

CRESST REPORT 758

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**A CIRCLE OF LEARNING:
CHILDREN AND ADULTS
GROWING TOGETHER IN
LA'S BEST**

MAY, 2009



National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing

Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
UCLA | University of California, Los Angeles

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The work reported herein was supported by grant number 021891 from LA's BEST with funding to National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

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Abstract

Afterschool programs offer an important avenue for enhancing educational opportunities. Federal, state, and local educational authorities increasingly see them as environments to improve attitudes toward school, achievement, and academic performance (Fashola, 2002; Hollister, 2003) with higher levels of student participation and engagement in these programs correlated to even greater improvements (Huang, Leon, La Torre, & Mostafavi, 2008; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). This is particularly true among low-performing, underserved, or at-risk students who can benefit greatly from additional academic help and social support (Afterschool Alliance, 2003; Muñoz, 2002). However, not all programs are equally effective, and no program can be effective if students only attend sporadically (Granger & Kane, 2004). Research has suggested that student engagement in afterschool programs—as indicated by their sense of belonging to and their interest in the programs—may be an important contributor to the program’s influence on their achievement, behaviors (Arbreton et al., 2008), and regular attendance (Finn, 1992). Consequently, federal, state, and private organizations including the Verizon Foundation have provided ample financial support to afterschool programs in recent years.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In recent years, afterschool programs have evolved into popular auxiliary services for schools around the nation. Gaining greater visibility in a vast number of communities, these programs are advocated enthusiastically by many educators, policymakers, and parents. For example, in support of schools' need for supplemental services, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) authorized a number of funding streams that are currently supporting many afterschool programs around the nation (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers [21st CCLC], Title I, Supplemental Education Services; Afterschool Alliance, 2007). In addition to government interest in afterschool programs, private organizations are also recognizing the benefits of these programs. Consequently, organizations in the private sector such as the Broad Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation, the Verizon Foundation, and others have provided ample financial support to afterschool programs in recent years.

More specifically, since 2001 the Verizon Foundation¹ has funded programs that focus on education and literacy, safety and health, and volunteerism (Verizon Foundation, 2008). For example, in 2007 they provided grants totaling \$8 million to 273 nonprofit education organizations (Verizon, 2008). This included a 2-year, \$1 million grant to Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST) to fund the expansion of the afterschool program to additional low-performing elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and develop two demonstration sites (Verizon, 2007a, 2007b). These sites, located in the San Fernando Valley and South regions of Los Angeles, were intended to demonstrate the best practices of LA's BEST and to serve as training sites for staff from similar programs in other schools (Verizon, 2007b).

The purpose of this study is to examine the functioning of the afterschool program sites and the impact of the funding from the Verizon Foundation on students, staff, and other stakeholders of the demonstration sites. Specifically, analyses sought to address the following evaluation questions:

1. What additional resources are available at the study sites?
2. What is the value of participating in the demonstration sites for the staff and other stakeholders?

¹ The philanthropic division of Verizon Communications

3. What is the relationship between participation in the LA's BEST demonstration sites and student attendance?

Do student participants improve their program attendance?

Do student participants improve their school attendance?

4. What is the relationship between participation in the LA's BEST demonstration sites and student attitudes towards reading and writing?

The following chapter presents a brief literature review: Chapter III discusses the study design and methods. Chapter IV describes the LA's BEST program and the study sites. Chapters V through VII describe the findings of the analyses of staffing and resources, relationship building, and the impact of the demonstration site project on staff, students, and other stakeholders. Lastly, a discussion of the findings and concluding comments about the study are presented in Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Afterschool programs offer an important avenue for enhancing educational opportunities. Federal, state, and local educational authorities increasingly see them as environments to improve attitudes toward school, achievement, and academic performance (Fashola, 2002; Hollister, 2003) with higher levels of student participation and engagement in these programs correlated to even greater improvements (Huang, Leon, La Torre, & Mostafavi, 2008; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). This is particularly true among low-performing, underserved, or at-risk students who can benefit greatly from additional academic help and social support (Afterschool Alliance, 2003; Muñoz, 2002).

However, not all programs are equally effective, and no program can be effective if students only attend sporadically (Granger & Kane, 2004).² Research has suggested that student engagement in afterschool programs—as indicated by their sense of belonging to and their interest in the programs—may be an important contributor to the program’s influence on their achievement, behaviors (Arbreton et al., 2008), and regular attendance (Finn, 1992). The following literature review discusses staff and students’ sense of belonging, the establishing of norms and relationships at afterschool programs, the providing of literacy rich environments, and the fostering of students’ positive attitudes towards school.

Sense of Belonging

Students who feel connected to their schools have been found to have lower levels of emotional stress, fewer negative behaviors, and be less likely to drop out of school (Blum & Rinehart, 1997; Roderick, 1993). Afterschool programs that provide students with a sense of membership and allow students to be recognized and valued also decrease the likelihood that they will become involved in high-risk behaviors, increase their sense of responsibility, and improve their self-competence, attitudes towards school, and academic performance (Gambone & Arbreton, 1997; Merry, 2000). A sense of belonging in an afterschool program can be fostered by encouraging supportive relationships.

Supportive Relationships

The importance of just one caring adult for at-risk youths has been documented by studies of resilience (Masten, 1994; Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1997). It has also been found that positive support from teachers is related to greater educational success of their students.

² In the typical program, the average participant in elementary and middle school programs attended 1 and 2 days per week.

When teachers have positive expectations, their students do better (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000). In addition, when students care about what teachers think and expect of them, they do better both academically and socially (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Supportive relationships are critical for youth development; they provide an environment of reinforcement, positive modeling, and constructive feedback for physical, intellectual, psychological, and social growth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Positive Social Norms

Effective afterschool programs that encourage student participation and engagement share a number of characteristics. They provide students with safe, structured environments and high quality instruction. Students have the opportunity to receive personal attention and build strong, respectful relationships with adults. There is a culture of peer support, with clear rules, high expectations, and real assessments. Furthermore, these programs provide students with many opportunities for challenging experiences and self-direction, including participation and contribution within the organization and the community (Hall, Yohalem, Tolman, & Wilson, 2003).

These features provide positive social norms at the afterschool settings for the students, fostering relationship building and the development of intrinsic motivation for learning. Research across multiple settings suggests that student' perceptions of their environment and their surrounding social norms have immediate and lasting effects on their behaviors (Steinberg, 2000; Elder & Conger, 2000). These experiences are particularly important to the students' social, psychological, and emotional development because these social norms can shape the students' morals, present students with ways of relating to others, and provide them with templates of self-control (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Establishing Norms and Relationships

Defined broadly, social norms are the relationships and expectations created and sustained by a group of people. More specifically, Hargreaves (2001) noted that it is the "level of trust between people and the generation of norms of reciprocity (mutual favours) and collaboration" (p. 490). From an educational standpoint, Huang and colleagues (2007) stated that social norms involve "variables that affect learning primarily from a student-centered perspective" (p. 3) and are identified as "the compilation of networks and civic norms that a community or school offers youth" (p. 30). This study focuses on the role of social norms in the development and maintenance of quality afterschool programs, specifically the internal and external relationships that these programs exhibit, and the impact these norms have on student participants as well as staff.

Staff Support and Readiness

To be effective mentors, afterschool staff members need to feel competent and efficacious. It is through targeted professional development and training that staff members can function at their best (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Miller, 2005; Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006). Effective professional development and training has the potential to impact afterschool programs on many levels. For example, it can increase staff self-efficacy, quality of programming, and retention of staff (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew., 2006). Therefore, it is critical to encourage all staff members from field workers to program administrators and managers to participate in professional development. To cater to different learning styles and provide continuous monitoring of program quality, it is important to provide both formal and informal types of training. Examples of formal training include professional conferences, curriculum workshops, and classes on topics such as behavior management. In contrast, informal training may include but is not limited to shadowing, observation and feedback, staff meetings, and activity planning sessions. These types of job preparation and training can lead to well prepared and more dedicated staff, which in turn can lead to higher program quality and more opportunities for positive youth development (Bouffard & Little, 2004).

Internal Staff Relationships

In a study on high-performing afterschool programs, Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke (2005) showed that the most successful programs were ones that “functioned ‘like a family’” and that “program strength lies in the success of the team and in its capacity to function effectively together” (p. 22). Birmingham and colleagues (2005) also found that in high-performing programs, directors and site coordinators often facilitated an open line of communication with their staff using both formal (e.g., anonymous surveys) and informal (e.g., praise and encouragement) methods. Moreover, effective methods of communication can aid in the resolution of conflicts as well as minimize the number of conflicts amongst staff members. Thus, by working as a united team and practicing open communication, staff can aid in the process of creating and maintaining a positive, consistent, and well-structured learning environment for the students.

External Relationships

Research on afterschool programs has demonstrated the importance of collaboration between afterschool programs and their host schools in maintaining quality and consistency for their students (Birmingham et al., 2005; C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Huang et al., 2007; Stephanidis & Murphy, 2008). Key factors found by Birmingham and colleagues, include the development of mutual respect

between the site coordinator and principal, the sharing of staff between the program and its host school, and having day school staff appreciate the benefits of the program. Through ongoing communication with the students' schoolteachers, the afterschool staff can implement a curriculum that complements but does not duplicate the lessons taught during the school day (Stephanidis & Murphy, 2008). In addition, fostering partnerships with day schools can also lead to the sharing of resources and facilities, which is another key element in program success (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005).

The relationship between afterschool programs and students' families is another form of external relationship that is paramount to the development and sustaining of program quality. According to Horowitz and Bronte-Tinkew (2007) family involvement in afterschool programs can impact students' relationships and academic performance, improve parenting, and lead to better program quality. Other research has corroborated these statements (Harris & Wimer, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Miller, 2005). Furthermore, the integration of family, school, and community efforts can provide coordination and synergy in the students' lives (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Thus, having a strong partnership with the local community is yet another factor of afterschool program success (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005). This connection brings in the effective use of community resources (Pederson, de Kanter, Bobo, Weinig, & Noeth, 1998), and provides students with a variety of additional activities that are available locally while enhancing their sense of belonging and citizenship in their community. This has been found particularly beneficial to English Language Learners (ELLs) who might not be exposed to such activities otherwise (Stephanidis & Murphy, 2008). Furthermore, by forming connections with the local communities, afterschool programs can establish a niche for themselves, securing financial support through diverse connections (e.g., government and/or private organizations), and enhancing the sustainability of their programs (Sandel, 2007). Increased fiscal support can also help afterschool programs to supply their students with a variety of academic and enrichment materials. Therefore, it is beneficial for programs to gain visibility and to amplify community members' interest in the program, which can lead to more support and recognition of the programs.

Promoting Positive Attitudes towards School

When students feel that what they are learning is relevant, they are also more likely to take more initiative concerning their education, a key factor in improving performance and intrinsic motivation for learning (Larson, 2000). The National Longitudinal Study of

Adolescent Health suggests that students who feel connected to learning will feel better towards school, as measured by the strength and quality of their relationships with teachers and peers as well as their attitudes towards school (Resnick et al., 1997).

Research has demonstrated that student engagement is critical to achievement and school attendance (Finn, 1992). Numerous studies have also examined the association between afterschool program participation and day school attendance patterns (Bissell, Dugan, Ford-Johnson, & Jones, 2002; Huang, Gibbon, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000; Kaiser & Lyons, 2001; McComb & Scott-Little, 2003). However, because afterschool engagement is often not a factor in the study design, it is not surprising that the results are conflicting. There are some studies that have showed no statistically significant differences in attendance between afterschool program participants and nonparticipants (Bissell, Ashurst, & Jones, 2001; Bissell et al., 2002; Trousdale, 2000); whereas other studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between afterschool program participation and day school attendance (Huang et al., 2000; Kaiser & Lyons, 2001; LoSciuto, Hilbert, Fox, & Porcellini, 1999; Welsh, Russell, Williams, Reisner, & White, 2002). Moreover, some studies have found positive associations with students' attendance rate in school when factoring in the issue of intensity of afterschool attendance (Huang, Leon, et al., 2008; Kaiser & Lyons, 2001). Most importantly, it was found that programs that have good student attendance and engagement generally encourage student autonomy and self-direction (Huang, Cho, Mostafavi, & Nam, 2008).

Providing an Environment for Literacy Development

Together with an emphasis on academic achievement, the development of students' literacy skills remains a top priority for many educators. Resources, staff preparation, and support can create an environment that is rich in learning experiences and encourages student expression and literacy development. Although cognitive issues related to literacy continue to be important to educators and researchers, the affective aspects of literacy, particularly students' reading attitudes, are beginning to gain focus (Kush & Watkins, 1996; Parker & Paradis, 1986). This is especially true for afterschool programs, many of which are beginning to focus more attention on student motivation and are implementing different literacy programs that have demonstrated success in improving student attitudes toward reading.

A popular program designed for afterschool settings is the AfterSchool KidzLit, a research-based curriculum aimed at improving students' literacy skills and their reading attitudes.³ Currently, KidzLit is employed at all LA's BEST sites. The framework behind

³ See <http://www.devstu.org/afterschool/askl/videos/index.shtml> for more information about the curriculum.

KidzLit is the literature-based (or whole language) approach to reading instruction; a theory influenced by the work of psycholinguists and social cognitive psychologists such as Bandura, Piaget, Weaver, and Vygotsky, who stressed the social nature of learning. Advocates of this approach believe that the best method of literacy instruction is that which helps students to adopt the behaviors of good readers and writers (Lamme, 1989). They suggest that students should not be passive learners but need to participate actively in the learning process.

The theorists behind the literature-based approach believe that literacy is constructed through holistic activities. Not only are reading and writing best learned in a social context, but the situations where learning occurs should also be meaningful and purposeful. For example, the functions of reading and writing for communication, enjoyment, or information can be demonstrated to the students (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). When students are provided with learning environments that are filled with meaningful books and interesting learning activities, these experiences support students' achievement, knowledge acquisition, fluency, and familiarity with how the printed word is used in real-world contexts. These learning activities help promote interest, positive attitudes, and effort (Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

When the Developmental Studies Center (2003) launched an internal evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum, the results revealed that students who completed the program showed significant increases in both their sense of reading self-efficacy and the amount of reading they did. Because the LA's BEST demonstration sites provided students with a wide variety of on-site activities and field trips that emphasized active learning, these sites had the ability to provide students with the hands-on experiences necessary for skill building and mastery in literacy, reading, writing, and other curricular areas. This study examined whether the abundance of activity choices at the demonstration sites enhanced the development of literacy attitudes and efficacy in participating students.

In summary, students need a variety of formal and informal experiences that involve their families, schools, programs, and communities. Effective afterschool programs create a sense of belonging and membership for both the staff and students. These supportive program environments encourage low staff turnover rate and engage students to encourage consistent participation. Under this umbrella of positive program environment; strong sense of belonging; and connection to families, schools, programs, and communities; students and staff have the potential and opportunities to develop ownership, contribute as decision makers, engage, and interact in a circle of learning and growing.

The following chapter presents the study design and methodology.

CHAPTER III: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter provides descriptions of the study design, procedures, and methodology for the study.

Study Design

A multi-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies was used. A survey was developed and administered to students from a sample of two demonstration sites and two matched comparison sites. The administration took place at two time points at the demonstration sites (January and June 2008) and once at the comparison sites (June 2008). Longitudinal samples of day school and afterschool attendance data were provided to the CRESST evaluation team in November 2008. Qualitative instruments, including interview and observation protocols, were also developed to examine resources, program structure, norms, and relationships at the two demonstration sites and the two comparison sites. Staff interviews and observations were conducted at all four sites near the end of or immediately following the 2007–08 school year.

Student surveys were analyzed using paired T-tests to examine the change in student attitudes at the demonstration sites. Paired T-tests were also used to examine change in day school and afterschool attendance at the demonstration sites between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. Finally, interviews and observations were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Program Selection and Recruitment of Participants

Cluster analysis was conducted to identify the comparison sites based on demographic and prior achievement variables from the 2006–07 school year. Clustering is the classification of cases into groups (called clusters) so that cases within the same cluster are more similar to each other than cases from different clusters. For the purposes of this analysis, each school represented a case. In this study, similarity between schools was based on school level indicators including ethnic composition, language proficiency, parental education, and student achievement. A measure of distance from the center of each cluster (known as the Euclidian distance) was obtained for each school. The Euclidian distance was then used to determine and select which comparison schools were most similar to the two demonstration sites. This resulted in one matched comparison being located in the South region of Los Angeles and the other being located in the San Fernando Valley; referred to respectively as demo and comparison sites X and Y.

