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Afterschool Centers on Education

Cycle 8 Austin Independent School District

Final Report 2015–2016

Department of
Research and Evaluation
AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Executive Summary

The Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is the program administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants authorized under Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; Public Law 107–110). This report examines outcomes for the 2,087 program participants served by Cycle 8 Austin Independent School District (AISD), during the 2015–2016 school year at a total of 10 AISD campuses: nine elementary schools (Allison Elementary School, Blanton Elementary School, Blazier Elementary School, Govalle Elementary School, Houston Elementary School, Linder Elementary School, Ortega Elementary School, Palm Elementary School, and Perez Elementary School), and one middle school (Paredes Middle School).

Findings and Recommendations

Overall, results were mostly mixed on all three outcome goals for the Cycle 8 AISD campuses. None of the 10 Cycle 8 AISD campuses met all three outcome goals- increased academic achievement, decreased school-day absences, and decreased disciplinary referrals from year to year.

Overall results were mostly mixed on all three outcome goals for the Cycle 8 AISD campuses. None of the 10 Cycle 8 AISD campuses met all three outcome goals- increased academic achievement, decreased school -day absences, and decreased disciplinary referrals from year to year.

Academic goals: Program participants at Paredes met academic achievement goals of increased GPA all four subject areas and better course completion rates from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016. Academic achievement outcomes were mostly negative for Blanton and Perez.

Attendance Goals: Program participants (regular and non-regular) at Blanton, Blazier, Houston, and Linder met attendance goals of decreased school-day absences from one year to the next. Additionally, school-day absences significantly declined from 2014-2015 to 2015-2015 for regular participants at Houston and Perez.

Discipline goals: Program participants (regular and non-regular) met discipline outcome goals of either no removals or decreased removals from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 at Allison, Houston, and Linder. Discipline outcomes were mixed for the remaining seven Cycle 8 AISD campuses.

Program participation: Findings indicate that increased participation in the afterschool program had an effect on all three outcomes (academic performance, attendance rates and discipline referrals). Students who participated in the program more days received higher GPAs, higher course passing rates, higher school attendance rates and fewer disciplinary referrals than did students who participated fewer days.

Recommendation 1. Given the mixed results for ACE Austin participants related to GPA, it is recommended that academic-related afterschool programs implement changes to better align with

program goals. In addition, identifying the specific programs and strategies used to address academic issues, specifically, at Paredes, where all the academic goals were met, would be useful in understanding what may have contributed to this finding in order to influence the adoption of similar approaches at other campuses as well.

Recommendation 2. Findings indicates that increased participation in the afterschool program has an effect on attendance rates. Therefore it is recommended that program staff utilize strategies to encourage increased program participation by students in order to better their attendance outcomes at other campuses. Refinements to components that are effective should be ongoing at campuses where the goal was met.

At campuses where the attendance goal was not met: Govalle and Paredes, it is recommended that afterschool programs identify and implement effective recruitment strategies while providing services that cater to the needs and interests of students at their campus. These strategies could encourage increased attendance in the afterschool program which in turn will hopefully encourage regular school-day attendance.

Recommendation 3. Based on this finding refinement to components that are effective should be ongoing so that they may continue to meet the needs of students at campuses where the discipline outcome goal was met. Campuses where disciplinary goals were not met could be due to the fact that students who already have a history of high disciplinary issues are specifically targeted and therefore the program would have difficulty in demonstrating a significant reduction in referrals over the course of program participation. In these cases, the specific program goals need to be examined in order to better understand the desired outcomes for these students.

Recommendation 4. The importance for students to attend the afterschool programs on a regular basis is critical in order to truly reap the benefits of the classes and activities being offered and see an impact on school outcomes. Program providers should identify and implement appropriate retention strategies such as incentives, point reward systems, better snacks/food, which would increase student engagement and improve attendance.

