primary program goals and objectives, your programming and practices with youth, and staff development.

I would like to record our interview in order to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

1. How did you become involved in the Advisory Board for the ACE program at [CENTER]?
2. What are your primary functions as an advisory board member for the ACE program at [CENTER]?
3. What do you see as the primary purpose of the Advisory Board?
4. How often are Advisory Board meetings scheduled?
 - a. What does the typical agenda involve?
 - b. How many members are on the board?
 - c. What is the composition of the board (e.g., ACE program/center staff, school staff, district staff, parents, community members)?
5. How is the Advisory Board involved in making decisions about the ACE program at [CENTER]?
 - a. (If not covered in the above response) What recommendations has the advisory board made to improve ACE operations or programming at [CENTER]?

- b. (If not covered in the above response) Is the guidance or feedback offered by the Advisory Board acted upon by the ACE program at [CENTER]?

- 6. What do you see as the primary goals and objectives of the ACE program at [CENTER]?

- 7. How well do you feel the program meets these goals and objectives?
 - a. What is going well?
 - b. Where are there opportunities for growth?

- 8. How do you think students benefit from participating in ACE programming?

- 9. How do you think parents and other adult family members benefit from participating in ACE programming?

- 10. Has the Advisory Board discussed strategies to sustain the program once ACE funding has ended?
 - a. What role does the Advisory Board have in identifying and securing funding for the program?
 - b. Developing partnerships that may support program sustainability?

TX ACE Evaluation-Spring 2019

Family Engagement Specialist Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation being conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR). TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC program (also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to understand your role as a Family Engagement Specialist for the Texas ACE program you work in. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of how Family Engagement Specialists are supporting Texas ACE programs. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the Texas ACE program. For example, I'll ask questions about your role in supporting the Texas ACE program and your work with the families of participating youth.

I would like to record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

- 1) How long have you worked in the afterschool/youth development field?
 - a) What was your most recent previous role in this field?
 - b) How long have you been in your current position?
- 2) What are your primary responsibilities as a family engagement specialist?
- 3) Which family engagement activities does this center offer that are designed to help parents and adult family members support the positive development of their students?
- 4) Describe activities offered to parents or that enhance their education or job skills (e.g., health services, financial aid information, and information about local colleges).
 - a) Do you refer parents to outside organizations that provide these services?

- 5) In what ways do you work with school-day staff and ACE center staff to reach parents and adult family members?
- 6) Describe your recruitment and enrollment strategies for parent and adult family member activities and classes.
- 7) What barriers do parents and adult family members face in terms of participating in ACE programming?
 - a) What strategies have you developed to help overcome these challenges?
- 8) What role do special events play in your efforts to get parents and adult family members involved in the ACE center at this school?
- 9) In what ways and how frequently do you communicate to parents and adult family members about ACE programming?
- 10) Are there any specific tools, resources, or trainings that have influenced how you get parents and adult family members involved in ACE programming?
- 11) Aside from more funding, are there any additional resources you wish you had that would help you more effectively engage parents and adult family members in ACE programming?



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

March 2019

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We ask permission for your child to complete a survey about his or her afterschool program.

Your child attends an afterschool program from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is working with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to study the program. The study will assess how the program helps students and how it can be improved.

The survey contains questions about the following areas.

- How much does your child like the program?
- How does your child feel about staff and other youth in the program?
- How does your child feel about the helpfulness of the program?

Your child's responses may influence decisions about improving the program.

The survey takes about 15–20 minutes to complete. Your child will take the survey during the afterschool program.

Completing the survey is voluntary. Whether your child completes it or not, his or her enrollment in the program will not be affected. Your child can stop taking the survey at any time without penalty.

Although results of the study will be published, your child's identity will be protected to the extent permitted by law. His or her name will not be used in any reports or in any way.

Only the research team will have access to the responses from students. Staff of the afterschool program and TEA will not have access to the responses.

If you **do not** want your child to complete a survey, please sign this form and return it within 10 calendar days to your child's afterschool center or the center's front desk. At that point, your child will not be included in the study.

For questions about the survey or study and your child's role in it, contact:

American Institutes for Research
c/o Chairperson, Institutional Review Board
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Washington, DC, 20007
Email: IRBChair@air.org
Phone (toll free): 1-800-634-0797

For questions about the study and to verify approval of this survey by TEA, contact:

Texas Education Agency
c/o **Ellie Hanlon**
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701-0922
Email: ellie.hanlon@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-3326

Thank you!

Brenda Arellano
Project Director

If you **do not** want your child to complete a survey, please sign this form and return it within 10 calendar days to your child's afterschool center or the center's front desk:

I **do not** want my child to complete a survey.