The descriptive statistics for the demonstration sites and their matched comparisons are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Matching Based on 2006–07 School Year

Site	% Black	% Hispanic	% EO	% LEP	Parent Ed % Some College	ELA Mean	Math Mean
Demo site X	24.7	74.4	29.1	46.7	12.3	314.6	334.8
Comparison site X	26.0	73.5	31.1	37.1	10.7	329.6	361.3
Demo site Y	3.0	92.9	30.1	41.5	35.7	331.8	364.2
Comparison site Y	1.2	89.8	17.0	59.9	21.7	327.8	344.3

Note. The table presents the demonstration sites and their closest matches only. EO = English only, LEP = limited English proficient, Ed = education, ELA = English Language Arts.

After the comparison sites were identified, the research team obtained permission from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Office for Protection of Research Subjects concerning the appropriateness of the study procedures and instruments (approved on October 2, 2007 by the UCLA Human Subjects Protection Committee). Upon approval, the research staff recruited all four sites, and permission was also obtained from the LAUSD Program Evaluation and Research Branch and the school principals to conduct surveys, interviews, and observations at the site. Finally, the afterschool staff helped the research staff to distribute and collect staff consent, parent permission, and student assent forms.

The key participants in this study were LA’s BEST students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 and staff. Staff included site staff, leadership staff, and traveling leadership staff. Table 2 shows the specific number of participants who were recruited at each site.

Table 2

Participants by Afterschool Site and Role

Participants	Demo site X	Demo site Y	Comparison site X	Comparison site Y	Total
Traveling Leadership Staff					
Interviews	1	1	1	0	3
Leadership Staff					
Interviews	2	2	1	1	6
Site Staff					
Interviews	4	8	5	8	25
Students (Grades 3–5)					
Surveys 1 and/or 2	65	72	34	32	203
Afterschool attendance	42	52	23	17	134
Day school attendance	55	67	32	25	179

Note. Table includes all participants who had consent and participated in data collection. This table does not reflect the final sample sizes used during analysis.

Instrument Development

Instruments were developed by CRESST to measure the value and effect of participating in a demonstration site on afterschool staff, students, and other stakeholders. A description of each instrument is provided below.

Student Surveys

The student surveys were developed to examine change in student attitudes about literacy at the demonstration sites. The survey included sections on attitudes about reading and writing, reading and writing self-efficacy, and LA’s BEST staff support for reading and writing. Identical forms were used for all survey administrations (See Appendix A). Results from the reliability analyses are reported in Chapter VII. Three items that were originally intended to be part of the survey sub-scales were dropped due to weak reliability. Each of these items contained the phrase “I do not like.”⁴ For example, the item “I do not like to do writing activities when I am at LA’s BEST.” was dropped from the general attitudes toward reading and writing sub-scale. This particular type of phrasing appeared difficult for the student sample to respond to in Likert scale format. The student survey also included items about peer support for reading and writing at LA’s BEST. These items were not included in

⁴ See Barnette, (2000) for more information about the effect of negatively worded questions on the internal consistency of surveys.

the quantitative analyses because they were not needed to address the primary research questions and the reliability on the items was weak.

Observation Protocol

The observation protocol was developed to examine activities and interactions at the afterschool sites. It also served as a source for validation of the survey and interview protocols. The observation protocol included sections on activities, engagement, staff communication and interaction, and program organization (See Appendix B).

Staff Interviews

Two different protocols were developed to elicit comments from staff at the demonstration sites and comparison sites. Both protocols included sections on general background information, staff communication and teamwork, access to resources, staff interactions with their coworkers and other stakeholders, program impact, and suggestions for improvement. Questions developed to determine change that occurred because of being designated as a demonstration site were not included in the protocol for the comparison sites. (See Appendices C and D).

Data Collection Procedures

The following describes the procedures used to observe and survey students and staff, and interview staff at the afterschool sites.

Survey Administration

Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at the demonstration sites were each surveyed twice. Because of delays in UCLA Human Subjects approval and the sites involvement in holiday preparations, the first administration occurred in January 2008, a point at which site literacy activities were just settling into a routine. The second administration took place in June 2008. Students at the comparison sites were surveyed once in June 2008, corresponding to the second administration at the demonstration sites. Research staff administered the instrument during the operation of the afterschool programs.

Observations

Two-day observations were conducted at each of the research sites near the end of the school year. The CRESST researchers who participated in the site visits all had prior experience conducting observations in afterschool settings. Furthermore, each of these researchers participated in a training session concerning the function of the protocol, rating systems and terms used in the protocol, and the procedures for the site visits. For example,

members of the research staff were instructed to observe one or two activities during each site visit that include an integration of literacy skills.

Over the course of the site visits, meetings were conducted to debrief and cross-validate each evaluator's observations. In addition, evaluators reviewed each other's work periodically to triangulate findings and to make sure that the protocol was being used consistently among all researchers.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted at each of the afterschool sites near the end of the school year. Staff interviews were held on site during program hours, with the exception of the traveling staff members who were interviewed by telephone. The site staff interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes. In contrast, interviews with the leadership staff and traveling staff ranged from approximately 30 minutes to more than 1 hour. All interviews were captured using digital voice recorders.

Data Analysis

The following describes the strategies and procedures used to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data sources.

Qualitative Data Analysis

All interviews were taped using digital voice recorders, transcribed, and analyzed using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software⁵. Based on the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), data were analyzed on three different levels (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At the first level of analysis, data were categorized according to constructs identified in the literature. CRESST researchers developed codes independently, after which the research team met to develop the final list of codes and their definitions. Based on the established themes and codes, members of the research team coded sample data for each protocol until an 80% coding agreement was achieved. At the second level of analysis, cases were compiled to identify emergent themes by group (i.e., demonstration sites and comparison sites). This involved the use of constant comparison methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in an iterative process. Finally, at the third level of analysis, cross-case analyses were conducted by program.

⁵ ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Nassauische Str. 58, D-10717 Berlin Germany

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative analyses were undertaken to address the two research questions concerning student participants in the two demonstration sites. The first set of analyses examined the change in reading attitudes among demonstration site students from January to June 2008. This was accomplished with a series of paired T-tests, one for each of the three survey scales. Prior to performing the analyses, reliability was examined for each attitude scale using Chronbach's Alpha (See Chapter VII). Finally, analyses were conducted to examine the change in afterschool and day school attendance among demonstration site students between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. This was also accomplished using a series of paired T-tests.

Quantitative analyses were also conducted using the comparison group samples, but are not presented in this report. This was done because sample sizes obtained were not sufficient to ensure that students in the demonstration sites were similar in their background characteristics to the students in the control sites. Furthermore, the small student sample sizes for the comparison sites (see Table 2) did not allow for introduction of the background variables as statistical covariates in the model design. Despite this limitation, the research team did examine the differences between survey results for the students in each demonstration site and their respective comparison. Results of these comparisons did not produce any results that differed from those found when examining change within the demonstration sites.

In the next chapter, descriptions of the LA's BEST program and the four study sites are presented.

CHAPTER IV: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This chapter will provide an overview of the LA's BEST program and the four study sites. These overviews are intended to offer an understanding of the structure of LA's BEST, as well as some of the unique traits of the study sites. The subsequent chapters will expand upon these descriptions by exploring the commonalities and differences between the sites.

The LA's BEST Program

Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST) was first implemented in the fall of 1988. The program is under the auspices of the Mayor of Los Angeles, the Superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), a board of directors, and an advisory board consisting of leaders from business, labor, government, education, and the community.

LA's BEST seeks to provide a safe haven for at-risk students in neighborhoods where gang violence, drugs, and other types of anti-social behaviors are common. The program is housed at selected LAUSD elementary schools and is designed for students in kindergarten through Grades 5/6. The LA's BEST sites are chosen based on certain criteria, such as low academic performance and their location in a neighborhood of economic need that is at risk to crime and gang activity. For optimal program success, and to ensure buy-in from school administration and staff, the school principals have to write an official letter of request for the program to be placed at their school site.

LA's BEST is a free program open to all students in the selected sites on a first come first serve basis. Students who sign up for the program are expected to attend five days a week in order to reap the full benefits of the program. Currently, LA's BEST serves a student population of approximately 30,000 with 58.5% Hispanic/Latino and about 8.3% Black/African-American elementary students. English Language Learners (ELLs) comprise at least half of the student population at most sites. Of this population, the majority's primary language is Spanish, with most of the remaining students having a primary language of Asian/Pacific origin.

Parents often mention homework help and proper supervision as the primary incentives for enrolling their children in the program (Huang et al., 2007). Teachers may also recommend students for LA's BEST due to behavioral or academic needs. Students enjoy the program because of its supportive staff and positive environment conducive for academic achievement and engagement in extracurricular activities.

Program Offerings

Since its inception in 1988, LA's BEST has adapted and updated its goals in response to educational policies, research, and theory. Over the years, the program has moved past its initial emphasis on providing a safe environment and educational enrichment to an emphasis on the development of the whole child. In developmental theory, a whole child curriculum is one that cultivates the development of students' intellectual, social, and emotional well-being so that they can achieve their full potential (Schaps, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2006). LA's BEST accomplishes this by focusing their 3 ½ *beats* (or activity periods) on students' intellectual, social-emotional, and physical development:

Cognitive and homework beats. Activities that take place during these beats focus on the intellectual development of students, such as:

Responsibility and positive work habits—through emphasis on the importance of completing assignments, teaching learning strategies and study skills, and providing a learning climate that enforces positive attitudes towards school

Love of learning—through active participation, explorations, and engaging research-based activities

Self-efficacy—through guided experiences, challenging activities, and relationship building between staff and students

Future aspirations—through high expectations, activities that build self-reliance, value of education, collaborations, and critical thinking

Recreational beat. Activities that take place during this beat focus on physical, social, and emotional development, such as:

Sense of safety & security—through providing students with a safe and nurturing environment

Healthy lifestyle—through curricula and activities that promote drug and gang prevention, healthy eating habits, and plenty of exercise

Social competence—through demonstrating and enhancing students' respect for self and others, and providing students with opportunities to form friendships and develop trust and respect with peers and adults

Sense of community—through providing students with opportunities to participate in community-sponsored events, volunteer in community assignments, and offering field trips to local businesses and organizations

Respect for diversity—through role modeling and curriculum that enhances awareness and responsibility to each other within their diverse community

To summarize, the mission of LA's BEST is to provide engaging settings so that each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally

safe for students as well as adults. Furthermore, the setting should be such that each student can be actively engaged in learning activities that connect to their school and broader community. Finally, and most importantly, each student should have access to extracurricular activities, academic enhancements, and to qualified and caring adults.

The central theme of the LA's BEST mission is to empower both staff and students, and to build on students' daily life experiences with program offerings. Thus, as a program policy, each individual LA's BEST site is autonomous in how they structure their specific programs as long as the site coordinator and staff adhere to the foundational principles of the program. That is, the sites have flexibility in selecting and implementing activities for their cognitive and recreational needs. As a result, each site has its distinct characteristics and program themes (e.g., arts, self-esteem, conflict resolution, etc.). Furthermore, sites vary concerning their relationship with the day school and their surrounding community (see Huang et al., 2007).

LA's BEST offers four main types of activities. (a) Core activities that focus on homework help, academic and fun content areas, and a nutritious snack. These activities are usually designed by the education and staff development departments at LA's BEST operations or by site staff.⁶ (b) Enhanced programs such as those purchased from education vendors. (c) Citywide events that take place outside of regular program hours and provide staff and student participants opportunities to interact with families and the community. (d) Special activities and excursions, including additional enrichment opportunities that take place on site or in the community.

The following list provides an overview of some of the different activities offered:

Cognitive or academic—This includes core activities such as homework assistance, tutoring, science club, computer instruction, reading and math activities, and conflict resolution skills. This also includes the enhanced programs of LA's BEST Celebrate Science, KidType, KidzLit and KidzMath,⁷ and Adventures in Peacemaking.

Performing and visual arts—This includes the core activities of drill team/dance, music, and arts and crafts. This also includes enhanced activities such as the After School Arts Program (ASAP) and citywide events such as the Dance and Drill Team Showcase.

⁶ Site staff members receive support from their site coordinators and their program coaches in developing and/or implementing activities.

⁷ See the Developmental Studies Center web site at <http://www.devstu.org/programs.html> for more information about Afterschool KidzLit and Afterschool KidzMath.

Health and nutrition—This includes core activities such as nutrition and seasonal sports. This also includes enhanced programs such as BEST Fit, and citywide events such as the Family Health Fiesta and the LA84 Foundation Sports League.

Community and cultural—This includes the enhanced program of Junior Achievement, as well as citywide events such as the Community Jam Against Violence.

Parent and Family Involvement Activities—This includes site-based special events and citywide events including Halloween Kidfest, Family Days at Raging Waters, and the LA’s BEST Annual Family Brunch.

LA’s BEST Staff

Three types of staff work directly with the LA’s BEST sites. This includes the traveling leadership staff, leadership staff, and site staff. See Table 3 for descriptions of each position.

Table 3

LA’s BEST Staff Descriptions

Job Title	Acronym	Role
Traveling Leadership Staff		
Traveling Program Supervisor	TPS	Providing support to a cluster of 4–6 sites concerning program compliance and safety
Program Coach	PC	Providing support to a cluster of 4–6 sites concerning activity design, teaching strategies, and implementation
Leadership Staff		
Site Coordinator	SC	Supervise site staff and manage all daily operations at a site, including finances, scheduling, staffing, and communication with stakeholders
Demonstration Site Director	---	Oversee a demonstration site
Site Staff		
Playground Supervisor	PS	Supervise students, facilitate site-based activities, and assist the site coordinator in supervising the program and managing paperwork
Playground Program Specialist	PPS	Supervise students, facilitate site-based activities, and assist the site coordinator in the design of developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate activities
Program (Playground) Worker	PW	Supervise students, plan and facilitate site-based activities and events
Part-time Playground Helper	PTPH	High school workers who assist in the supervision of students, planning and facilitation of site-based activities and events

The Study Sites

Four LA's BEST sites participated in the study including two demonstration sites and two comparison sites. The following provides a description of each site, its school, and its surrounding community.

Demo Site X Overview

Demo site X was located at an urban elementary school serving Grades 1–5 in the South region of Los Angeles. The school is located in a high crime, low-income neighborhood with gang activity. According to the 2000 census socioeconomic data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), one-third of the families reported living in poverty and only 60% of adults over 25 reported having graduated from high school or its equivalent. During the 2007–08 school year, approximately two-thirds of the students were Hispanic/Latino and approximately one-third were Black/African-American. Slightly less than half of the students were classified as ELL, with the majority of these students having Spanish as their primary language. The site is a Title 1 school and also participated in the Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) and the Ready Set Go before school program during the 2007–08 year, all of which provided additional support for student learning. Furthermore, the school met its school-wide California Academic Performance Index (API) growth target for 2007, but failed to meet its target for one of its four subgroups, African-American.

The LA's BEST program at demo site X received funding from the California Department of Education, as well as the Verizon Foundation during the 2007–08 school year. The site has been in operation for 9 years, the longest of any of the study sites. Because of the additional funding, the site was able to maintain an adult staff to student ratio of less than 1:20. The staff included the traveling leadership staff, a site coordinator, and site staff. During the 2007–08 school year, the site also employed a full-time demonstration site director, two credentialed schoolteachers, four part-time playground helpers, and three substitutes. The majority of site staff who participated in the study⁸ defined their position using the acronym of PW.⁹ The site staff also included a PS whose duties included assisting the site coordinator as well as facilitating activities.

Based on the interviews, it appears that most of the staff members were new to demo site X at the start of the demonstration site year. Exceptions included the traveling program supervisor who started working with the site in early 2007, the program coach who had been

⁸ Site staff who served as substitutes and those who were still in high school were not recruited for participation in the study.

⁹ See Table 3 for a complete list of job titles and their commonly used acronyms.

with the site since the 2005–06 school year, the playground supervisor who was in her third year with the site, and a program worker who reported joining the site during its first year of operation. Furthermore, the site experienced turnover while serving as a demonstration site, losing at least five staff members, including site staff and substitutes. As noted by the traveling program supervisor, some of the site staff members were taken out of the site because they did not fulfill basic duties such as coming to work on time, being ready to work with their group, and having their activities prepared.

Demo Site Y Overview

Demo site Y was located at an urban elementary school serving Grades K–5 in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. The school is located in a working-class neighborhood with high levels of crime, including gang activity. On the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), almost one-fifth of families reported living in poverty and just over 50% of adults 25 and older reported having graduated from high school. Over 90% of students enrolled at the school were Hispanic/Latino. In addition, the school had small percentages of White, Black/African-American, Alaskan, and Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino students. Slightly less than half of the students were classified as ELL, with the majority of these students speaking Spanish as their primary language. The site is a Title 1 school and participates in the School for Advanced Studies program¹⁰ at LAUSD. Unlike the other demonstration site, this site did not meet its school-wide API growth target for 2007. Furthermore, the school failed to meet its API growth targets for all three of its subgroups (i.e., Hispanic/Latino, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and ELLs).