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Introduction and Purpose of Program

The Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is the program administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; Public Law 107–110). The purpose of ACE programs is to support the creation of community learning centers to provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. ACE Austin provides a comprehensive range of out-of-school-time (OST) academic assistance, enrichment, family and parental support, and college and workforce readiness activities. Building on its existing infrastructure of evidence-based OST activities and partnerships, ACE Austin collaborates with a range of partners, including Austin Independent School District (AISD), to provide a comprehensive menu of before-school, afterschool, and summer programming. Activities are offered at least 15 hours per week for 30 weeks during the academic year and for 30 hours per week for 4 weeks during the summer. All activities focus on the four 21st CCLC core component areas: academic assistance, enrichment, family engagement, and college and workforce readiness/awareness.

The main goals of the youth and family afterschool programs offered by ACE Austin are based on narrowing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and students of more affluent families. Across activities and centers, the afterschool program focuses on three primary objectives:

- Decrease school-day absences
- Decrease discipline referrals
- Increase academic achievement through support and enrichment activities

21st CCLC Core Components

Academic assistance. ACE Austin offers a range of activities designed to improve students' achievement by providing extra academic assistance and support in the form of tutoring and homework help for students who are struggling in the core subjects, including science, math, reading, and social studies. All extended-day learning opportunities are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards and with the school-day reading/writing, math, science, technology, and social studies curricula, and use hands-on, experiential, and project-based teaching strategies to reinforce learning. Academic support activities incorporate the district-wide Curriculum Roadmap and link the afterschool program with school-day instruction to ensure consistency and continuity.

Family engagement. ACE Austin staff partner with the AISD Adult Education Department and each school's parent support specialist to provide family engagement activities that help connect families to schools and enable them to better support their children's academic achievement. Services include English language support for limited English proficient (LEP) students; technology classes; parent support classes that focus on college readiness, child development, positive behavior, and ways to support students' academic achievement; and family fitness nights, offered in partnership with ACTIVE Life Movement, a national organization dedicated to healthy lifestyles for all.

This report examines outcomes for the 2,087 program participants served by Cycle 8, Austin Independent School District (AISD), during the 2015–2016 school year from a total of 10 AISD campuses: nine elementary schools (Allison Elementary School, Blanton Elementary School, Blazier Elementary School, Govalle Elementary School, Houston Elementary School, Linder Elementary School, Ortega Elementary School, Palm Elementary School, and Perez Elementary School), and one middle school (Paredes Middle School).

21st CCLC Core Components

Enrichment. ACE Austin offers a variety of skill-building enrichment activities to which some students would otherwise lack access, including fine arts, technology, games, health and fitness, outdoor and environmental education, and youth leadership and development. Enrichment activities are designed to extend, expand on, or otherwise enrich classroom learning by supporting students' physical, emotional, and social development.

College and workforce readiness/awareness. ACE Austin implemented the Get Ready for College program with 5th graders at selected campuses. Students were targeted based on teachers' recommendations. Participating students investigated careers, visited area colleges and universities, practiced public speaking skills, participated in service projects, and played lacrosse. All ACE Austin activities and classes integrated college and workforce readiness whenever feasible, including discussions about careers and educational attainment, presentations from guest speakers, and information about the importance of high school graduation and college attendance.

Evaluation Strategy

Expectations

The Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) evaluators and program staff together reviewed the grant requirements and developed an evaluation plan and timeline for the program, which were published online (http://www.austinisd.org/dre/about-us) as part of the DRE work plan. Throughout the duration of the grant program, evaluators worked closely with program staff to collect and submit identified data in a timely fashion and met regularly to monitor progress and make any needed adjustments.

The evaluation plan was used to ensure continuous improvement for (a) program management (monitoring program operation; (b) staying on track (ensuring that the program stayed focused on the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes; (c) efficiency (streamlining service delivery, helped lower the cost of services; (d) accountability (producing evidence of program effects; and (e) sustainability (providing evidence or effectiveness to all stakeholders).

The ACE Austin program used TEA Security Environment (TEASE), the Texas ACE web-based tracking system, to track students' attendance and other program data needed for TEA reports. The DRE evaluator extracted students' records from AISD's data warehouse and assisted program staff with formatting and data entry into TEASE for accurate reporting to TEA.