Student Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Marzo de 2019

Estimado padre de familia o tutor:

Le pedimos permiso para que su niño/a responda a una encuesta acerca del programa extracurricular al que asiste.

Su niño/a va a un programa extracurricular del programa *21st CCLC (21st Century Community Learning Centers)*. La *Texas Education Agency (TEA)* está estudiando el programa con la ayuda de los Institutos Americanos de Investigación (*American Institutes for Research, AIR*). En el estudio se evaluará cómo ayuda el programa a los estudiantes y cómo se puede mejorar.

La encuesta contiene preguntas sobre los siguientes temas:

- ¿Cuánto le gusta el programa a su niño/a?
- ¿Qué opina su niño/a acerca del personal del programa y de los otros niños?
- ¿Qué opina su niño/a acerca de la utilidad del programa?

Las respuestas de su niño/a podrían influir en las decisiones que se tomen para mejorar el programa.

Para responder a la encuesta se requieren entre 15 y 20 minutos. Su niño/a la responderá durante el programa extracurricular.

Responder a la encuesta es voluntario. La inscripción de su niño/a en el programa no se verá afectada, independientemente de si la responde o no. Su niño/a puede dejar de responder a la encuesta en cualquier momento sin que esto le acarree ninguna sanción.

Aunque los resultados del estudio se publicarán, la identidad de su niño/a se protegerá en la medida en que la ley lo permita. Su nombre no se mencionará en ninguno de los informes ni de otra forma.

Solo el equipo investigador tendrá acceso a las respuestas de los estudiantes. Ni el personal del programa extracurricular ni el de la TEA tendrán acceso a las respuestas.

Si **no** desea que su niño/a responda a una encuesta, firme este documento y envíelo en el plazo de 10 días consecutivos al centro extracurricular al que asiste su niño/a o entréguelo en la recepción de dicho centro. A partir de ese momento, su niño/a no se incluirá en el estudio.

Si tiene preguntas sobre la encuesta o sobre el estudio y el papel que su niño/a desempeña en él, comuníquese con:

American Institutes for Research
c/o Chairperson, Institutional Review Board
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Washington, DC, 20007
Correo electrónico: IRBChair@air.org
Teléfono (línea para llamadas gratuitas): 1-800-634-0797

Si tiene preguntas sobre el estudio o quiere verificar que la TEA ha autorizado esta encuesta, comuníquese con:

Texas Education Agency
c/o **Ellie Hanlon**
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701-0922
Correo electrónico: ellie.hanlon@tea.texas.gov
Teléfono: (512) 463-3326

Atentamente,

Brenda Arellano
Directora del proyecto

Si **no** desea que su niño/a responda a una encuesta, firme este documento y envíelo en el plazo de 10 días consecutivos al centro extracurricular al que asiste su niño/a o entréguelo en la recepción de dicho centro.

No quiero que mi niño/a responda a una encuesta.

Nombre del estudiante: _____

Nombre del padre o la madre: _____

Firma del padre o la madre: _____ Fecha: _____

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation-Spring 2019

Principal Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 60 minutes. TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as Texas ACE - Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of this interview is to understand how the Texas ACE program and the regular school interact and support one another. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE program looks like on site. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your Texas ACE centers will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. Your participation is voluntary. You can opt not to answer any question and stop participating at any time.

If you think I have not asked about something that would be helpful for the evaluation, please let me know so we can address it during this interview.

I would like to record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. “Do I have your permission to record the interview?”

Principal Role and Support

1. Please describe your relationship with the ACE center at your school.
2. What type of input do you provide about the ACE center at your school?
3. Please describe how the school supports the ACE center at this campus.

Program Goals

4. In what ways is the ACE center at this school meeting:
 - a. Academic needs of students?
 - b. Social emotional and enrichment needs of students?
5. To what extent are you able to recruit students who would benefit most from ACE programming?
 - a. [If not covered in Q3] How are students targeted for participation in the ACE center at this school?

Student and Family Benefits

6. In what ways do students benefit from participating in ACE programming?
7. How do you know if students are benefitting from participating in ACE?
8. How do parents and adult family members benefit from their students participating in ACE programming?

Alignment with the School-Day Curriculum and School-Day Goals

9. Please describe how ACE activities align with the school-day curriculum. How are alignment decisions made?
 - a. How does the alignment of ACE programming help achieve campus goals?
 - b. What is working well with efforts to align regular school-day instruction and ACE programming? What could be improved?
10. In what ways does the school consider ACE programming to be an extension of students' regular school-day activities?
11. Has the ACE center been formally incorporated into your school improvement plan? What effect has this had on the school improvement plan?