The LA’s BEST program at demo site Y received funding from the U.S. Department of Education, as well as the Verizon Foundation during the 2007–08 school year. The site has been in operation for 7 years. As with the other demonstration site, the Verizon funding enabled the site to lower its adult staff to student ratio below the LA’s BEST requirement of 1:20. The staff included the traveling leadership staff, a site coordinator, and site staff. The site also employed a full-time demonstration site director for the duration of the 2007–08 school year. In contrast to the other demonstration site, this site did not employ any substitute staff, any schoolteachers, and did not have a program supervisor at the end of the school year. Furthermore, staff mainly defined their job using a specific title (i.e., site coordinator, program worker, playground worker, etc.). One of the staff also used the non-standard job title of program leader.

¹⁰ Schools for Advanced Studies serve as demonstration sites for the LAUSD Gifted and Talented Programs.

As with demo site X, many of the staff members joined demo site Y during or just prior to the start of the demonstration site year. More specifically, the traveling program supervisor, demonstration site director, and two of the site staff joined the site in early 2007. An additional three site staff joined the site during the 2007–08 school year. Those with greater experience at the site included the site coordinator who joined the site as a program worker in 2001 and three of the site staff who had each been at the site between 2 ½ and 5 years. The site also experienced high turnover, losing the program coach¹¹ who had been with the site for 1 ½ years as well as 11 of the 18 site staff listed on their fall 2007 roster. According to the demonstration site director, most of these staff members left because of their college studies or transferred within the organization to work closer to home. In addition, one of the site staff was promoted to site coordinator at another site.

Comparison Site X Overview

Comparison site X was located at an urban elementary school serving Grades K–5 in the South region of Los Angeles. The school is located in a low-income neighborhood with high levels of crime and gang activity. According to the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), approximately 25% of the families reported living in poverty and just over 50% of adults 25 years and older reported having a high school degree or its equivalent. Three-fourths of students enrolled at the school were Hispanic/Latino and approximately 25% were Black/African-American. The site had the lowest percentage of ELLs of the study sites at 40%, all of whom spoke Spanish as their primary language. The site is a Title 1 school and participates in multiple programs including the Ten Schools Program,¹² the School Readiness Language Development Program (SRLDP), and Schools for Advanced Studies. Moreover, similar to demo site X, the site met its school-wide and all four of its subgroup API growth targets in 2007.

The LA’s BEST program at comparison site X received its funding from the California Department of Education. The site is the newest in the study, having been in operation for 2 years. Unlike the other study sites, the site did not meet LA’s BEST recommendations, having an adult staff to student ratio of 1:22. The staff included a traveling program supervisor, a site coordinator, a playground supervisor, and seven program workers. The site also had a program coach during the 2007–08 school year, but they stopped working with the site prior to data collection in spring 2008. Most of the site staff described their job position

¹¹ The program coach participated in the staff interviews since he was still with the site during half of the school year. The position of program coach was not replaced at demo site Y until after completion of the study.

¹² The Ten Schools Program is a specially funded program at LAUSD that focuses on providing language intensive instruction to reverse poor academic performance.

using the acronym of PW. The exception was the playground supervisor who used the term “Second in charge” to describe her role at the site.

Most of the staff reported having been with the site since its initial year of operation. More specifically, the traveling program supervisor, site coordinator, and all but one of the site staff had been at the site since the 2006–07 school year. The exception was a program worker who joined the site in January 2008, having replaced the one staff member who left the site. The program coach for the site also left the cluster during the 2007–08 school year.

Comparison Site Y Overview

Comparison site Y was located at an urban elementary school serving Grades K–5 in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. The school is located in a working-class neighborhood with high crime and gang activity. According to the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), one-tenth of families reported living in poverty and over two-thirds of adults over 25 reported having a high school diploma or its equivalent. Furthermore, the area around the school had a higher percentage of college graduates than the other study sites, with about one-fifth of adults having a bachelor’s degree. During the 2007–08 school year, over 90% of students were Hispanic/Latino. The remaining students were Filipino, White, Asian, and Black/African-American. Approximately two-thirds of the students were classified as ELL, with most speaking Spanish as their primary language. During the study year, the site operated on a multi-track schedule, unlike the other sites that all operated using a traditional schedule. The site is a Title I school. In addition, as with demo site Y, the site failed to meet most of its API growth targets for 2007. More specifically, the site only met its target for one of its four subgroups, ELLs.

The LA’s BEST program at comparison site Y received its funding from the California Department of Education. The site has been in operation for 4 ½ years. Although interviews revealed that the site is sometimes short-staffed, at the end of the school year it was operating with one more person than required to meet its adult staff to student ratio of 1:20. The staff included both of the traveling leadership staff, a site coordinator, a playground supervisor, six playground workers, and one part-time playground helper. In contrast to the other sites, most of the site staff described their job position using the term playground worker and the acronym PW.

Staff interviewed varied in their experience level. More specifically, the traveling program supervisor, program coach, and site coordinator had all been with the site since 2006. Most of the site staff joined comparison site Y during the 2007–08 school year. Those

staff members with the most experience at the site were two playground workers, one of whom had been at the site for 3 years and the other who had been at the site for 4 years.

The next chapter explores the first research question regarding the resources available at the study sites.

**CHAPTER V:
STAFFING, RESOURCES, AND STRUCTURE**

The following chapter examines the program environment of the two LA’s BEST demonstration sites and two comparison sites. This includes results from the analysis of the staff interviews and observations, when applicable. Specifically, this chapter will discuss staff support and readiness, program resources, and structure.

Staff Support and Readiness

According to Kelly (2004), competency consists of the sum of skills and expertise of instructors and administrators. At LA’s BEST, the competency of the staff is a combination of their work experience in and outside of the organization, as well as their ongoing professional development. The following provides a discussion of the work experience of the staff at the four sites, as well as their access to professional development.

Work Experience

The four research sites each employed between 9 and 19 staff members, with the demonstration sites employing more staff than the comparison sites. Traveling leadership staff reported being assigned to their current site between 1 and 1 ½ years. Leadership staff reported being at their respective sites between 1 and 7 years. In contrast, site staff reported working at their sites between 2 months and 9 years. Table 4 presents the average years by position and site.

Table 4
Mean Number of Years Staff Worked at the Research Sites

Site	Site Staff	Leadership Staff	Traveling Leadership Staff
Demo site X	3.29	1.25	1.50
Demo site Y	1.87	4.17	1.00
Comparison site X	1.40	2.00	1.00
Comparison site Y	1.62	2.25	---

Note: Averages are based on information reported by staff who participated in data collection.

The length of work experience the staff had in LA’s BEST varied by position as well as by site. Demonstration site directors reported working in LA’s BEST the longest (6 to 15 years), with traveling leadership staff reporting the second greatest length (5 to 9.5 years). In contrast, site coordinators reported working with LA’s BEST for 3 to 7 years and site staff reported being with the organization anywhere from 1 month to 9 years. Furthermore, the

demonstration sites generally had staff with more years of experience in LA's BEST than those at the comparison sites. This may also be the result of the demonstration sites having hosted LA's BEST programs for more years than their comparisons.

Staff members who held higher positions all reported working their way up the LA's BEST career ladder. For example, all of the site coordinators, the demonstration site director at demo site X,¹³ and the traveling leadership staff who participated in interviews stated that they had worked as site staff and/or site coordinators in the past; thus gaining valuable experience at LA's BEST sites. The exception was the demonstration site director from demo site Y whose only prior experience in the organization was that of traveling program supervisor. Interestingly, only four site staff members reported having held other positions in LA's BEST. Furthermore, two of these staff members reported going down the career ladder; a program worker at demo site X reported having served as a playground supervisor for a short time and the playground supervisor at comparison site X reported having been a site coordinator.

Additionally, all but one staff member reported having relevant prior experience outside of LA's BEST. This included volunteering with children, working with other afterschool programs, and working in paraprofessional positions with LAUSD. Staff at the demonstration and comparison sites in the South of Los Angeles appeared to have more outside experiences. For example, at demo site X, two site staff were also currently employed as Teacher Assistants (TAs) and two others were currently employed as schoolteachers with the host school. At comparison site X, three of the site staff and the site coordinator had experience with Wise Care, the afterschool program that LA's BEST replaced at the school. The site coordinator and one of the site staff at this site also reported being currently employed as TAs with the host school.

Access to Professional Development

The vision, mission, and values statements for LA's BEST¹⁴ play a critical role in shaping the organizational capacity. The first values statement is "Nothing we do is as important as the effect it has on a child." To prepare and enhance the ability of all staff members in carrying out the program's mission, the organization offers regular professional development opportunities for staff preparedness, both in terms of readiness in dealing with student behaviors or in curriculum delivery. These trainings and workshops are primarily

¹³ The demonstration site director from demo site X also reported working as a sports consultant with LA's BEST.

¹⁴ See <http://www.lasbest.org/program/index.php> for the complete vision, mission, and value statements.

conducted by learning facilitators¹⁵ and are listed on an internal database, enabling site staff and leadership staff to find out current offerings and sign up for attendance. Additionally, the operations office offers a yearly staff development day, which is open to all employees. This daylong event is organized with opening and closing sessions, a vendor fair, and three workshop sessions that staff can attend. Topics offered in the past include but are not limited to youth development, leadership development, conflict management, and activity ideas.

The majority of staff interviewed at the four study sites noted participating in the regular staff development opportunities provided by the operations office. For example, staff at each of the sites mentioned attending trainings for enhanced programs such as Junior Achievement, KidzLit, and KidzMath. The exceptions primarily included members of the site staff who had recently started working at LA's BEST. These staff members mentioned that they planned to participate in training soon after the interviews.

Notably, the site coordinator at comparison site Y mentioned only participating in the staff development days, and seemed reluctant to take the time away from her duties:

That's the thing, being a site coordinator, I have never really been to training other than the big staff developments that we have. And its, I find that I would like to go, but I find it difficult to leave my site and stuff like that. I think if there was maybe, I don't know. I think that if things were easier here at the site then I would probably make the time to go. And I think it's important. I think that I know something that I need to work, work towards to going to some of these trainings. Because it's true what they say, you know, if you're the leader and you don't really know what's going on or what's taking place.

Meanwhile, the site coordinator at comparison site X stated that he participates in regular professional development: "I try to go to any new trainings that become available first." For instance, he mentioned just finishing a five-session course on how to work more with staff, students, and parents. Despite this, as with his fellow site coordinator, he also shared some reluctance:

So yeah, I try to go to as many trainings as I can myself, but I'd rather send my staff members to trainings because they need to work with the kids more than I do. But I try to get as many trainings in between them that I can go to.

Leadership staff at both of the demonstration sites appeared to be free from these constraints. Based on the interview results, it seemed the extra funding provided by the Verizon Foundation made a difference. For example, the site coordinator at demo site Y

¹⁵ Part-time staff development professionals who work under the Director of Staff Development at the operations office.

noted that the demonstration sites were able to pay their entire staffs to attend training while the students were on summer break:

During the summer, because we did have the money with the grant and stuff, the staff members got to work during the summer without kids. We went through all the trainings that LA's BEST has to offer. You know without taking time from the kids. It was just the adults, so that was really good.

In many cases, the professional development during the summer took place on site. That is, the learning facilitators came to the demonstration sites rather than requiring staff to travel to another location. This also benefitted the demonstration sites by enabling all of the site staff and leadership staff to participate. One of the exceptions to this was a team-building retreat conducted by Fulcrum Learning Centers at their Malibu¹⁶ location. In addition, approximately half of the summer trainings for demo site X took place at another LA's BEST site in the South region of Los Angeles (See Appendix E for the Summer Training Schedule for demo site X).

Unfortunately, because both of the demonstration sites experienced moderate to high turnover during the 2007–08 school year, neither site was able to capitalize fully on the potential value of the summer professional development.¹⁷ Fortunately, though, both demonstration sites had sufficient additional funding and extra staffing to send the new site staff to the regular professional development offerings without compromising the quality of the program.

Program Resources

In order to provide a safe, consistent, and structured environment for students, certain organizational supports and resources are needed. Within educational settings, this includes access to the physical space, material resources, and funding necessary to carry out programming and activities.

Physical Space

As was mentioned in Chapter IV, LA's BEST has an organizational policy that requires principals to write an official letter of request for the program to be placed at their site. At the initiation of a site, classrooms and other physical space are requested from the school, and the traveling program supervisor and site coordinator collaborate with the school to establish the operational guidelines. Depending on the characteristics of the site and the afterschool

¹⁶ See <http://www.fulcrumadventures.com/rope.html> for more information.

¹⁷ According to Kelly (2004), professional development is an organizational capital that has the potential to generate value, but does not yet have an impact.

staff, different LA's BEST sites maintain different relationships with their host schools. As a result, the use of classrooms and other physical spaces on campus may differ from site to site.

Classroom access. Classroom access varied at the four study sites and appeared to differ based on region rather than designation as a demonstration site. More specifically, the demonstration site and its comparison located in the San Fernando Valley had full access to classrooms. According to the site coordinators and site staff, access to classrooms was not nor had it ever been a problem. Furthermore, both of these sites developed strategies to maintain positive relationships with their host schools, in particular concerning classroom use.

First, both sites set up systems to rotate the classrooms used. At demo site Y, the site staff reported that classrooms are rotated every 4–6 months. At comparison site Y, site staff reported that the rotation takes place on a yearly basis. Furthermore, they pointed out that if the schoolteacher switches location on campus, the afterschool group associated with that location moves with the teacher.

Secondly, both sites in the San Fernando Valley reported that they emphasize the establishment and maintenance of open communication with their host school. As stated by the site coordinator at comparison site Y:

And also for the day schoolteachers, I encourage my staff members, especially the first day, if we get switched classrooms or whatever, “You need to have communication with that teacher.” And I make it a responsibility, because we are using their classroom and it's their space. So it's important that we know also who we're dealing with and whose classroom we're in.

Staff at demo site Y pointed out that in addition to open communication, they also try to be considerate, and responsible to the teachers' with whom they share classrooms: “And we try to be respectful towards the teacher's stuff and the teacher's desk. And they have their own rules. You know teachers have their own rules about their classrooms because it's their classroom.”

In contrast, the demonstration site and its comparison located in the South region of Los Angeles had limited access to classrooms. Specifically, demo site X had full access to only one classroom. This classroom housed the site coordinator's desk, a seating area to conduct activities, and a reading area with beanbags. The site also had limited access to two other classrooms for special activities and trainings. According to one of the program workers who had been working there for many years, demo site X used to have access to classrooms in the bungalows, but lost the privilege years ago because of the actions of one of the site staff:

And they messed it up and the teacher said, “No. You are no longer.” This same person used three different classrooms and they have similar problems. The teachers got upset. They talked to the principal and they didn’t allow us to use their rooms anymore.

Although the principal did improve access to classrooms during the demonstration site year, the traveling program supervisor noted that the principal did not return full access to classrooms in respect of the teachers’ feelings:

I guess her mentality, her feeling, and her thoughts were that the classrooms are the teachers’, and you know they don’t want anybody there. And having somebody else there is stepping over the boundaries of the teacher and what they have in their classroom and stuff like that.

Comparison site X had better access than demo site X, but still failed to have enough classrooms for each of the six student groups. The site coordinator reported that the site normally used four classrooms, but the site staff reported a smaller number of either three or two. Interview data also revealed differences of opinion concerning whether access to classrooms was a problem at comparison site X. According to one of the program workers, the site did not have classrooms for all the groups: “It’s a little bit difficult. Some of the teachers really don’t want other students touching their stuff...” In contrast, the traveling program supervisor reported that, “They have access to any rooms they need.” The site coordinator also provided a more positive view stating that he can ask the day school office for classrooms when needed. In any case, it is evident that at this site, as well as demo site X, the program would have benefited from better classroom access in terms of efficiency and productivity in conducting activities and providing students with an environment that is conducive to learning.

Access to other physical space. At the same time, all four programs supplemented their classroom use with other physical space at their host school. For example, staff from all four sites reported using the auditorium, cafeteria,¹⁸ playground, and other outdoor areas on a regular basis. At the sites in the South region, the auditorium and/or cafeteria areas housed multiple groups of students throughout the program hours. In contrast, the sites in the Valley appeared to use these areas only for specific activities, such as dance/drill team. Staff at demo site X also noted using the teachers’ lounge on a daily basis and the library, computer lab, and science room for specific weekly activities. Additionally, comparison site Y reported having occasional use of the library and school garden, and comparison site X reported occasional use of the teacher’s lounge.