Measurement

Program participation files and AISD student records provided demographic information and results for each of the school-related outcomes. Program participants' outcomes were compared for school years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016. Program participants were categorized based on the total number of days they participated in the afterschool program: regular participants were students who participated in a program for 30 or more days, and non-regular participants were students who participated in a program between 1 and 29 days. Analyses were conducted to compare school outcomes (e.g., school attendance, discipline removals, and core subject grade point average [GPA] in reading, mathematics [math], science, and social studies) and course completion percentages.

Regression analyses were used to determine whether program participation level predicted student outcomes significantly. The student *t*-test was used to determine if changes from year to year were meaningful. Students' program participation level was categorized based on participation rate (i.e., percentage of time students attended the afterschool program). This was obtained for each student by calculating the total number of program participation days/total number of days enrolled in school.

School Attendance

The average number of school days absent was calculated for both the regular participant and non-regular participant groups. Absent days were defined as the total number of days a student did not come to school and included both excused and unexcused absences.

Discipline Removals

To examine the program's impact on discipline referrals, the percentage of students who were disciplined was calculated for both the regular and non-regular participant groups. Student discipline referrals were included for analysis when the resultant action was a suspension (i.e., in-school or out-of-school suspension) or placement in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP; e.g., the Alternative Learning Center). These removals from the regular education environment were divided into two categories for the purposes of analyses: those for which a removal was mandatory and those for which a removal was discretionary. All mandatory discipline offenses resulted in a removal from campus, as required by law. Discretionary removals were those offenses that did not require a removal by law, but for which a student was removed anyway. For example, mandatory removals included drug and alcohol violations, as well as assaults on other students or adults on campus; discretionary removals included behaviors such as persistent misbehavior or fights.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was measured using school-year GPA in reading, math, science, and social studies and course completion percentages (Table 1). The mean GPAs were calculated for coursework completed during the year, and the percentage of students who passed courses was also calculated.

Table 1. Afterschool Program Objectives and Description of How They Were Measured

Program objective	Measurement	Data source
Decrease participants' school-day absences	Mean school-day absence	Program participation file, AISD student attendance records
Improve behavior	Percentage of mandatory or discretionary discipline removals	Program participation file, AISD student discipline records
Improve academic performance	Core grade point average (reading, math, science, social studies)	Program participation file, AISD student grades records
	Course completion	Program participation file, AISD student grades records

Source. AISD Afterschool Program records

Program Design and Support Strategy

Program Design

High-quality OST programs are an integral part of the pipeline to graduation and college success. All the services and activities for this project were designed based on research about what works in OST programs—primarily research from the Department of Education's "What Works" Clearing House publication *Structuring Out-of-School Time to Improve Academic Achievement* (Beckett et al., 2009) and research about family engagement from the Harvard Family Research Project (Westmoreland, 2009). The program used an evidence-based assessment tool developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (YPQ) and trained all afterschool staff members on best practices for activity development and implementation. In addition, all the project's family engagement activities were based on the national parent involvement standards established by the National Parent Teacher Association, including regular, two-way, meaningful communication between home and school; promotion and support of parenting skills; active parent participation in students' learning; parents as welcome volunteer partners in schools; parents as full partners in school decisions that affect children and families; and outreach to community resources. ACE Austin and its partners took a coordinated approach to engaging families so those most in need would have multiple points of entry into the continuum of services available through this program.

During the spring and summer of 2015, a campus needs assessment was conducted. The program leadership analyzed indicators (e.g., students' socioeconomic status [SES], school disciplinary referrals, student and family mobility, school dropout and completion rates, and college readiness); reviewed each school's campus improvement plan; and conducted in-depth interviews with school administrators, staff, teachers, community members, partners, parents, and students to identify gaps in services on each campus and the surrounding neighborhoods. Common themes emerged indicative of the campus needs, which included opportunities for extended learning, youth development, health and fitness, school safety, family engagement, and neighborhood safety.

Data from TEA's *Academic Performance Report* (TAPR) 2014–2015 indicated that the percentage of students who were low SES (i.e., qualified to receive free or reduced price lunch) and the percentage of students who were considered at risk of dropping out of school were above district and state averages for all 10 Cycle 8 AISD schools. The percentage of students who were classified as English language learners was above district and state averages for at nine of the 10 Cycle 8 AISD schools (Table 2).