Communication between ACE and the School Day

12. Please describe how school-day data or information are shared with the ACE center to help the youth activity leaders better understand student learning needs, or monitor the academic progress of students.
13. Please describe how the ACE center shares data or information with school-day staff regarding students?

[If not covered by the response to Q13]

- a. What data or information are provided to you by the site coordinator?
 - b. What data or information are provided to school-day staff by the site coordinator?
 - c. What data or information are provided to school-day staff by ACE youth activity leaders?
14. Does the site coordinator have an office in the school?
 - a. Is the site coordinator available to administrators and teachers during the school day?
 - b. To what extent is the site coordinator invited to school-day meetings with school leaders, grade-level teams, or department content teams? What meetings do they commonly attend?

Space and Resources

15. How well do your school facilities accommodate the ACE center's activities?

Other

16. In what ways are you involved with the Advisory Board that oversees the ACE center at your school?

17. In what ways have you been involved in discussions related to sustaining the ACE center at your school?

18. Is there anything we have not discussed that you think would be helpful for our evaluation?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation - Spring 2019 Project Director Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 75 minutes. TEA has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as the Texas ACE Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program). This spring we are visiting 20 Texas ACE programs to learn more about how the programs support and deliver high quality program activities.

Information from this interview and other data we collect from your centers will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified.

The interview covers several topics associated with the program activities, and has many specific questions. If you think I have not asked about something that would be helpful for the evaluation, please let me know when the interview is completed.

I would like to record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. “Do I have your permission to record the interview?”

Goals

1. How long have you worked as the project director for this ACE program? How long have you worked in afterschool education, more generally?
2. What are the three most important goals of your ACE program?
 - a. For each stated goal, ask: What activities or programs are in place to meet that goal?
3. To what extent do program offerings and activities differ across centers in your ACE program?
4. How does program quality vary across your funded centers, if at all?

Programming

5. How are you involved in helping to craft center-level logic models?
 - a. What role do you play in making decisions about what programming is provided at a given ACE center?
 - b. What data are involved in making these decisions?

6. What are the primary considerations that centers need to follow in the design and delivery of programming?

Staffing

7. What role do you play in hiring site coordinators for your ACE centers?
 - a. What about youth activity leaders and other center staff?

8. What key qualifications should site coordinators possess to serve the students in your ACE centers?
 - a. And what qualifications should your youth activity leaders possess?

9. What approaches have been effective – or not effective – in recruiting and hiring qualified staff?
 - a. Have you experienced staff retention issues?
 - b. What methods have proven effective for reducing turnover?

Partnerships

10. Tell me about your process for identifying partners to provide programming for your centers.
 - a. What types of activities or programming do these partners offer?
 - b. Do you work with other partners who provide materials, funding, or other indirect programming assistance?

11. In what ways do your partners make your ACE program better?

12. Describe any challenges you've experienced in working with your partners.

13. How, if at all, do you and school principals develop a shared vision for what should be happening in your ACE program?
 - a. What are some of the challenges that have arisen when trying to come to a consensus on a shared vision for the program?
 - b. What support have you received from district administrators related to program implementation?
14. How would you describe your ACE program's role in the district's overall education strategy?
15. What has your role been in establishing a Community Advisory Board?
 - a. In what ways are you involved with the board and its activities?
 - b. In what ways do you seek and implement feedback from the board to inform ACE programming?

Supporting Families

16. What steps has your family engagement specialist taken to get parents and adult family members involved in the ACE program?
 - a. How do you coordinate with the family engagement specialist to facilitate his or her work?
17. How does your program involve parents and adult family members in determining program offerings for students?
 - a. How does your program involve parents and adult family members in determining parent activity programming?
18. What strategies have been successful in engaging parents and adult family members in ACE activities related to their students?
 - a. What strategies have been successful in engaging parents and adult family members in parent activities and classes?
 - b. How have students benefited from ACE programming?
 - c. How have parents and adult family members benefitted from ACE programming?

Professional Development

19. Describe the support and professional development offered to site coordinators.
 - a. Describe the support and professional development offered to youth activity leaders, specific to their role in delivering ACE programming.

20. What supports and professional development offerings have you found to be the most impactful for your site coordinators?
- a. And which professional development offerings have been most impactful for youth activity leaders?