¹⁸ Some of the sites had multipurpose areas, which combined an auditorium with a cafeteria (or lunch area).

Material Resources

Each LA's BEST site is given a budget based on the number of students enrolled. This budget provides for staff salaries and the purchase of supplies and equipment. Part of this funding is allocated to an imprest (or petty cash) account, providing the site coordinator with flexibility in making direct purchases of supplies and materials. During the 2007–08 school year, the demonstration sites were provided with additional funding from the Verizon Foundation.

Staff from both of the demonstration sites considered the extra funding a valuable resource. As stated by the demonstration site director at demo site Y, "...one of our biggest resources has been the financial situation." The playground supervisor from demo site X echoed this sentiment, adding that resources were limited before receiving the extra funding: "And I liked that that we had more money to buy the things that we needed, because we used to need all kinds of stuff."

Access to supplies. Staff from all four sites expressed satisfaction with their access to supplies. At the demonstration sites, staff credited their plentiful supplies to the Verizon funding as well as the support of the demonstration site directors. More specifically, staff at demo site X noted having more school supplies, like paper and pencils. They also noted being able to purchase their own books, boxes of materials for enhanced activities such as Junior Achievement, and recreational games. More noticeably, both sites were able to purchase their own mobile computer labs, which appeared to benefit the students greatly. The traveling program supervisor from demo site X expanded upon this:

We were able to purchase more things for the kids to do. We had a computer lab. We had a new computer lab, the mobile computer lab during last year. They were able to purchase t-shirts for them to wear on the field trips. They were able to get more supplies, resources like special games; like the wall game they were able to install. So a lot more resources for activity wise. We also were able to bring in specialists, like a nurse to teach the kids some CPR, First Aid; we were able to do that with resources. Bring in more partnerships within the program, within the site.

Despite the lack of extra funding, access to supplies also appeared to be more than sufficient at the comparison sites. Site staff at both of these sites reported having stocked supply bins, including paper and pencils, art materials, and sports equipment. Both sites also noted having books for enhanced activities such as KidzLit, KidzMath, and Junior Achievement. Furthermore, site coordinators from both of the sites noted leveraging their relationships with their host school to improve access to supplies. For example, the site coordinator at comparison site Y was able to access extra books for KidzLit because of her

relationship with the literacy coach, and the site coordinator at comparison site X noted being able to borrow supplies because of his role as a TA at the host school and his strong relationship with the school administration.

Notably, neither of the comparison sites had access to computers for their students. As noted by the site coordinator at comparison site X, this resulted in his inability to get the KidType enhanced program for his students: “I tried to get the KidType, but we don’t have a computer lab at this school. So that’s my downfall on that one.”

Staff to student ratio. As a practice, LA’s BEST sites are funded to support a staff to student ratio of 1:20. According to the LA’s BEST Operations Manual (LA’s BEST After School Enrichment Program, 2001), this ratio is expected to be maintained during all on-site activities and is expected to decrease to a ratio of 1:10 during field trips and other off-site activities. Despite this funding guideline, three of the four study sites reported having a ratio lower than the LA’s BEST requirements. The exception was comparison site X, which had an adult staff to student ratio of 1:22 at the end of the school year. It should also be noted that comparison site Y had only one extra staff member, making it more likely to have staffing issues on any individual day than the demonstration sites.

Site staff, leadership staff, and traveling leadership staff all attributed the lower ratio at the demonstration sites to the extra funding provided by the Verizon Foundation. For example, the traveling program supervisor at demo site X stated that having the money to bring in extra staff “...did benefit the site, most definitely.”

Program Structure

The vision statement for LA’s BEST emphasizes the importance of providing the student participants with engaging activities that help them connect to their school, family, and community. As part of this vision, LA’s BEST provides the individual sites with the flexibility to tailor their program to the needs and preferences of the students. As a result, the activities implemented may differ across sites (See Appendix F).

Core and Enhanced Activities

As part of their role as demonstration sites, demo site X and demo site Y were encouraged to implement all of LA’s BEST’s core activities and enhanced programs. Therefore, it was not surprising that these sites offered greater breadth of programming than did the comparison sites. For instance, the demonstration sites each offered all 13 of the core activities and most or all of the enhanced activities.¹⁹ In contrast, the comparison sites each

¹⁹ Demo site X did not offer Adventures in Peacemaking during the 2007–08 school year.

offered 10 of the core activities and 5 of the enhanced programs. More specifically, the comparison sites did not offer any core activities or enhanced programs that focused on computer instruction, conflict resolution, or music; activities that require specialized training and/or equipment to implement. Furthermore, staff at comparison site Y reported having only two components of the BEST Fit enhanced program.

The demonstration sites also offered greater depth in their programming than did the comparison sites. That is, the demonstration sites frequently offered more iterations of each activity. For example, demo site X met the core activity of homework/tutoring with three separate daily or weekly offerings (i.e., homework, enriched homework, and Mentoring USA). In contrast, demo site Y offered homework and Mentoring USA and the comparison sites each only offered homework. Likewise, demo site Y reported implementing five different science topics over the course of the school year (i.e., astronomy, club invention, gardening club, celebrate science, and zoology), whereas the other sites all reported only offering one or two.

As with professional development and resources, staff at the demonstration sites credited their ability to have breadth and depth of programming to the Verizon funding. As noted previously, this funding enabled both demonstration sites to lower their staff-student ratios, resulting in more activities being taught during each beat or activity period. This funding also enabled these sites to purchase mobile computer labs, enabling them to offer the core activity of computer instruction and its accompanying enhanced program of KidType. This funding also contributed to both sites being able to add cooking clubs and demo site Y being able to add gardening. The demonstration site director at demo site Y talked about the difficulty of implementing these activities with the normal funding:

Because of the finances, we've been able to buy a computer lab. Because of it we've been able to do certain things that might have been more difficult. For example, cooking club, usually cooking club that might get paid out of our imprest account [petty cash fund], schools imprest account is only \$200. So to sustain a cooking club throughout the year you probably wouldn't be able to do it on \$200. You might have to go and get donations and so on and so forth, but that's iffy. You don't know if you're going to get it or not, but because we have the funding to do that we're able to sustain a program like that throughout the year that the kids really love. It's the same thing with gardening club. You're going to buy tools. You're going to buy soil. You're going to buy plants on a consistent basis. That's something that imprest wouldn't be able to handle.

Citywide Events, Special Activities, and Excursions.

Educational theorists have long noted the importance of being able to connect what is learned in school with out of school learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Helping students to see the connection between school and the real world has been linked to increased motivation and learning (Bransford et al., 2000). Because of this, LA's BEST offers a variety of activities that enable students to have enriching experiences in their local community as well as in the county of Los Angeles.

Staff at three of the four study sites reported participating in the citywide events and field trips (or excursions) during the 2007–08 school year. This included the two demonstration sites and comparison site X (See Appendix F for a list of events and field trips). Comparison site Y, located in the Valley, did not report any off-site activities during this school year.

Staff at the demonstration sites regularly noted the value of taking their students into the community. Furthermore, when asked about the biggest benefit to being a demonstration site, many of the staff at these sites noted the field trips. The program worker who had been with demo site X since its inception stated, "They have more field trips and places where they never went before and now they are going. And they have those experiences." Another program worker at this site added, "I think last month, every Saturday I went on a trip. We never used to go on that many trips, just maybe once every couple of months or so."

The site coordinator at comparison site X also noted the importance of taking the students on field trips. He stated, "I want to expose them to so much because again I've worked here for so many years." After which he told a story about a student he worked with as a TA at the host school who had never seen the beach before:

He [the schoolteacher] took the whole entire class and we all went to the beach just for that one child to experience what the beach is. Again, we don't live that far from the beach. So it's like...since that day my train of thought is a lot of the kids are never going to ever, ever know what it is to experience different things like that.

Because of his convictions concerning the value of real world experience, the site coordinator at comparison site X found ways to integrate field trips into his program, despite the lack of extra funding from the Verizon Foundation. Interestingly, although demo site Y had access to these additional funds, its demonstration site director still credited the increase in field trips to planning rather than money:

I know that they've had great things happening before [becoming a demonstration site], but even now we have our students, "Why are we having so many field trips? Why are

we having so many this or why are we having so many that?” It’s like, “Well it’s because we’re planning them now.” I’m jumping online. “This is free. We’re going to go to that. That’s free. We’re going to go to that.” As opposed to before, you would have to wait for the operations office to tell you, “Okay, you can have a field trip to this.” Now we’re going on field trips all over the place.

Special Events

The three sites that participated in off-site experiences reported hosting on-site events as well. In this way, both demonstration sites and comparison site X were able to create more real world connections for their students by inviting parents and other members of the community to participate in their programming (See Appendix F for a complete list of on-site events).

At comparison site X, the special events focused on the strengths of their programming, which included literacy, sports, and the arts. For example, one program worker reported on planning a special event that celebrated children’s author Dr. Seuss:

We just finished last Friday we had *The Cat in the Hat* play. The kids were doing *Cat in the Hat*. It was so lovely. I had the drill team do a little skit, a little cheer. The kindergartners made a statement about the *Cat in the Hat*.

In contrast, some of the special events at the demonstration sites seemed tied directly to their role as demonstration sites. Examples provided by staff include having a famous actor do a reading at demo site X and the Mayor of Los Angeles visit both demonstration sites; events which were also publicized by Verizon and/or LA’s BEST.

Staff at both demonstration sites also reported about hosting larger scale events for the community. At demo site Y, the demonstration site director noted having a family night focused on the LA’s BEST core activity of conflict resolution, an important issue in a neighborhood with gang activity:

Just about 3 weeks ago we had an Adventures in Peacemaking Family Night. We had a pretty good turnout. Parents came in. Our staff went over our Adventures in Peacemaking curriculum, which is basically conflict resolution with the kids and things like that, just to expose them.

Likewise, demo site X planned a large-scale event for the community that focused on the crime and gang issues in the South region of Los Angeles. This event seemed particularly important to the stakeholders at the site, with all seven interviewees noting it as an example of community involvement. One of the site staff provided details about the event, including

the participation of one of the stars of a show on a popular children's cable show and a Grammy nominated rapper who attended the host school as a child:

We had so many people come out, 'cause our Community Jam the theme was against violence... We had Kel [a TV personality] and we had [a rap star] here and they were the hosts. We had people perform. We had other schools come out and perform with us... But the Community Jam turned out to be really great. It was so many people who came out. There were people who talked about violence and actually talked to the kids and told them that violence is not the way to go. And it was just, it was great. That was one of the most memorable things that I've done this whole year.

The next chapter explores the establishing of social norms and relationships at the study sites.

CHAPTER VI: ESTABLISHING NORMS & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

According to Hargreaves (2001), the building of networks and relationships can provide members of an organization with added support and opportunities to learn. The motto of the LA's BEST corporate office builds on this idea by emphasizing the importance of different groups of people coming together to benefit children: "It takes a village to raise a child." In other words, for afterschool sites to be successful they must build relationships and construct networks both internally as well as externally. Specifically, this chapter explores the internal relationships among afterschool staff, as well as the external relationships with the host schools, the families of the student participants, and the community at large.

Internal Relationships

Teamwork and collaboration among afterschool staff is essential in creating a safe and productive environment for students (Huang, Cho, et al., 2008). Furthermore, the shared relationships among the staff are central for demonstrating positive social norms to students. Consequently, the collaboration of staff and the building of positive internal relationships are important elements of quality afterschool programs.

Staff Collaboration and Teamwork

Staff meetings were the primary method used by the leadership staff to develop positive norms for teamwork and open communication at the study sites. Site coordinators at three of the sites reported having monthly staff meetings, whereas the coordinator at demo site Y reported having weekly meetings. The sites with the most consistent meeting schedules, based on the reports of the leadership and site staff, were those serving as demonstration sites. At comparison site Y, one of the program workers reported that the time between meetings actually varies, "Usually we have meetings once a month or sometimes a little more, or sometimes less." Likewise, the site coordinator at comparison site X noted that meetings might occur less frequently, "Sometimes it goes from once [a month], to maybe once every month and a half, month and one week, but we try to have them once a month."

Staff at the four sites noted the importance of the staff meetings for planning daily activities and special events. The traveling program supervisor for demo site X stated that the staff tried "to meet to plan, to set goals, so that we can do special events, set up activities." He also added that the staff commonly "sat down and they talked about what type of interests they have and what is available for the program, and what they can bring to the program."

Meetings also served the purpose of providing leadership staff with an opportunity to bring up issues that may affect the quality of operations at the site and remind staff about upcoming activities. As noted by the site coordinator at demo site Y:

If there are things that need to be addressed, you know, like let's say the snack area hasn't been left clean, I talk to them about that. "Remember, the snack area needs to be cleaned." If there's any field trips, activities, any meetings that they have to attend. Any trainings that they have to attend.

Staff meetings also provided an opportunity to encourage communication and ensure that all staff shared the same agenda concerning activities and the students. The site coordinator at demo site Y expanded upon this by saying, "After a meeting, there's a slot of time where we go around and each staff member says something that's going on with the kids or just any suggestions that they have to the other counselors." Likewise, one of the program workers at comparison site Y noted that:

Well when we have meetings, any concerns we bring it out on the table and we say it. Any new ideas, we put it on the table and we say it. And if we all agree on it, then we use the ideas.

Moreover, staff meetings provided a forum for staff at the four sites to collaborate on how to handle student problems including disciplinary issues. The site coordinator at demo site X stated:

Usually we'll come together and talk about the more challenging children, and each staff throw it out there how we can help that child, see what else we can do or find what this child likes and maybe that'll calm him down a little. But, yes, we all get together and try to do that every month. I debrief the staff at the end of every day; let them know what's going on with different students, and how we best can adjust to help that child.

The site coordinator at comparison site X also noted that the meetings helped staff members learn about issues they should be aware of before working with certain students:

We'll talk about, like I said again if that one child, "You know so and so is going to your group next week. You know, this and this happened. So you might want to watch out or be a little bit more gentle on that topic."

The afterschool sites included in this study also reported building teamwork and communication through having staff plan together. The most common format was having staff work in groups in preparation for special events. At demo site X, this collaboration was formalized through the forming of cohorts to plan both small- and large-scale events. The

demonstration site coordinator at this site explained, “There’s the cohorts of three and they would have to promote, market, plan their activities.”

Leadership staff at the demonstration site and its comparison sites in the Valley also formalized the planning of regular lessons. At demo site Y, the staff was encouraged to arrive 15 minutes before the start of the program to conduct planning at the LA’s BEST office. Furthermore, each staff member was provided a minimum of 90 minutes paid planning time per week. According to the site coordinator, this time was structured with multiple site staff working in the office at the same time so that they can help each other:

Usually what we do is we bring staff into our office and it might be a group of four or five. They sit there and they lesson plan for their individual plans. During the course of that, they’re helping each other and giving each other ideas and things of that nature.

Because comparison site Y only had one extra staff member to cover classes, paid planning time was limited to 30 minutes per week. Depending upon what was happening at the site, planning sessions might be organized into one 30-minute or two 15-minute periods. The site coordinator at this comparison site explained why she formalized this practice:

Even for ideas, for activity planning, I encourage them to plan together. Just because I feel that, you know, it’s good to learn off of each other. And you know. And then some of us have been here longer than others. And then even the new, the people who are fairly new, they have great ideas. So I think it’s, that’s very important in the program too to be able to learn from each other.

Constructing a Supportive Environment

As was previously noted, conflict resolution is one of the core activities for LA’s BEST. In order for this curriculum to be effective, students need the opportunity to observe healthy and supportive adult relationships. In most cases, staff members at the study sites reported little if any conflict with their peers over the course of the school year. Furthermore, the development of positive relationships among staff appeared to play a critical role in minimizing conflict at these sites. For example, staff who noted little conflict often mentioned being close to their peers. One of the program workers at demo site X stated, “And we have great communication. We call. We respect each other. We talk to each other. We have really great relationships.” Not surprisingly, both the demonstration site director and traveling program supervisor for this site also used the term “respect” when discussing conflict resolution. The demonstration site director at demo site Y also noted that conflict sometimes happened during that transitional period when new and old staff members were just getting to know each other:

In some cases that might have happened when we've had new staff members come in. They're new. You have staff that's established. They're trying to get to know each other type of thing. So sometimes you've got different personalities, different characters might not just blend right away. Then they start talking to each other and they seem to do very well as far as working with each other and dealing with any kind of conflict.