Table 2. Description of Needs

School	Percentage low socioeconomic	Percentage at risk	Percentage limited English proficient
Allison Elementary School	96%	72%	43%
Blanton Elementary School	87%	75%	61%
Blazier Elementary School	77%	60%	37%
Govalle Elementary School	91%	72%	37%
Houston Elementary School	97%	74%	54%
Linder Elementary School	96%	76%	54%
Ortega Elementary School	95%	59%	35%
Palm Elementary School	83%	63%	43%
Paredes Middle School	74%	57%	20%
Perez Elementary School	92%	73%	50%
AISD	60%	53%	28%
State	59%	51%	18%

Source. 2014–2015 Texas Education Agency's Academic Performance Report.

Programming was developed based on the needs of Cycle 8 AISD campuses. Upon implementation, project directors met with the site coordinator to set goals in the following areas: program operations, communication, curriculum alignment, quality of instruction, and program evaluation. Individual goals were reviewed mid-year, and adjustments were made. The project director, curriculum specialist, and quality coach visited all the sites and documented each visit. Recommendations for improvement were received by the site coordinator, who then met with the OST instructor. Observers looked for compliance in operational functions, program quality, and procedures. In addition, observers checked for fidelity to the project plan, including activity alignment; use of goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART); staff-to-student ratios; and student engagement strategies. ACE Austin participated in the community-wide YPQ initiative. Leadership team members and all site coordinators were trained to use the nationally validated Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool. Each semester, the quality coach and each site coordinator conducted a minimum of two assessments using the YPQA tool, and the results of each assessment were used to guide the Center's quality improvement and professional development activity plan for instructors and vendor staff.

ACE Austin's training calendar was extensive. In addition to new employee orientations, and district and campus training sessions, staff attended webinars and regional training sessions provided by Edvance. All afterschool instructors participated in YPQ training sessions, which were offered throughout the year; assessment tools and technique sessions; and instructional models sessions. To ensure that all TEA objectives were met, each objective had a professional development activity strategy for implementation. As part of the lesson planning training, afterschool staff learned how to assess learning styles, determine students' progress, and assess portfolios. Strategies for professional development activities included:

- Professional development activities for all afterschool instructors about Department of Education evidence-based practices in lesson planning, instruction, tutoring, and homework assistance
- Professional development activities for all afterschool instructors and staff about effective youth development practices and the development of high-interest, developmentally appropriate activities
- Recruitment and training of adult advocates and assignment of trained advocates to targeted students in order to provide tutoring and mentoring on a consistent basis
- Professional development activities for all afterschool instructors and staff about evidence-based Positive Behavior Support strategies

Marketing

Successful marketing and program promotion are essential, both to attracting participants and to securing community buy-in for and ownership of the program. ACE Austin's marketing strategies focused on both marketing to attract participants and outreach to build and maintain community interest and support. Marketing materials emphasized the community benefits of OST programs, student and family benefits of participation, and the cost benefits of providing quality programs. When community members have buy-in, they become advocates for the program and assist in marketing and outreach for the program. School staff also are important in efforts to attract participants to the program and in helping to connect students and families in need of appropriate services and activities. An important aspect of marketing and outreach is ensuring that programs create engaging environments in which children and parents can experience success together. Satisfied participants become strong advocates who also can assist in marketing the program. Successful programs benefit from word-of-mouth, as well, which increases demand as information about the program builds in the community.

Ongoing Monitoring

Ongoing monitoring of attendance patterns helped staff address issues that otherwise could have become barriers to regular attendance. ACE Austin staff took daily attendance and monitored absence patterns weekly. They worked with the family engagement specialist and the campus parent support specialist to notify parents of students' absences, and worked to address the causes of repeated absences. Direct parent participation in activities also increased students' participation levels.