Management and Continuous Improvement

21. In what areas do you think your ACE program is most successful?
- a. In what areas would you like to see improvement in your ACE program?
 - b. What areas are a current focus for program improvement, and what steps are you taking to improve those aspects of your ACE program?
 - c. What quality assessment tools do you currently use to determine the quality of your ACE centers?
 - d. What data do you use to inform program improvements, if any?
22. Tell me about how you conduct your local evaluations, including how your team works with your independent evaluator.
- a. What have you learned from your independent evaluator that has helped improve your program?
 - b. What does the independent evaluator typically assess in the course of a local evaluation?
 - c. To your knowledge, what methods are used in the independent evaluator's assessment (e.g., observations, surveys, analysis of student outcomes)?
23. How often do you visit each of your ACE centers and what do you look for during those visits?
- a. Do you also meet with school-day leadership when making site visits?
 - b. What do you discuss with school leaders?
24. What changes, if any, have been implemented at centers because of your visits and interactions with site coordinators and youth activity leaders?

Sustainability

25. What strategies have been identified for sustaining the ACE program after funding concludes?
 - a. What role does the district or other partners play in program sustainability?
 - b. What alternative funding sources have been identified to continue programming?
 - c. Do any identified approaches or funding mechanisms provide for programming on par with what is currently in place?
 - d. Is parent co-pay an option that has been considered?

Resources and Wrap-Up

26. Aside from more funding, are there any additional resources you feel you need in order to more effectively implement your ACE program?
27. Is there anything we haven't asked about that you think we should know about your ACE program?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation
Guiding Questions for Staff Focus Group – Spring 2019

Hello, I'm _____ from Gibson Consulting Group. We are an organization that conducts educational research and evaluation studies. We are part of an evaluation team funded through a contract between the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE). The purpose of the evaluation is to better understand how well out-of-school-time programs funded by 21st CCLC have fared relative to the goals and objectives specified for the program and to inform the development of promising and effective service delivery. The information you provide during today's focus group will be utilized to provide TEA with a better understanding of the procedures and approaches programs funded by 21st CCLC employ when delivering out-of-school-time programming.

The purpose of this focus group is to understand your perceptions of how the Texas ACE program is being implemented at your center. This meeting should take approximately 45-60 minutes. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE programs look like on site. Please note that participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can choose to decline to answer any question I ask and can stop participating at any time. Information from this focus group and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position. All your responses will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and we will not share your responses with any of your program administrators.

I will be taking notes as we talk and would also like to record our conversation to ensure accuracy. Do I have your permission to record this conversation?

This is a group conversation so please feel free to share your thoughts and add comments openly but not to interrupt each other. You are also free to leave the group at any time.

1. Let's take a few minutes for introductions. Please tell me:
 - your name
 - how long you have been at this ACE center, and
 - what type of program activities you facilitate.
2. In what ways do you think the ACE center at this school contributes to the positive development of the students you serve?

Skill Building

3. Please describe how you plan lessons and prepare for a given day's activities?
 - a. Thinking about activities that you led today, what specific skills or areas did you want students to improve upon?
4. What steps do you take to align afterschool activities with specific goals?
5. To what extent does information you receive from school-day teaching staff influence how you approach ACE activities and lesson planning?
 - a. Do you ever provide information about students back to school-day teachers? If so, in what ways?

Youth Engagement and Leadership

6. Which strategies have proven effective in actively engaging students in ACE programming?
7. What challenges have you experienced in keeping students engaged in ACE activities?
8. What opportunities are there for youth leadership in the activities you lead?

Staff Involvement in Decision Making

9. How regularly do youth activity leaders and site coordinators meet as a team?
 - a. What do you typically discuss in your ACE staff meetings?
 - b. In what ways are you involved in planning, or making decisions, about the content and format of ACE activities?
 - c. Do you discuss ACE program data as a group to plan for program activities (e.g., observation results, satisfaction surveys)? (If Yes) What types of programmatic changes are made as a result of these discussions?
 - d. Do you discuss school-day data to address student needs (e.g., grades, teacher notes)? What kind of changes are made based on these discussions?

Staff Development

10. Describe the orientation and initial training you received prior to starting in your role at this center.
 - a. Describe the focus of any support or professional development, or other training, that you've attended related to your role in delivering ACE programming since Summer 2018.
11. [ONLY ASK IF PD ATTENDED] In what ways are you able to use information from supports or training directly in the ACE activities you deliver?
 - a. In what ways are you supported in your role as youth activity leader by your site coordinator or program director?

Impact

12. In what ways do you think students benefit from participating in ACE programming?
13. What do you think is the most important driver to your ACE center's success in supporting students' development?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation-Spring 2019 Site Coordinator Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 75 minutes. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of this interview is to understand your thoughts and perceptions of how the Texas ACE program is being implemented at your center. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE program looks like on site. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the Texas ACE program. For example, I'll ask questions on your primary program goals and objectives, your programming and practices with youth, and staff development.