Thus, effective communication appeared to play a critical role in preventing and resolving staff conflicts. Site staff often expressed that they resolved minor conflicts by talking with the other party immediately or right after work. In the case of more complicated issues a common practice was for site staff to turn to the leadership staff for assistance and mediation. One of the program workers gave details about the process at demo site Y, stating that the leadership staff begin by meeting separately with site staff: "They meet separately. They [then] bring them together and they mediate between the two." One of the program workers at comparison site X further added that the first step at his site is turning to the site coordinator and then to the traveling program supervisor if needed.

External Relationships

The development of strong external relationships is considered another important factor in the sustaining of afterschool program quality (C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). These relationships can help programs improve access to resources. Furthermore, staff communication and collaboration with day school staff, parents, and other external stakeholders can demonstrate norms that help students develop a sense of community.²⁰

Relationship with the Day School

As mentioned previously, having a good relationship with the host school is important for an afterschool site to maintain access to physical space and materials. Having a positive relationship with the schoolteachers can also enhance collaboration for the benefit of their students. For example, site staff and schoolteachers can align their expectations for the students, creating consistency throughout the day. They can also jointly monitor the academic and behavioral progress of their students.

School administration. The leadership staff at the four study sites laid the foundation for collaboration and communication with the host schools. This was primarily accomplished through their efforts to develop and maintain respectful working relationships with the principals and vice principals. The traveling program supervisor for comparison site X attested to the quality of this relationship, noting that the "principal and vice principal are

²⁰ LA's BEST emphasizes the development of a "sense of community" within its recreational beat.

really, really supportive of the program.” The site coordinator added to this, stating that he was able to develop these relationships because of his role as a parent and a TA at the host school: “And so I know what’s going on at [the host school] because I’m here during the day.”

Staff at the other study sites indicated that the relationship with the school administration improved under the current leadership. For instance, the site coordinator at comparison site Y indicated that her predecessor did not have a relationship with their host school, “It’s just that there was no relationship with the previous site coordinator or just the staff in general with the administration.” Similarly, the traveling program supervisor for demo site X indicated that the principal did not support the program under the previous site coordinator:

It changed dramatically just because the past LA’s BEST personnel that was there didn’t have a strong relationship with the principal. She was not too happy, so she was in a disagreement with the program and didn’t want to support it.

The traveling program supervisor at this site expanded upon this, giving much of the credit for the change to the demonstration site director:

So that kind of made it better and then during the time, during the year, the relationship with the principal and the administration was strong because the [demonstration site] director...was always talking to her, the principal, and building that relationship; Talking to her, showing her the different changes that we’re going through. She was seeing the changes that we were going through and so that relationship started building.

In contrast to demo site X, demo site Y already had the foundation of a good relationship with the school administration. The program coach pointed out in his interview that demo site Y “...has always had a really strong relationship with the principal.” Despite this, he felt that becoming a demonstration site required even greater communication, “I think the only difference now is that the relationship with the principal probably grew even more because they had to work more with her and they had to work with us.” Both of the leadership staff also pointed out that communication increased because of the demonstration site director being at the school throughout the day. Specifically, the site coordinator stated:

It’s always been very good, but I think that because our site director is here from early in the day, that they got to see him more. They got to see what we were doing, you know, because they would talk to him and see how the program was going and stuff. Everyone got to know each other little better.

Schoolteachers. The relationships with the schoolteachers varied at the four sites. The leadership staff at the demonstration site and its comparison in the Valley institutionalized these relationships by encouraging the site staff to communicate with the schoolteachers with whom they were sharing a classroom. Furthermore, the schoolteachers at these sites often stayed in their classrooms after the end of the regular school day, thus increasing their contact with the afterschool staff. Consequently, the site staff noted that at a minimum they were able to greet the schoolteachers.²¹ Staff at both sites also mentioned talking with the schoolteachers about student issues and homework. In some cases, the schoolteachers who shared their classrooms initiated conversations by providing site staff members with suggestions or giving feedback about the students. One site staff member at demo site Y even noted that:

We have teachers now who ask us; they come up to us after school and they are just like, “Oh, I’m having problems with so-and-so, with them not doing their homework. Can we have, can we set something up where you help them with their homework and let me know what they’re doing wrong or if they’re not paying attention?”

Site staff at the demonstration site and its comparison in the South region of Los Angeles did not have the benefit of sharing classrooms with the schoolteachers. As a result, communication with the schoolteachers was more limited. Those staff who reported having good communication normally had their own relationship with the host school. For example, at comparison site X both the site coordinator and one of the site staff reported that they had children who attended the school. In addition, the site coordinator and another site staff member reported working as TAs during the school day. Demo site X also reported having four site staff who worked as either a TA or a credentialed teacher at the host school during the 2007–2008 school year. One of the staff who was working as a TA at demo site X expressed that she had more communication than her colleagues and that she helped to facilitate the sharing of information:

They don’t have the same communication with the teachers that I have. And then for me it’s easy to go and ask the teacher, “Do they have homework today?” And most, sometimes my coworkers from LA’s BEST, they ask me, “Do you know the teacher?” And I go and ask the teacher for the homework for that particular child. It’s comfortable for me to go and ask them.

²¹ The exception was one site staff member at comparison site X who was fairly new at the time of the interviews.

Sharing of Staff between the Day School and Afterschool

The sites in the South region of Los Angeles also benefitted by having day school staff members volunteer at their programs. At comparison site X the site coordinator reported that the vice principal volunteered with the drill team and the basketball tournament. The site coordinator also talked about the involvement of the schoolteachers, “Two of my teachers did drill team with my girls. One, two, three, I had three teachers that did softball with us.” The site staff member who works as a TA also reported that the librarian volunteered with the science fair.

Furthermore, at demo site X, the demonstration site director reported that the school administration helped implement the Mentoring USA²² program by selecting students from LA’s BEST to pair one-on-one with mentors. The schoolteachers further embraced this site by volunteering to fill 5 of the 12 mentor positions. The program lasted from November 2007 to June 2008 and required these volunteers to work on assignments with their mentees. The demonstration site director provided details:

The beginning was getting to know each other assignments, or I would distribute some assignments, which was kind of easy. Especially [since] LA’s BEST has a brunch contest, so that was their assignment to help the child, how could they be selected for this essay contest....Then there was another assignment from the ASAP program, the After School Arts Program, to go to camp. That was another assignment for the mentors and we were the only school that had two children selected to go to camp, to the Idlewild Camp. We got some nice assignments.

Family Involvement

Parent involvement is considered an important predictor of student success in school (Baker, 1996; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998; Jeynes, 2003). However, there is limited research that links parent involvement to student outcomes in afterschool settings (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). In part, this lack of evidence may be due to the barriers to participation that many parents face—especially those from low-income neighborhoods—including speaking different languages and work conflicts (Huang et al., 2007).

Communication. Statements made by the leadership staff at the sites in the Valley were consistent with the literature. The site coordinator at comparison site Y stated that work seems to be an issue for parents, “There’s very little parent involvement within the LA’s BEST. I know that it’s just a lot of parents work.” Likewise, the demonstration site director at demo site Y noted that parents are busy until the end of the program, “I think in a lot of

²² See <http://www.mentoringusa.org> for more information about this non-profit mentoring program.

cases our parents are working until 5:30 or 5:45 pm. That's a lot of the reason why they have their students here.”

Staff reported that the parents' participation was often limited to picking up their children. At the sites in the Valley, students were signed out in the classroom, creating an opportunity for communication. Staff at each of these sites confirmed that they communicate with parents during this time. At the most basic level, this communication involved casual greetings between site staff and parents. Many staff also reported having higher-level conversations with the parents periodically such as talking with them about their child's homework completion, behavior, and general success in the program. One of the site staff at demo site Y mentioned:

Yes, when they come and pick them up, it's a simple “Hello, how was my child”. If I had a problem, I'll explain it; what needs to be worked on, if they didn't want to do their homework, or if they're missing homework and stuff like that. I just let them know.

In contrast, site staff at the demonstration site and its comparison in the South region of Los Angeles rarely mentioned talking with parents during regular program days. This appeared to be the result of the check out procedures at these sites, where parents go to a sign out table rather than their child's classroom. One of the site staff at demo site X explained:

I mean you can't really have a great relationship with the parents unless you're really at the sign out table. And during that time I'm doing enrichment, which is math. So once in awhile I will get to talk to some of the parents, but it's not often.

Opportunities offered to parents. All four sites provided opportunities for parents to participate in special events. Staff at the demonstration sites mentioned that parents and other family members were invited to participate in large-scale events, such as the Community Jam Against Violence at demo site X and the Adventures in Peacemaking Family Night at demo site Y, which focused on crime prevention and conflict resolution (See Chapter V for more information). Other special events mentioned by staff at demo site X included the KidFest Haunted House, a science fair, and a holiday event where a group called the Rough Riders handed out toys. Demo site Y reported having their own KidFest event in collaboration with their host school, multiple Reading is Fundamental (RIF) events where students were given books to take home, a Family Fun Fair, and dance team shows.

Comparison site X reported hosting more special events than comparison site Y, but less than the demonstration sites. Events that staff at comparison site X mentioned included a carnival, cheerleading, and sports events such as basketball. In contrast, staff at comparison site Y only provided the example of a talent show.

Both demonstration sites as well as comparison site X also reported inviting parents to participate in field trips. One of the program workers told a story about comparison site X's participation in the LA's BEST Health Festival at East Los Angeles College. The site was able to get about half of the parents to participate by providing bussing and promoting the fun aspect of the event:

When we had our Health Fair, we had the biggest parent turn out. It's amazing. We try to make it seem like it's a fun thing....We had parents out there at six o'clock in the morning. We didn't leave until seven. I got here at quarter to six. I try to get here early because I don't want them sitting out front. So we had parents coming at six o'clock. They were already dressed up and ready to go. By the time they got back, they were tired, but they said, "I enjoyed it." So we have at least, of the 120 some odd kids that we have, we'll say 80 of those are the kids that can go and I'll say maybe about 60% parent participation.

Because of parent enthusiasm, the demonstration site director at demo site Y scheduled more field trips just to keep the parents involved:

Field trips, they try to go on field trips as much as possible. We've had a couple of field trips where we've included parents just because they always want to go. Sometimes we try to do it exclusively for the students just to get as many of them to go. Recently we've included a lot of parents in the field trips just to get them more involved.

Parents at most of the sites also assisted during special events. Demo site X recruited parent volunteers to help run two of the large-scale events. According to one of the site staff, T-shirts were given to parents as an incentive: "On those two days, we had so many parent volunteers. I think 'cause we give them shirts. I think that makes them feel more important. They have 'Parent Volunteer' on the back." Meanwhile, both of the comparison sites sought donations from parents. As mentioned by a program worker at comparison site Y:

During the special events, if our budget doesn't seem to pay for a lot of it, we ask for donations from parents to try to make it more exciting for the kids, and a lot of the parents help us out.

Donations included bottled water for sporting events at comparison site X, as well as food items for trick or treating and a spring egg hunt at comparison site Y.

Notably, the sites that reported the greatest parent participation had leadership staff members who actively networked with the parents. At demo site X, the demonstration site director reported getting taxi vouchers and bus tokens for parents from the Guidance

Community Development Center²³ in the South region of Los Angeles. In addition, she reported volunteering with the parent center at the host school, “Working with Healthy Start in the Parent Center, sometimes we would speak on certain families or a child and certain needs.” Similarly, the site coordinator at comparison site X volunteered with the Parent Committee at his host school; a relationship he hoped to leverage further in the 2008–09 school year:

I’m one of the representatives for the committee here at [comparison site X] for the parents. And the only reason I joined, was for LA’s BEST....This was my first year so I’m trying to pick up and see what it’s about. So for my upcoming year I’m trying to implement the parent committee programs and the participation ‘cause they do carnivals, they do picnics, and whatnot with local [supermarkets] like Food 4 Less and the little shops here and there. They have a big giant carnival and I’m trying to have that in LA’s BEST at [comparison site X].

Linking with the Community

Policymakers and researchers on afterschool programs recognize the importance of linking with the community for program quality (American Youth Policy Forum, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Miller, 2003). LA’s BEST recognizes the importance of this connection in their vision statement. Furthermore, the operations office has staff members who specifically help sites connect with the community.

Staff at the demonstration sites reported utilizing the resources of the operations office to connect with the community at large. As was mentioned before, both sites participated in some of the field trips and community events planned by the operations office. Staff at demo site X also reported having the operations office help arrange site visits by employees from Mattel and Target, as well as a famous actor and the Mayor of Los Angeles. Demo site Y also mentioned having site visits, although the only example provided was by a site staff member who talked about their visit from the Mayor: “Also, remember that a few months ago Mayor Villaraigosa was supposed to come and that gave the school a lot of recognition as well.”

Both of the demonstration sites also made their own efforts to connect with the community. At demo site X, these efforts were very successful because of the demonstration site director’s active networking. When planning their Community Jam Against Violence she was able to enlist the involvement of staff from the Guidance Development Center, MADD,

²³ For more information about this nonprofit organization see <http://www.guidancecommunity.com>

the probation department, animal cruelty, LAPD and the LAUSD school police to name a few. In some instances, this involved taking advantage of chance meetings:

We were hosting the [LA's BEST] Advisory Council in here and I saw this lady police officer come up. The meeting was in the library. I said, "Can I speak to you real quick?" so I brought her in here. I was telling her about it. I said, "I've been having a hard time getting in touch with school police, no one's answering, getting back to me." She gave me her card and told me who to call. She said it probably should be taken care of and it was. He said, "Yes, she said you would be calling." And after that LAPD fell in line.

In contrast, the demonstration site director at demo site Y tried to connect with the community by having the entire staff introduce themselves to local businesses, "We went out over the summer, all our staff. We went out to the business and introduced ourselves." Unfortunately, the site director reported little success from this and other efforts:

We've tried to do some things with, for example, the convalescent home across the street. To be honest it just hasn't happened. I'll be honest there hasn't been much participation on the part of community with the school. I really don't know what it is. We've tried to make connections with the college, with even the hospital and with the different business that are around. There hasn't been a real big connection. As far as anything from the community it's been maybe, you know, we have a mentoring program [Mentoring USA] and currently we have a few volunteers, but anything beyond that we really haven't had a big response I guess you'd say.

Although, the program coach at demo site Y did perceive some increase in community involvement and provided the following example, "They kind of did more outreach stuff. I don't know. They got the fire department to come in and talk to the kids." The program coach further expressed that this and the exposure to students from the local community college helped increase student awareness, "I think they just made it more aware to the kids as far as what's around here and what the possibilities are that they can do."

At comparison site Y, connections with the community were also limited. The site coordinator indicated that the site did not have community partners: "Honestly, I would tell you it's very weak. We don't have that." Another staff member who had been with the site for many years reiterated this point of view: "I would say there's not much, just with the parents." Despite this, some of the site staff indicated that efforts were being made to start involving the community:

As of yet no, but I do know that we are sending out some fliers for the neighboring communities about different afterschool programs and just the kids, also for the kids that are here, I guess there is a Fun in the Sun Day that is coming up and I believe they are mailing it to everyone in the surrounding area to get involved and for the summer school.

One of the newer staff members at comparison site Y indicated that the increased efforts were resulting in some community involvement: “Well we’re having career day. So we’re going to have the fire department come. Have a cop, a sheriff, medical people from Kaiser, which is down the street. So we’re trying to get involved more than, you know.”

Comparison site X also had limited connections to the community at large. Staff at this site did not report any outreach beyond the successful efforts made by the site coordinator to involve the parents and staff at the host school.

The one consistency among the four sites was the involvement of local teenagers. Site staff mentioned sometimes having students from the local high school or middle school ask to volunteer. Primarily this appeared to be an effort by students to meet their community service requirement at school, as noted by one of the staff members at demo site X, “High school students come in, and ask for volunteer time to work with the kids. You know ‘cause it’s part of their curriculum in high school to get some community service and work with the kids.” Tasks that staff reported having the student volunteers complete included preparing or retrieving supplies, handing out snacks, and helping staff to supervise students during activities such as homework.

The following chapter examines the perceived value of participating in the demonstration sites.

CHAPTER VII: VALUE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE DEMONSTRATION SITES

This chapter presents staff perceptions of the value of participation in the demonstration sites and results of the quantitative analyses concerning students' day school and afterschool attendance, as well as their attitudes towards reading and writing.

Staff Perceived Value of Participation in the Demonstration Sites

Staff members at the demonstration sites were interviewed in regards to their perceptions of the impact of participation on their site, host school, and students.

The Afterschool Sites

Both leadership and site staff reported that their respective afterschool programs were more organized, efficient, and effective after becoming demonstration sites. With the addition of the demonstration site directors, the sites were able to implement guidelines and procedures that were more consistently enforced, and provide clear expectations for staff performance that translated into a more effective management structure. With more effective management structures in place, daily operations became more organized. The demonstration site director at demo site Y explained:

I'll be honest we're a lot more organized than when I first came. Like I said, I'm not trying to attribute everything to myself, but it's a lot more organized. Schedules are out in time. We have our emergency procedures out. We have our planning. Everybody knows what they're doing. Schedules are set. If somebody is absent, we're on top of it and decisions get made quickly.