LOGIC MODEL

Site coordinators at all 10 Cycle 8 AISD schools in conjunction with the project directors developed a logic model to guide the implementation of the ACE program at their campus. The model also served as a tool for documenting programmatic changes over time. The logic model of the ACE program at each Cycle 8 AISD campus included six components: resources, implementation practices, outputs activities, outputs participation, intermediate outcomes, and impact.

Program Participation

Student Demographics

Table 3. Number of Students, by Campus and Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) Austin Participation Status, 2015–2016

Cycle 8, AISD campuses	Regular participants		Non-regular participants		Non-participants		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Allison	134	24%	25	4%	388	71%	547	100%
Blanton	138	29%	5	1%	338	70%	481	100%
Blazier	144	16%	33	4%	696	80%	873	100%
Govalle	179	33%	56	10%	309	57%	544	100%
Houston	130	18%	18	2%	564	79%	712	100%
Linder	131	33%	45	11%	217	55%	393	100%
Ortega	159	49%	27	8%	137	42%	323	100%
Palm	128	27%	31	6%	318	67%	477	100%
Paredes	199	21%	307	32%	451	47%	957	100%
Perez	145	19%	53	7%	580	74%	778	100%
Total Cycle 8-AISD	**1,487**	**24%**	**600**	**10%**	**3,998**	**66%**	**6,085**	**100%**

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015-2016; AISD student records.

All Cycle 8 AISD campuses met program participation goals. At all campuses, except Paredes middle school, the majority of program participants were regular participants (i.e., attended the afterschool program for 30 or more days) (Table 3).

Program participants were underrepresented at most campuses when compared to the overall school population, except at Linder and Ortega. This could be attributed to the fact that afterschool staff were learning how best to utilize the resources available to them, and identify and develop effective recruitment and retention strategies at their campuses. With the hopeful retention of current program staff and identification of successful recruitment strategies, program participation should increase in the following year.

Overall, modifications to programs were made throughout the school year at all Cycle 8 AISD campuses in order to increase attendance. When a class had extremely low participation, the site coordinator worked with the teacher to make changes and bring in more students. New classes were added in the spring to prevent enrolled students from losing interest and to attract new students. New classes were

developed based on programs that students requested or teachers suggested. Classes with no participants enrolled were canceled.

Table 4. Student Gender, by Campus and Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) Austin Participation Status, 2015–2016

Cycle 8, AISD campuses and participation level		Gender		
		Regular participants (*n* = 1,487)	Non-regular participants (*n* = 600)	Non-participants (*n* =3,998)
Allison	Female	60%	36%	45%
	Male	40%	64%	55%
Blanton	Female	53%	80%	52%
	Male	47%	20%	48%
Blazier	Female	58%	48%	45%
	Male	42%	52%	55%
Govalle	Female	57%	45%	41%
	Male	43%	55%	59%
Houston	Female	53%	44%	50%
	Male	47%	56%	50%
Linder	Female	52%	73%	43%
	Male	48%	27%	57%
Ortega	Female	42%	33%	48%
	Male	58%	67%	52%
Palm	Female	65%	58%	40%
	Male	35%	42%	60%
Paredes	Female	47%	51%	47%
	Male	53%	49%	53%
Perez	Female	61%	50%	47%
	Male	39%	50%	53%

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015-2106; AISD student records.

Table 5. Student Ethnicity, by Campus and Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) Austin Participation Status, 2015–2016

Cycle 8, AISD campuses and participation level		Ethnicity						
		American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Two or more races	White
Allison	Regular participants	-	-	7%	92%	-	-	1%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	-	100%	-	-	1%
	Non-participants	-	-	5%	95%	-	-	-
Blanton	Regular participants	-	-	5%	83%	-	1%	11%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	-	80%	-	-	20%
	Non-participants	-	-	10%	78%	-	1%	1%
Blazier	Regular participants	-	1%	10%	76%	-	4%	10%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	6%	64%	-	-	30%
	Non-participants	1%	2%	6%	79%	-	2%	10%
Govalle	Regular participants	-	-	12%	83%	1%	1%	3%
	Non-regular participants	-	2%	16%	78%	-	2%	2%
	Non-participants	-	-	14%	82%	-	2%	2%
Houston	Regular participants	-	-	9%	91%	-	-	-
	Non-regular participants	-	-	6%	89%	-	-	6%
	Non-participants	-	-	8%	90%	-	-	2%
Linder	Regular participants	-	10%	8%	75%	-	3%	4%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	7%	87%	-	-	7%
	Non-participants	-	-	6%	88%	-	1%	5%
Ortega	Regular participants	-	-	98%	87%	-	3%	3%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	19%	78%	-	-	4%
	Non-participants	-	-	12%	77%	-	3%	7%
Palm	Regular participants	-	-	9%	84%	-	-	6%
	Non-regular participants	-	6%	6%	87%	-	-	-
	Non-participants	-	2%	6%	84%	1%	4%	4%
Paredes	Regular participants	-	2%	15%	68%	-	3%	13%