I would like to record our interview in order to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

Program Goals and Objectives

1. How long have you served as site coordinator for this ACE center? How long have you worked in afterschool programming, more generally?
2. What are the three most important goals of your ACE center?
 - a. For each stated goal, ask: what activities or programs are in place to meet those goals?
3. Was your center involved in a formal needs assessment process to help inform program content and delivery?
 - What data, if any, from the school day were used to support the needs assessment?
 - What key program decisions resulted from the needs assessment, if any?

Intentionality in Program Design

4. How do you align ACE activities and offerings with your center's goals?
5. Have you been provided with a copy of your center's logic model?

[ASK ONLY IF PARTICIPANT RESPONDS “YES” TO THE ABOVE QUESTION]

- a. When was the last time you reviewed your center’s logic model?
 - b. In what ways has your center’s logic model helped you to organize ACE activities to benefit your students?
6. How would you define the target student population for your ACE center?
- a. What methods do you use to recruit students?
 - b. What methods do you use to retain students?
7. In what ways do school-day staff help identify and recruit students for your center?
8. How do you ensure that activities related to academic areas are delivered in an engaging way?
9. In what ways does the programming at this center support the emotional development of participating students?
10. In what ways do you gather student feedback to determine program offerings?
11. Does your ACE center rely upon outside organizations and agencies to support the delivery of programming?
- a. What types of activities or programming are provided by these organizations?
 - b. Do you work with other partners who provide materials, funding, or other indirect programming assistance?
 - c. In what ways do these organizations make your programming better, if any?
 - d. Describe any challenges you've experienced in working with your partners.

Linkages to School Day

12. What data is used to monitor students’ academic progress?
- a. How are these data incorporated into ACE programming?
13. Are you on campus during the school-day to connect and interact with school leaders, grade-level teams, or department content teams? Are you able to interact with the students in your program during the school day?
- a. To what degree are you invited to participate in regular school day meetings with school leaders and teachers during the school day?
14. Do youth activity leaders have opportunities to communicate with school-day staff about students that attend ACE programming?
15. Describe the support you receive from school administration related to program implementation?

Community Advisory Board

16. Are you aware of an Advisory Board that may be in place for this center?

[ASK ONLY IF PARTICIPANT IS AWARE OF ADVISORY BOARD]

17. What direction or guidance, related to afterschool programming, have you received through recommendations from your community advisory board?

Family Engagement and Involvement

18. What strategies have been successful in engaging parents and adult family members in activities related to their students?
- What strategies have been successful in engaging parents and adult family members in parent activities and classes?
19. Can you describe the activities and offerings that are provided to parents and adult family members of students participating in ACE programming?
- How well are these activities attended?
20. What steps has your family engagement specialist taken to get family members involved in ACE programming?

Staff Development

21. Approximately what proportion of your center's youth activity leaders are:
- Certified teachers
 - Paraprofessionals
 - Youth development workers from partner agencies
 - College students
 - Other (Are there any other types of employee that I did not mention?)
22. What is typically covered in the ACE orientation provided for new activity leaders?
- Do outside partners receive an orientation to the ACE program?
23. Beyond new employee orientation, what support or professional development opportunities are provided for youth activity leaders, specific to their role in delivering ACE programming?
24. What sort of group-planning process do you have with youth activity leaders before or at the start of a program term?

Program Quality and Data Use

25. What resources, trainings, or tools have been helpful to you in the management of your center?
26. In which areas do you think your center is most successful?
- Are there any areas in which you would like to see improvement in your center?
 - What areas are a current focus for improvement?
 - Are there any improvements currently in process? If so, what modifications are being made?
27. In what ways do you monitor how students interact with each other?
- How do you monitor how youth activity leaders interact with one another and students?
 - How do you monitor how program space is used?

28. What data do you use to monitor student progress?
 - a. Are youth activity leaders involved in interpreting student outcome results?
29. Tell me about how you and your team are involved in local evaluation efforts, including how your team works with your independent evaluator.
 - a. What have you learned from your independent evaluator that has helped improve your program?
 - b. What does the independent evaluator typically assess in the course of a local evaluation?
 - c. To your knowledge, what methods are used in the independent evaluator's assessment (e.g., observations, surveys, use of PQA, analysis of student outcomes, and other student-level data)?
30. What do you think is the most important driver to your Texas ACE program's success in supporting students' development?
31. What barriers or challenges do you have in terms of impacting students in the manner you want to?
32. In what ways are you involved in discussions related to Texas ACE program sustainability?



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