This demonstration site director also explained how he mentored the site coordinator at demo site Y on certain procedures:

...working with the site coordinator on learning how to do budget correctly, payroll and learning how to do all that. She has basically mastered it to the point where I'm not even involved in it. I still oversee it, but she's got it down, which has made her more efficient, which in turn makes the program more efficient. It gives her more time to be out and about.

Furthermore, the demonstration site director at demo site Y provided specific examples on how staff attitudes changed since becoming a demonstration site:

When I came here the staff got along great, they were happy, but there was a time in just talking to them where before I came or before even the site coordinator had taken over, because she was fairly new when I came. There was a period of time where they were not happy. Even to this day they continue to express that. You know like, "It's so different."

This demonstration site director also noted that the staff learned more about the focus of LA's BEST, "I think that there's a greater focus on what LA's BEST is about and what we're here to do." For example, he noted that he taught the site coordinator and site staff about structuring their programming to be flexible and to focus on the mission of LA's BEST:

I think that my coming here, I've been able to, I don't want to say educate, but I've been able to let them know these are the things that the program requires. This is our flexibility. This is what we can do and what we can't do. Ultimately, this is our philosophy and that's what we're going towards. Do you know what I mean? I think that before I came they were all here for the kids. They were all here for the right reasons, but I don't think the LA's BEST focus was there.

Site staff also experienced improved effectiveness and flexibility as they gained access to training, supplies, and activities. For example, one site staff member at demo site Y explained:

I think that it being a demonstration site, we have more opportunity to try all the things that LA's BEST has to offer first off. Because I know that not all the sites get to try everything and I think that we've really gotten the opportunity to really explore what LA's BEST is about and having the flexibility to do it. I think that's the most wonderful thing of all.

One of the site staff, who transferred to demo site X during the middle of the school year, compared her experience at the demonstration site with her brief experience at another LA's BEST site:

...it's different simply because I guess we get more help here. And the children...get more activities and more things to be involved in. As in like, when I was at the other site it was just once in a while they would get a trip or something. Here they go on trips all the time. They have so many events here. We had a big old Community Jam where everyone came out. We had special guests. It is so great. The kids enjoy it so much. They are just so great. They really appreciate it. It's different. It's a lot and I think the kids really deserve it.

To summarize, positive changes were reported by both the leadership and site staff. Leadership staff described the changes more in terms of improved effectiveness and efficiency, whereas site staff attributed positive impacts to the improved access to program resources, activities, and other opportunities for student participants. Additionally, site staff also reported having improved program management structures, which enabled better communication within the afterschool program site and with the day school.

Linkage with the Day School and the Community

With the addition of human resources, staff at the demonstration sites reported increased communication with the host school. The demonstration site director at demo site Y shared:

I think the biggest benefit has been the level of communication with the program. Before they had great communication, but I think now it's just everybody can come and talk to me, come and talk to the site coordinator. They have a better understanding of what we're here to do.

Staff at the demonstration sites also noted an increased level of support from the host schools whereby better working relationships could be formed. The demonstration site director at demo site Y touched on how this led to the development of reciprocity:

If they need something we're there. They know that they can count on us whenever they need anything from the program just the same as we can count on them if we need anything from them. They can pretty much count on us to make sure that the classroom is clean at the end of the day. It's not going to be a situation where things are going to be left, things are going to be stolen or things like that. I think that has been a big benefit to the school. I think that in any school, but specifically here, that's one of the biggest issues you have at a school, "Is my stuff being left alone? Is it missing or whatever?" So, when you can give them that peace of mind then things are just wonderful.

The demonstration site director at demo site X made a similar reflection. When asked about the biggest benefit of being a demonstration site to the host school, she commented:

Change. Seeing that if they doubted what an afterschool program can do, is all about, that we made LA's BEST real to them, the BEST, even though it is an acronym. We showed them the best practices, and we tried our best to better educate the students for tomorrow, and just showed a whole different side, the true side of LA's BEST.

As a sense of trust developed between the schoolteachers and the afterschool staff at demo site X, that opened up more access to physical spaces for instruction. Beyond the physical space of the campus, improved relationships with the host school also enabled schoolteachers to become more involved in the afterschool program. The site coordinator at demo site X explained that some of the schoolteachers also served as instructors in the afterschool program, "We have a few teachers that work here [at the host school] that work for LA's BEST." When asked for details, she stated:

... I believe [we have] a better working relationship with the teachers during the day now because it seems the teachers are more relaxed. When they speak of LA's BEST, they

speak of it with confidence and pride now, not with negativity. Everything that comes out, or is said by them is positive.

Another sense of pride for one demonstration site in particular, was the community recognition that the school received from becoming a demonstration site. The site coordinator at demo site X said, “Well I feel personally we’ve put [demo site X] on the map.” At this particular site, LA’s BEST sponsored a community event and invited students, parents, and community members to promote the school as a demonstration site. Music artists and community organizations performed at and attended the event. The demonstration site director at demo site X also reported that the demonstration site participated in a public service announcement that aired during the news on a local television network. Through its community outreach, the site was able to make the greater community aware of LA’s BEST and the role the school played as a demonstration site.

With increased support and recognition from the day school and community, the demonstration sites were able to function more effectively and garner more resources, thus creating social norms that were more positive at their afterschool sites.

Promoting Positive Attitudes towards School

These positive social norms may provide students with engaging activities and supportive environments that can encourage participation. Two of the evaluation questions for this study focus on whether students who participated in the demonstration sites were motivated to attend LA’s BEST and their day school more consistently. To address these questions, the school and afterschool attendance patterns of the participating students at the demonstration sites in 2006–07 and 2007–08 were examined. A paired sample T-test was performed on the samples within each demonstration site to determine if the differences in mean attendance for the two school years were significant. Results from the qualitative data provide further details of changes in student attendance.

Afterschool Attendance

One of the goals of the demonstration sites was to enhance student participation in LA’s BEST. Tables 5 and 6 display the afterschool attendance of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at the demonstration sites. Only those students who participated in the study and had afterschool attendance records for both school years were included in the analysis (demo site X = 42, demo site Y = 52).

Table 5

Afterschool Attendance Descriptives

Site	Valid <i>N</i> at both time points	Mean		Standard deviation	
		2006–07	2007–08	2006–07	2007–08
Demo site X	42	137.12	157.00	48.13	33.46
Demo site Y	52	140.52	147.90	45.99	30.60

Table 6

Afterschool Attendance Paired T-test Results

Site	Mean difference	<i>t</i> -value	Significance
Demo site X	19.88	3.843	0.000
Demo site Y	7.38	1.120	0.268

Results of the paired T-tests indicate that the difference in mean afterschool attendance between the two school years was significant for demo site X ($p < .05$). In other words, student participants from this demonstration site showed a moderate increase in their mean afterschool attendance days ($M = 19.88$) between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. As for demo site Y, there was no significant difference in afterschool attendance ($p > .05$).

Day School Attendance

The other evaluation question focused on whether students who were exposed to the increased resources and activity options at the demonstration sites would attend school more regularly. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the day school attendance of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at these sites. Similarly, only those who participated in the study and had day school attendance records for both school years were included (demo site X = 55, demo site Y = 67).

Table 7

Day School Attendance Descriptives

Site	Valid <i>N</i> at both time points	Mean		Standard deviation	
		2006–07	2007–08	2006–07	2007–08
Demo site X	55	156.11	148.25	37.33	33.73
Demo site Y	67	168.12	174.30	19.01	6.71

Table 8
Day School Attendance Paired T-test Results

Site	Mean difference	<i>t</i> -value	Significance
Demo site X	-7.85	-1.208	0.232
Demo site Y	6.18	2.723	0.008

As with afterschool attendance, paired T-tests were employed to determine if the differences in mean school attendance between the two school years were significant. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the day school attendance pattern for demo site X ($p > .05$). In contrast, student participants at demo site Y showed a small but significant increase in their day school attendance between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years ($M = 6.18$; $p < .05$).

In summary, the two demonstration sites showed varying changes in attendance for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. Student participants who attended demo site X showed a moderate increase in afterschool attendance. In contrast, student participants from demo site Y showed a small increase in day school attendance.

Providing a Literacy Rich Environment

As noted in Chapter II, KidzLit is implemented at all LA’s BEST sites to foster students’ interest in reading and writing. One of the key elements in this literacy program is to enhance students’ intrinsic motivation to read and write by providing them with interesting material to read and write about. One of the evaluation questions for this study focuses on whether providing students with an abundance of enriching activities and experiences, such as the field trips, will further inspire students’ positive attitudes towards reading and writing.

Descriptions of the Three Reading and Writing Attitudes Scales

Students were surveyed twice at the demonstration sites on their: (a) general attitudes about reading and writing, (b) reading and writing self-efficacy, and (c) LA’s BEST staff support for reading and writing. All of the questions were asked using a 4-item scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*sometimes*), 3 (*a lot*), and 4 (*all the time*). For purposes of analysis, positively phrased responses were re-coded with scores ranging from 1 to 4 with a score of 1 representing “*never*” and a score of 4 representing “*all the time*.” Negatively phrased questions on the survey were reverse coded with a score of 1 representing “*all the time*” and a score of 4 representing “*never*.”

General attitudes scale. There were nine survey questions used to create the total general attitudes scale. Examples of the questions on this scale include “Reading is fun.” and “I enjoy when we read at LA’s BEST.” Of the 115 students in the two demonstration sites who filled out the surveys during both administrations, 100 answered all of the questions on this scale (demo site X = 42, demo site Y = 58). Reliability was good for the scale during both the January (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.782), and June (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.842) administrations.

Reading and writing self-efficacy scale. The student reading and writing self-efficacy scale was comprised of five individual questions. Examples of questions include “I can read well.” and “I am a fast reader.” Of the 115 students who filled out the surveys during both administrations at these two demonstration sites, 101 students answered all 5 questions on this scale at each administration (demo site X = 44, demo site Y = 57). Reliability was somewhat lower than ideal when administered in January (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.695), and in June (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.676).

Staff support for reading and writing. Students also responded to five questions that were used to gage the level of staff support for reading and writing at LA’s BEST. Examples of questions on this scale include “The LA’s BEST teachers care about how well I read and write.” and “The LA’s BEST teachers have helped me to write better.” Of the 115 students in the two demonstration sites who filled out the surveys at both collection points, there were 109 students who answered all 5 questions at each administration (demo site X = 50, demo site Y = 59). Reliability was somewhat low for the scale at the January administration (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.633), but improved at the June administration (Chronbach’s alpha = 0.806).

Results of the Three Reading and Writing Attitudes Scales

Results for the three reading and writing scales are presented in Tables 9 and 10 for both survey administrations at the demonstration sites. A paired sample T-test was performed to determine if differences between the means at the two survey administrations were significant. The results indicate that the difference in the means between the two survey administrations was not significant ($p > .05$) for any of the three attitudes scales in demo site X. In contrast, students in demo site Y had significantly lower means ($p < .05$) at the second administration compared to the first for both their general attitudes toward reading and writing as well as their attitudes concerning LA’s BEST staff support.

Table 9

Attitudes about Reading and Writing, Descriptives

Site	Valid <i>N</i> at both collection points	Mean		Standard deviation	
		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 1	Survey 2
Demo site X					
General attitudes	42	2.93	2.79	0.58	0.66
Self-efficacy	44	3.20	3.10	0.57	0.62
LA's BEST staff support	50	2.83	2.81	0.68	0.75
Demo site Y					
General attitudes	58	2.74	2.56	0.62	0.66
Self-efficacy	57	2.88	2.90	0.58	0.55
LA's BEST staff support	59	2.59	2.35	0.72	0.88

Table 10

Attitudes about Reading and Writing, Paired T-test Results

Site	Mean difference	<i>t</i> -value	Significance
Demo site X			
General attitudes	0.14	1.389	0.172
Self-efficacy	0.11	1.293	0.203
LA's BEST staff support	0.02	0.183	0.856
Demo site Y			
General attitudes	0.18	2.657	0.010
Self-efficacy	-0.01	-0.211	0.843
LA's BEST staff support	0.25	2.230	0.030

To conclude, results for student participants' literacy attitudes were not as positive as would have been expected considering the added resources and professional development. At demo site Y, students' general attitudes toward reading and writing significantly decreased between the two survey administrations, which took place in January and June 2008. Moreover, at demo site Y, student perceptions of staff support for reading and writing were significantly lower at the second administration than at the first. No significant results were found for the students at demo site Y in terms of reading and writing self-efficacy. Demo site X also experienced no improvement in student attitudes about reading and writing. More

specifically, student participants at this site showed no significant change in terms of their general attitudes, self-efficacy, or perceived feelings of staff support for these literacy skills.

These findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The additional resources had a definite impact on the demonstration sites in fostering positive social norms and enhancing the sense of belonging for the staff and the students. The major contribution to this development was the addition of the full-time demonstration site directors. With this full-time position, the demonstration site directors had more time to provide leadership and collaborate with their respective host schools, meet with the site staff and link with members of the community, resulting in a more orchestrated experience for all stakeholders. Consequently, the relationships with the schools at both demonstration sites improved. Traveling staff from both demonstration sites expressed that better collaboration with the host schools was the biggest accomplishment of the demonstration sites.

Relationship Building

Relationship building was especially beneficial for the demonstration site in the South of Los Angeles because the previous relationship with the day school was poor. To remedy the situation, the CEO and President of LA's BEST personally invited the principal to collaborate with LA's BEST in becoming a demonstration site. The demonstration site director maintained and further built this relationship by constantly communicating with the principal and explaining the positive changes that the site was going through. As a result, the principal at demo site X became more involved and much more responsive to the programs' needs. More importantly, following the lead of this principal, the schoolteachers began to collaborate with LA's BEST in ways such as sharing homework packets and students' test scores.

Because demo site Y already had a strong relationship with the principal, the changes in terms of relationship building with the day school were not as obvious. Nevertheless, the demonstration site director and the site coordinator at this school in the Valley used this opportunity to strengthen the relationship even further by attending some of the day school staff meetings and explicitly encouraging site staff to collaborate with the schoolteachers. As a result, staff noted that many of the schoolteachers positively changed their perception of LA's BEST and became more supportive of the program.

At the same time, the comparison site in the Valley also reported having a strong relationship with their host school. The site coordinator at comparison site Y modeled positive norms through regular communication with the school administration. As with demo site Y, she was able to institutionalize communication by encouraging her staff to develop relationships with the schoolteachers with whom they shared classrooms. As a result, day

school staff developed greater understanding and support for the program. The site coordinator at comparison site Y stated:

I think that since I've been a site coordinator, and I'm totally able to encourage my staff to just have that communication with the day school, that they're able to support our program and have a better view of the program. Because a lot of, I've found that a lot of teachers didn't know what our program was about.

This finding highlighted that some differences in norms and relationships were regional, rather than based on designation as a demonstration site, suggesting the importance of knowledge sharing among the traveling leadership staff and their ability to recognize and promote effective practices among the sites they supervised. In the above example, the demonstration and comparison sites in the Valley shared similar effective strategies in developing strong relationships with their host schools, which in turn lead to open communication with schoolteachers and access to classrooms. These sites also established similar practices that eased the process of communication with parents by having student sign out in the classrooms. This important function of the traveling leadership staff can be an effective link to efficient practices throughout the LA's BEST sites²⁴ and ought to be further examined and validated.

Establishing Structure and Norms

Increased funding made a positive impact on the programs by enabling an increase in the number of site staff at each of the demonstration sites. This helped to ease the tension that many afterschool sites experience due to staff shortages and made it possible for each site to establish more stable program structures and collaborative program climates. The newly consistent, on-schedule staff meetings and activity planning sessions brought coherence to the program structure. This gave staff members the opportunity to come together, talk about challenging students, and share practices and strategies that may enhance the functioning of other staff members. These collaborations resulted in more consistent and stable environments for the staff as well as the students, where expectations could be consistently made and reinforced.

This study also underscores the importance of promoting and supporting intrinsic motivation and sense of belonging for the afterschool staff. As an example, staff expressed an overwhelming sense of accomplishment, confidence, and pride because of their work at the

²⁴ For example, traveling leadership staff could be provided with focused training on effective communication and management skills. Regular meetings of the traveling leadership staff would also provide an opportunity to share effective practices and other lessons learned from their sites.

demonstration sites. Staff felt like they were responding to a “call to duty,” as the site coordinator at demo site X expressed:

I feel proud. They [Visitors] are welcome to come here, because I know the staff that I have here is doing the best job that they possibly can to make sure these kids are happy every day. And that’s the growth that I’ve noticed in staff, that they’re actually focusing and concentrating on making sure they’re giving the best of themselves to these children to make this a successful project.

At the same time, this site coordinator was also proud of the positive feedback received from the school and the community since becoming a demonstration site:

Community is happy with this school. We have not had anyone to come up to try to be violent or anything on the yard. They respect the boundaries now. They accept the rules and they follow them. Parents’ participation, that’s gone through the roof. We tell them that your child will be doing this and this. Parents are actually coming to see their children and support their children in the activities that we have here. And the parents’ attendance has really gone up so I think it’s great now.

Both of the demonstration sites created positive social norms where staff members were motivated and eager to contribute towards the LA’s BEST vision: “All children need a safe place to be after school with caring, responsible adults and engaging activities that connect each child to his/her school, family, and community.” The community, day school staff, afterschool staff, and students became more willing to identify with these programs. This coherence generated a sense of belonging for both staff and students, and enabled staff to provide students with positive learning experiences accompanied with high expectations.

Increasing Staff Efficacy

Another major benefit of the demonstration sites project was the opportunity to increase the readiness of staff through additional professional development opportunities. Prior to the start of the 2007–08 school year, staff at the demonstration sites were paid to attend trainings 3 days per week from July to the end of August. These trainings focused on topics such as activity planning, literacy, math, communication (at both the child and adult levels), and so forth. During this summer training, the staffs received hands-on experience with both core and enhanced LA’s BEST program activities. These experiences appeared to benefit and motivate the staff members. For example, the site coordinator at demo site X noted that the increased opportunities improved staff attitudes about professional development, “Staff is actually open to going to workshops, whereas before it was like, why do I have to go, I already did this. Now it’s like okay, I’ll go, what day is it, what time?”

On the practical side, because a greater number of staff were trained in these curricula, it was easier for the demonstration sites to obtain substitute instructors. Moreover, fidelity of the curriculum was strengthened; instead of using a “training of trainers” approach where information is disseminated informally by one or two staff members who attended a hands-on training, most of the demonstration site staff were trained by the learning facilitators who work in the staff development department at LA’s BEST operations. The program coach for demo site Y remarked, “I think the main part was there was no work lost in translation.” By adhering to content fidelity, staff can deliver research-based curricula and practices such as KidzLit and KidzMath as intended and, theoretically, students should reap more benefits.

Unfortunately, much of this benefit was regrettably lost due to staff turnover. At demo site X there was a period of increased staff turnover upon transitioning to the role of a demonstration site. Leadership at this site replaced some staff members with those who they perceived to be more qualified and better able to execute the LA’s BEST mission, vision, and values. At demo site Y, the high turnover took place mid-school year and was the result of staff being promoted to higher positions, requesting transfers to other LA’s BEST sites that had been opened closer to their homes, and choosing to focus on the completion of college. Several staff members at the demonstration sites expressed their concerns regarding the staff turnover, particularly the loss of many staff who received the benefit of the summer trainings, and its effect on student relationships with staff. For example, one of the program workers at demo site X said:

I really don’t know because nobody say why the person leave or whatever. But for me to have staff members to leave that periodically and that soon, and having those changes, that is not good for the kids. ‘Cause you know a child, sometimes their only secure and safe place is LA’s BEST. And they relate with one person, then the following week they’re going to have another person, and the following week they’re going to have another person.

Moreover, when staff members leave an afterschool site they take their knowledge and the potential benefit of that knowledge with them. Improving knowledge management²⁵ is an area that LA’s BEST might want to examine further internally.

²⁵ According to Rossett (1999), knowledge management involves the identification, accessibility, value, and use of the explicit and tacit information that resides within an organization and its staff.

Promoting Afterschool and Day School Attendance

One focus of the demonstration sites was to improve student participants' sense of belonging to their afterschool program and day school. The benefits of the demonstration sites concerning these two matters were however, mixed.

In regards to afterschool attendance, it seems that the demonstration site in the South region of Los Angeles experienced more immediate improvements than did its fellow demonstration site in the Valley. Between the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years, student participants in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at demo site Y showed no significant change in mean afterschool attendance. In contrast, the mean afterschool attendance for student participants in the same grades at demo site X showed a moderate increase of nearly 20 days. Results from the qualitative and quantitative analyses imply that the additional resources had more of an effect on the afterschool attendance of the students at the demonstration site that initially had less consistency and less stable relationships.

One of the traveling program supervisors credited the increased number of activities for an increase in average daily attendance²⁶ at demo site X:

The demonstration site, every week, every month has something going on: field trips, to events that the kids wanted to [participate in]. So I know our ADA, our increase in regards to our attendance went up.

The leadership staff from demo site Y also provided more insight into the afterschool attendance trends at the demonstration site in the Valley. They indicated that their average daily attendance increased and then dropped again near the end of the school year; incidentally, a time-period after the site experienced a large turnover in staff. The demonstration site director stated:

I think that we over the last few months, dipped a little bit, but for the majority of it we've been 180 or 185. At the beginning of the year, it was 201 and 199. We've been consistent. It hasn't been until recently that it's dipped a little. At the end of the year that always tends to happen.

It is also interesting to learn that demo site Y had a significant, albeit slight increase in mean day school attendance, whereas demo site X did not. In other words, students who participated at the demonstration site that already had a stable environment showed greater improvements in terms of day school attendance. Perhaps the efforts by afterschool staff at

²⁶ At LA's BEST the average daily attendance is calculated on a monthly basis and represents the mean number of students in Grades K–5/6 that the site served on a daily basis. This statistic was not used in the quantitative analyses.

demo site Y to build on their already good relationship with the schoolteachers and administrators provided students with a stronger sense of belonging to their day school. In contrast, the relationship between the program at demo site X and its host school may have needed more time to stabilize in order to affect student attitudes and behaviors towards day school.

Promoting Attitudes towards Literacy

Results of the quantitative analyses revealed that students at the two demonstration sites did not show significant improvement in their mean attitudes about reading and writing. In fact, the students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 who participated in the surveys at demo site Y showed significant decreases in their general attitudes as well as their perceptions of staff support for reading and writing.

These results suggest that solely presenting students with enriched experiences and more consistent and positive social norms are not sufficient to improve students' attitudes and self-efficacy towards reading and writing. The fundamentals of reading and writing need to be targeted more specifically in order to improve students' efficacy and attitudes. Moreover, an environment that is intentionally literacy-rich, can also contribute to students' literacy development. Afterschool sites can focus on this goal by having program staff consciously model literacy engagement. In this way, staff members can show students how real people read and write for real purposes. For example, afterschool staff can help students put together a grocery list, clip interesting stories from newspapers, and read movie reviews with the students. Afterschool programs can also create a safe space for students to explore literacy in new ways, by giving them opportunities to be involved in their own way and at their own level of comfort. Students might be given the opportunity to read, write, and participate in preparing a script for a play. As they are doing this, the afterschool program can further promote literacy activities by honoring students as they make literacy practices their own, and mentoring students to perfect their practices. These practices may create an environment that entices students to actively participate and build confidence in their own reading and writing.

Programs such as KidzLit may foster students' positive attitudes towards literacy when program fidelity is enhanced. Because motivation is a strong element in this program, staff members who deliver the curriculum need to be well trained and enthusiastic about the literature they deliver in order to engage the students. Having staff turnover during mid-year (mid-program) could have interfered with the program design and expected results.

During the interviews, the demonstration site director at demo site Y expressed that the site lost staff members who were trained in the KidzLit curriculum during the sites mid-year turnover. As a result, some of the staff reported that students were not always happy with how the literacy activities were taught. One of the site staff at demo site Y stated:

Sometimes...the activities that are given, just a lot of kids really don't like it. They don't want to have literature after they've just gotten out of school. Sometimes we have to make them more hands-on, so it's something a lot more fun for the kids to do.

One of the traveling leadership staff, who is a certified trainer for KidzLit, under-scored another potential reason for the negative and null effects on literacy attitudes. This traveling program supervisor for comparison site X noted the following:

You get better with KidzLit as you do it more. And so this is really a big change from when they first started doing it 'til after they've done it for maybe 6 months to a year. It is a big difference.

The traveling program supervisor from comparison site X also noted that the curriculum is more challenging to use with upper grade students, such as those who participated in the surveys:

Because if you don't, if you don't know what you're doing with KidzLit it can be boring to the upper grades. Lower grades love it, but you've got to get creative with the upper grades.

Although the results concerning literacy were not favorable, it is encouraging to see that the leadership staff at the demonstration sites were cognizant of the need to increase their focus on literacy. When making suggestions for the future of demo site Y, the demonstration site director said the following, "I know right now we're currently talking to two companies about getting some more literacy programs..."

Voices from the Field

During interviews, staff members were given the opportunity to provide suggestions for improvements in their respective sites. Most responded that there is always room for improvement and agreed that programs should always strive for ways to function more effectively. Some specific suggestions were made including the following provided by the demonstration site director at demo site Y:

I think we're a great place for a staff to come and see the best practices of LA's BEST. I know that we weren't able to do that as much, as much as at least I wanted to. I know we had two or three visits from staff that wanted to see how we did this and how we did that.

This demonstration site director then added:

There's always things that could be improved. I would have hoped that a lot more people would have come, observed, and see what we do. At the same time, they're going to see something that maybe we don't see that we might be able to improve on and that would help us improve. So the feedback is always something that would be great for us. I think overall that it would have been a great experience for people to come and see what it is that we do and how we do it.

The demonstration sites were originally intended to serve as model sites, enabling staff from other LA's BEST sites and other afterschool programs to observe and be trained in the best practices of LA's BEST. However, findings revealed that the demonstration sites were rarely utilized in this way. As indicated in the quote above, only a few staff from other LA's BEST sites came to visit the demonstration sites. The demonstration site director for demo site Y also expressed that having visitors come to observe would have been beneficial to the demonstration site as well; visitors would have been able to provide feedback based on their observations, enabling the fine-tuning of the demonstration sites' practices, thus completing the model for continuous self-improvement.

More generally, site staff across all four sites suggested that they would like to receive more professional development training, particularly in classroom instruction. One staff member at a comparison site suggested having trainings available to site staff that will better prepare them to create lesson plans that are appropriate for a specific grade. Furthermore, as was mentioned before, staff at both of the demonstration sites expressed concern over the loss of staff, suggesting that having low or no staff turnover would benefit the site and students. For example, one of the program workers at demo site X suggested, "Getting staff that wants to really work with kids to be here. You know, so they can have someone that really cares about them and wants to stay." In other words, staff members want to feel efficacious and want opportunities to share best practices and learn from their peers at other afterschool sites and programs.

Revolving the Circle of Learning

Both the traveling leadership staff and the leadership staff were affected positively by their experience working with the demonstration sites. The traveling program supervisor at demo site X said:

Yes, you know it's affected me positively and majorly, most definitely the broader aspect of what LA's BEST can offer. Just all the variety and stuff that we can bring to the table for these kids, like you know, just giving them that opportunity to explore and experience new things in life, positive things in life.

As the Verizon funding ended, the demonstration site director at demo site Y was comforted to realize that the staff would be able to carry on and run the site without him:

It's an LA's BEST site regardless of whether it has demonstration in front of it or not. It's an LA's BEST site. I feel that the staff have got enough exposure to that [message], that the site coordinator has got enough exposure to that, that she'll continue to carry that on and that the staff will continue to carry that on.

Recognizing the potential and possibilities, the traveling leadership staff used the lessons they learned at the demonstration sites to mentor their other sites towards the benefits of bringing in more community resources, activities, and more choices for the students. The program coach at demo site Y explained:

I think one of the things I learned from being the program coach with [demo site Y] is there are different ways to get things. I always try to treat all of my sites the same and try to help them out equally. I think the only difference with that was hearing, "[Demo site Y] has this. They get to go on many field trips." So in order to get some stuff you need to give some of your time up. For example, for field trips what I worked on with a couple of the other sites when I was there was, "We don't have that many, but we can get it through donations. So we need to start going into our community." Or even for the Fire Department coming over. I said that was a really cool thing because the kids get to get on the fire truck... That doesn't cost anything. You've just got to go and talk to the Fire Department down the street.

The comparison site in the South region of Los Angeles provides an example of fulfilling this potential. Despite the lack of additional funding and the supports afforded the demonstration sites, the staff at comparison site X were able to bring in added supplies and activities. This was credited primarily to the extra efforts made by the site coordinator and traveling program supervisor to build and maintain positive relationships with the school administration and the parents. The traveling program supervisor stated, "I work more hours than most people do for LA's BEST and part of my morning time is spent at the school; just building that relationship so that they can have access." The site coordinator also created a crossover between the host school and afterschool through his work as a TA and a parent volunteer.

I'm one of the representatives for the committee here at [comparison site X] for the parents. And the only reason I joined, that was for LA's BEST... So for my upcoming year I'm trying to implement the parent committee programs and the participation 'cause they do carnivals, they do picnics, and whatnot with local, like Food 4 Less and the little shops here and there. They have a big giant carnival and I'm trying to have that in LA's BEST at [comparison site X].

Encouragingly, the excitement of creating a positive learning environment for staff and students will not end with the demonstration sites. The comparison site in the South region reaped positive benefits from the extra efforts of the leadership and traveling leadership staff. After seeing what is possible and can be achieved with additional effort, the site coordinators at the demonstration sites also learned strategies for building or improving their own relationships with the day schools. Furthermore, the traveling leadership staff members have already applied the lessons they have learned, recommending positive changes to other sites that they work with in the San Fernando Valley and South regions of Los Angeles.

Conclusion

Qualitative data reveal positive impacts on the program sites, host schools, staff and students since the two sites became demonstration sites. The programs each experienced improved efficiency and effectiveness. Staff suggested that the increased efficiency might have been the result of more on schedule and consistent staff meetings, and better staff communication among the afterschool staff and with the day school staff. The improved communications enhanced accessibility to day school resources, such as classrooms, and improved integration with the day school. The increased effectiveness of the program was observed in the staff members efforts to make sure that student participants were happy and having fun in the program.

Furthermore, during the 2007–08 school year, the demonstration sites also experienced positive changes in the number of resources available. The additional funding provided students with more materials, more special events, and more field trips. Both sites were able to increase their staffing, and the site in the South region of Los Angeles was able to regain some use of classrooms after having lost the privilege under the leadership of a previous site coordinator. As a result, students at both sites were provided with a greater breadth and depth of activities, field trips, and special events. Several staff members at the demonstration sites expressed that expectations were clearly stated and the students were better behaved. They were also more eager to learn.

Suggestions for further improvements from staff included more professional development opportunities and a concern regarding staff-turnover, particularly in regards to the impact of this turnover on students.

At the same time, quantitative results indicate that simply providing students with more quality learning experiences is not sufficient to improve students' attitudes and efficacy towards reading and writing; more targeted efforts are necessary. Results from the qualitative and quantitative analyses imply that the additional resources at the demonstration sites had

more of an effect on the afterschool attendance of students at the demonstration site that initially had less stable norms and relationships. At the same time, students who participated at the demonstration site that already had a stable environment showed greater improvements in terms of day school attendance. In another word, it appears that the site needing internal stability focused on issues that strengthened staff, planning, programming and linkages. This may have contributed to increased attendance for the LA's BEST program. The other demonstration site focused on fostering ties to the school and that may have contributed to enhance day school attendance.

To summarize, staff members who are inspired and motivated are more likely to enhance student learning. Staff members who exhibit positive behaviors²⁷ have students who are more engaged, which in turn further increases staff motivation (Brophy, 1986; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Moreover, joint interaction between staff and students helps to structure learning climates, creating opportunities for students to advance their skills, and for staff and students to develop shared understanding (Rogoff, 1990). Thus, a reciprocal relationship is created whereby staff and students grow together, creating a circle of learning.

²⁷ Positive teacher behaviors that promote student motivation include but are not limited to modeling, enthusiasm, sincere praise, and reinforcement (Brophy, 1986).

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Appendix A: Student Survey

Directions:

Find the word that best describes how you think or feel and circle it.

Remember that when you see **LA's BEST teachers** in a sentence that this includes all of the LA's BEST teachers at your school.

There are no right or wrong answers.

Example

A.	I am good at listening when the teacher or another adult is talking?	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
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Part I. Attitudes about Reading and Writing

1.	Writing is fun.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
2.	I do not like to read.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
3.	It is important to learn how to read.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
4.	I can write well.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
5.	Reading is really hard for me.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
6.	It is important to learn how to write.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
7.	I am a poor writer.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
8.	I can read well.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
9.	Reading is fun.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
10.	I am a fast reader.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time

Part II. Enjoyment of Reading and Writing at LA’s BEST

11.	I enjoy when we read at LA’s BEST.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
12.	I like activities at LA’s BEST where we get to read.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
13.	It is fun to write when I’m at LA’s BEST.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
14.	I would rather do activities at LA’s BEST that do not include reading.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
15.	When we read at LA’s BEST, I wish I were somewhere else.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
16.	I do not like to do writing activities when I am at LA’s BEST.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time

Part III. Support for Reading and Writing at LA’s BEST

17.	The LA’s BEST teachers care about how well I read and write.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
18.	In LA’s BEST, kids help each other learn to read and write.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
19.	If I do not know how to spell a word, I can always ask other kids at LA’s BEST to help me.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
20.	I do not like the LA’s BEST teachers when they make me read or write.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
21.	I feel comfortable reading when I’m with the LA’s BEST teachers.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
22.	The LA’s BEST teachers have helped me to write better.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
23.	I read with other kids during LA’s BEST.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
24.	Kids in LA’s BEST help me when I am writing.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
25.	The LA’s BEST teachers have helped me to read better.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
26.	I usually read by myself during LA’s BEST.	Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time

**Appendix B:
Observation Protocol**

General Background Information

1. Site Name: _____
2. Observer(s): _____
3. Date: _____
4. Time began: _____ Time End: _____

Activity Observation Information

I. Provide a brief description of each activity you observe (e.g., discussion, a tour of the program)

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

II. Provide further information for each activity listed above:

Activity a.

1. Location of activity: _____
2. People:

	Beginning of Activity	End of Activity
LA's BEST staff		
LA's BEST students		
Volunteers		
School staff		
Visitors		
Other		

3. In which of the following groupings did interactions take place?

<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/ staff <input type="checkbox"/> Staff/ visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor/ visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/ student <input type="checkbox"/> Student/ student <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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4. Approximately what percentage of participants were engaged in this activity?

Level of engagement	Student participants	Adult participants
Low (80% or more off-task)		
Mixed		
High (80% or more on-task)		

5. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff members.

6. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff and other adults (i.e., day school staff, visitors, etc.).

Activity b.

1. Location of activity: _____

2. People:

	Beginning of Activity	End of Activity
LA's BEST staff		
LA's BEST students		
Volunteers		
School staff		
Visitors		
Other		

3. In which of the following groupings did interactions take place?

<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/student
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Student/student
<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor/visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

4. Approximately what percentage of participants were engaged in this activity?

Level of engagement	Student participants	Adult participants
Low (80% or more off-task)		
Mixed		
High (80% or more on-task)		

5. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff members.

6. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff and other adults (i.e., day school staff, visitors, etc.).

Activity c.

1. Location of activity: _____

2. People:

	Beginning of Activity	End of Activity
LA's BEST staff		
LA's BEST students		
Volunteers		
Total # school staff		
Total # visitors		
Other		

3. In which of the following groupings did interactions take place?

<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/student
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff/visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Student/student
<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor/visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

4. Approximately what percentage of participants were engaged in this activity?

Level of engagement	Student participants	Adult participants
Low (80% or more off-task)		
Mixed		
High (80% or more on-task)		

5. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff members.

6. Describe the climate of learning and collaboration between staff and other adults (i.e., day school staff, visitors, etc.).

III. Overall observation of activities

Organization

		Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Highly Evident	N/A
a.	The school site provides an open environment for visitors (e.g., inclusive, friendly).					
b.	The activities appear to be well organized.					
c.	The school staff members appear competent in interacting with visitors.					
d.	The school staff members show a collective effort in working with visitors.					

Communication

		Not Evident	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Highly Evident	N/A
a.	Staff members are able to communicate clearly with visitors.					
b.	Staff members are aware of what the visitors hope to learn from visiting their school.					
c.	Visitors feel comfortable approaching school staff and ask questions.					
d.	Visitors show interest to learn and to participate in the activities.					

Appendix C:
Demonstration Site Interview Protocol

Note: Make sure consent forms are signed and collected.

Introductory Script: Thank you so much for participating in this interview. Your input is very important for us to understand the after-school program at your site. Please be aware that your answers will be kept confidential and will not be associated with either your name or your site in our report.

I have about 13 questions to ask you and some of these questions contain additional questions for clarification to the initial question. Please note that I will frequently ask for examples throughout this interview. This means that I would like you to describe a situation that occurred at your school that best answers the request for an example. This can be a conversation, an activity, an incident, and so forth.

Do you have any questions? Would you mind if we tape our conversation?

I. BACKGROUND INFO

1. What is your current job position and how long have you held this position?
2. What other job positions, if any, have you held with LA's BEST and for how long?
3. Do you have afterschool program-related experiences prior to working with LA's BEST?
If yes, ask: What were these experiences?

II. LA'S BEST SITE STAFF COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

4. In what ways do the LA's BEST staff at _____(school name) work together?
Probe: Planning lessons
Special event planning
Student problems
Sharing lesson ideas
5. What are some examples of how LA's BEST staff members at your site resolve conflicts with each other?

III. STAFF PERCEPTION OF THE DEMONSTRATIVE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

6. What are some examples of change that you have perceived since _____ (school name) became a demonstration site for LA's BEST?

Probe: Physical setting
Access to staff development
Access to resources (i.e., adequate staff, supplies)
Efficiency
Effectiveness in managing site
Programming (i.e., activities offered, structure of schedule, field trips, etc.)

7. How if at all has the program's relationship to the day school staff changed?

8. How if at all has the program's relationship with the community changed?

Probe: Community partners
Volunteers
Donations from community organizations
Parent participation

9. Do you feel that your school being a demonstration site has affected you as a staff member in any way?

If yes, ask: How has it affected you?

Probe: Commitment to the LA's BEST mission/vision
View of self as a leader
Feelings of self-efficacy
Improved procedures for monitoring and supervision
Relationships with other staff members
Access to more resources
Access to support from other LA's BEST staff

10. What do you think about _____ (school name)'s role as learning center for staff members from other afterschool program sites?

11. Do you think the functioning of the demonstration site at your school can be improved?

If yes, ask: How would you improve it?

12. What do you think has been the biggest benefit to your LA's BEST program since becoming a demonstration site?

13. What do you think has been the biggest benefit to this school since your LA's BEST program became a demonstration site?

IV. GENERAL

14. *Last Question:* Is there anything else that we have not talked about, or that you would like to share about the demonstration sites project with LA's BEST?

Appendix D: Comparison Site Interview Protocol

Note: Make sure consent forms are signed and collected.

Introductory Script: Thank you so much for participating in this interview. Your input is very important for us to understand the afterschool program at your site. Please be aware that your answers will be kept confidential and will not be associated with either your name or your site in our report.

I have about 10 questions to ask you and some of these questions contain additional questions for clarification to the initial question. Please note that I will frequently ask for examples throughout this interview. This means that I would like you to describe a situation that occurred at your school that best answers the request for an example. This can be a conversation, an activity, an incident, and so forth.

Do you have any questions? Would you mind if we tape our conversation?

I. BACKGROUND INFO

1. What is your current job position and how long have you held this position?
2. What other job positions, if any, have you held with LA's BEST and for how long?
3. Do you have afterschool program-related experiences prior to working with LA's BEST?

If yes, ask: What are these experiences?

II. LA'S BEST SITE STAFF COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

4. In what ways do the LA's BEST staff at _____ (school name) work together?

Probes: Planning lessons
 Special event planning
 Student problems
 Sharing lesson ideas

5. What are some examples of how LA's BEST staff members resolve a conflict between them?

III. STAFF PERCEPTION OF THEIR SITE

6. Describe the resources available at _____ (school name) LA's BEST?

Probes: Physical setting
Supplies
Staffing
Staff development

7. Describe the relationship between the LA's BEST staff and the day schoolteachers and administrators at _____ (school name)?

8. Describe the relationship between _____ (school name) LA's BEST and the local community?

Probes: Community partners
Volunteers
Donations from community organizations
Parent participation

9. Do you feel that working at _____ (school name) LA's BEST has affected you in any way?

Probes: Commitment to the LA's BEST mission/vision
View of self as a leader
Feelings of self-efficacy
Improved procedures for monitoring and supervision
Relationships with other staff members

10. Do you think the functioning of your LA's BEST site at your school can be improved?

If yes, ask: How would you improve it?

Probes: Efficiency
Effectiveness in managing site
Programming
Promote literacy skills
Attendance and/or student engagement
Staffing
Environment at the site
Access to staff development and training

IV. GENERAL

11. *Last Question:* Is there anything else that we have not talked about, or that you would like to share about LA's BEST?

Appendix E: Sample Summer Training Schedule

Table E1

LA's BEST Summer 2007 Training Schedule for Demo Site X

Date	Time	Training
First group of trainings:		
July 16th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Youth Development
July 18th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Becoming the Leader/Go over Module
July 19th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Team Building Exercise
July 23rd	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Understanding Children
July 25th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Action Plan I
July 26th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Action Plan II Practical
July 30th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	KidzLit Part I
August 1st	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	KidzLit Part II
August 2nd	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Communication-Adult
Second group of trainings:		
August 6th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	CPR
August 8th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	KidzMath Part I
August 9th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	KidzMath Part II
August 13th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Conflict Resolution Part I
August 15th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Conflict Resolution Part II
August 16th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Transitions
August 20th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Effective Communication for Children
August 22nd	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Homework Assistance and Homework
August 23rd	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Documenting your Skills and Experience
August 27th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Staff Policies and Review
August 29th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	Emergency Procedures
August 30th	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	ER Procedures/Walk-through and Scenarios

Note: The first group of trainings took place at demo site X, while the second group of trainings took place at another LA's BEST site in the local community.

Appendix F: Program Activities by Type and Site

Table F1
Cognitive or Academic Activities

Activities	Core				Enhanced				Other			
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Homework/Tutoring												
• Homework	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ								
• Extended Homework	Ⓟ											
• Mentoring USA									Ⓟ	Ⓟ		
Science												
• Astronomy		Ⓟ										
• Club Invention										Ⓟ		
• Gardening Club										Ⓟ		
• Nature (e.g., trees, insects, reptiles)			Ⓟ									
• Celebrate Science Fair					Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ				
• Zoology		Ⓟ										
Computer Instruction												
• Computer Club	Ⓟ											
• Graphics	Ⓟ											
• KidType					Ⓟ	Ⓟ						
• Technology Club	Ⓟ											
• Video									Ⓟ			
Reading/Language Arts												
• Artistic Expressions (e.g., poetry, writing)												Ⓟ
• Book Club	Ⓟ											
• Creative Writing										Ⓟ		
• Debate Club										Ⓟ		
• Journalism										Ⓟ		
• KidzLit					Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ				

(table continues)

Activities	Core				Enhanced				Other			
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Reading/Language Arts <i>(continued)</i>												
• Literacy/Reading		Ø		Ø								
• Pen Pal									Ø			
• Storytelling									Ø			
• Writing												Ø
Math	Ø											
• BRICKS (Lego math)												Ø
• Hip Hop Math									Ø			
• KidzMath					Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø				
• Multiplication Motivation	Ø											
Conflict Resolution												
• Adventures in Peacemaking						Ø						

Table F2

Performing and Visual Arts Activities

Activities	Core				Enhanced				Other			
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Drill Team/Dance												
• Dance	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ								
• Dance Competition	Ⓟ	Ⓟ										
• Dance Dance Revolution	Ⓟ											
• Drill Team	Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ								
Music												
• Drums	Ⓟ											
• Drum Major		Ⓟ										
• Keyboards	Ⓟ											
• Music	Ⓟ											
• Music Production (i.e., drum boards)		Ⓟ										
Visual Arts												
• Art	Ⓟ			Ⓟ								
• Arts & Crafts (e.g., cutting, pasting)	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ								
• Creative Drawing	Ⓟ											
• Drawing			Ⓟ									
• Fashion Design		Ⓟ										
• Floral Arrangements			Ⓟ									
Miscellaneous												
• Artistic Expressions (e.g., clay, music)			Ⓟ									
• ASAP (e.g., dance, visual arts)					Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ				
• Beading										Ⓟ		
• Drama/Theater		Ⓟ	Ⓟ									
• Kid Cabaret									Ⓟ			
• Musical Art (combines music and art)		Ⓟ										
• Performing Arts	Ⓟ											
• Radio Club									Ⓟ			
• World Art										Ⓟ		

Table F3

Health and Nutrition Activities

Activities	Core				Enhanced				Other				
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	
Nutrition													
• Cooking										Ⓟ	Ⓟ		
• Snack										Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ
Seasonal Sports													
• Basketball				Ⓟ									
• Boys Sports	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ										
• Football		Ⓟ											
• Girls Sports	Ⓟ	Ⓟ											
• LA84 Foundation Sports League	Ⓟ												
• Softball		Ⓟ		Ⓟ									
• Sports 4 All						Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ					
• Sports Tournaments													
• Tennis	Ⓟ												
• Track & Field	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	Ⓟ									
• Ultimate Football	Ⓟ												
• Volleyball				Ⓟ									
Health and Fitness													
• BEST Fit (e.g., fitness, nutrition)						Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ				
• Health										Ⓟ	Ⓟ		
• Hoop Hop								Ⓟ					
• Luna Stix						Ⓟ		Ⓟ	Ⓟ				
• Outdoor play													
• Physical Fitness Awareness											Ⓟ		
• Psychomotor										Ⓟ			
• Save a Life / CPR										Ⓟ			
• Sports Wall										Ⓟ			
• Yoga											Ⓟ		

Table F4

Miscellaneous Activities

Activities	Core				Enhanced				Other				
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	
Community and Cultural Activities													
• Junior Achievement					Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ					
Recreation													
• Board Games	Ⓟ												
• Recreation				Ⓟ									
Miscellaneous													
• A Burst of Positive Energy										Ⓟ			
• DDR										Ⓟ			
• Enrichment (e.g., play writing)												Ⓟ	
• ReCharge										Ⓟ			
• Table Manners													Ⓟ

Table F5
Special Events and Field Trips

Activities	Citywide Events				Excursions				Site-Based Events				
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	
Educational													
• California Science Center						Ø							
• Carnival (w/ books as prizes)													Ø
• Griffith Park Observatory					Ø	Ø							
• Reading by Famous actor										Ø			
• Mattel (e.g., homework help)										Ø			
• Museums					Ø								
• Natural History Museum					Ø	Ø							
• Nursery					Ø								
• RIF Books for Ownership event										Ø	Ø		
• Science Fair Finals	Ø												
• Skirball Museum (Noah’s ark exhibit, including art made by kids)					Ø								
• STAR ECO Station (wildlife station)					Ø								
• Target Reads w/ LA’s BEST	Ø												
• Tech Night										Ø			
Sports													
• Boating					Ø								
• Football									Ø				
• Intermission Volleyball													Ø
• Sports Tournaments	Ø												
• Staples Center – LA Avengers football game					Ø	Ø							
• Staples Center – X-Games					Ø								
Health & nutrition													
• LA’s BEST Health Fair @ East LA College	Ø			Ø									
Performing Arts													
• Dr. Seuss Day (play)													Ø
• Dance													Ø
• Dance & Drill Team Showcase	Ø	Ø		Ø									
• Dance tribute to Michael Jackson													Ø
• Shows													Ø

(table continues)

Activities	Citywide Events				Excursions				Site-Based Events			
	Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp		Demo		Comp	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Community & Culture												
• Adventures in Peacemaking Family Night												Ⓟ
• Annual Family Brunch	Ⓟ											
• Cinco de Mayo Party										Ⓟ		
• Community Jam Against Violence (Citywide @ UCLA)				Ⓟ						Ⓟ		
• Mayor Villaraigosa Site Visit												Ⓟ
Recreational												
• Adventure Games					Ⓟ							
• Amusement Parks					Ⓟ							
• Castle Park Amusement Park								Ⓟ				
• Raging Waters					Ⓟ			Ⓟ				
Holidays												
• Kid Fest – Halloween Event										Ⓟ	Ⓟ	
• Rough Riders – Christmas Event										Ⓟ		
Themed Days												
• Autograph T-shirt Day										Ⓟ		
• Buddy Picture Day										Ⓟ		
• Cinco de Mayo										Ⓟ		
• Crazy Hair Day										Ⓟ		
• Crazy Sock Day										Ⓟ		
• Father’s Day										Ⓟ		
• Laker Day/Basketball Day										Ⓟ		Ⓟ
• Luau										Ⓟ		
• Mother’s Day										Ⓟ		
• Pirating Day											Ⓟ	
• Tiny Tassel Olympics										Ⓟ		
Other												
• Back to School Night										Ⓟ		
• Big Sunday										Ⓟ		
• Field trips in Los Angeles						Ⓟ						