Cycle 8, AISD campuses and participation level		Ethnicity						
		American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Two or more races	White
Perez	Non-regular participants	1%	2%	8%	75%	-	2%	11%
	Non-participants	-	3%	4%	81%	-	2%	10%
	Regular participants	-	-	8%	90%	1%	-	1%
	Non-regular participants	-	-	6%	86%	-	2%	6%
	Non-participants	-	-	8%	85%	-	1%	5%

Source. **ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student records.**

Table 6. Student Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Status, by Campus and Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) Austin Participation Status, 2015–2016

Cycle 8, AISD campuses and participation level		LEP status
Allison	Regular participants	41%
	Non-regular participants	36%
	Non-participants	46%
Blanton	Regular participants	60%
	Non-regular participants	80%
	Non-participants	52%
Blazier	Regular participants	23%
	Non-regular participants	26%
	Non-participants	34%
Govalle	Regular participants	32%
	Non-regular participants	32%
	Non-participants	34%
Houston	Regular participants	47%
	Non-regular participants	72%
	Non-participants	51%
Linder	Regular participants	46%
	Non-regular participants	60%
	Non-participants	57%
Ortega	Regular participants	39%
	Non-regular participants	52%
	Non-participants	28%
Palm	Regular participants	28%
	Non-regular participants	31%
	Non-participants	45%
Paredes	Regular participants	14%
	Non-regular participants	20%
	Non-participants	24%
Perez	Regular participants	36%
	Non-regular participants	62%
	Non-participants	50%

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student records.

Program Intermediate Outcomes

Academic Achievement Outcome

Regular and non-regular program participants at Paredes experienced a significant increase in mean GPA in all four core subject areas, as well as an increase in course completion rates from 2014–2015 to 2015–2016 (Table 7 and 8). Regular participants at Govalle saw a year-to-year increase in mean GPA in all subject areas. Regular participants at Palm had significantly better course completion rates in 2015–2016 compared to the previous year. Academic achievement outcomes were mostly negative for Blanton and Perez. The participants who attended the program more often (between 60% and 80% of the time) had significantly better academic outcomes than did student who participated for less (Figures 1 and 2).

Table 7. Afterschool Center on Education (ACE) Participants' Core Grade Point Average (GPA), by School Year

Campus	Core subject GPA	Participation status					
		Regular participants			Non-regular participants		
		2014–2015	2015–2016	GPA change	2014–2015	2015–2016	GPA change
Allison	Reading	2.71	2.46	-0.24↓	2.76	2.43	-0.32
	Math	2.68	2.45	-0.22↓	2.77	2.62	-0.14
	Science	2.79	2.72	-0.07	2.90	2.80	-0.10
	Social studies	3.06	2.83	-0.22↓	3.06	2.85	-0.21
Blanton	Reading	2.76	2.56	-0.19↓	2.75	2.77	0.02
	Math	2.76	2.32	-0.44↓	2.16	1.90	-0.26
	Science	3.13	2.79	-0.34↓	3.16	3.00	-0.16
	Social studies	3.15	2.68	-0.47↓	3.50	3.00	-0.50
Blazier	Reading	2.63	2.55	-0.07	2.46	2.41	-0.05
	Math	2.73	2.62	-0.11	2.58	2.21	-0.37
	Science	3.14	3.07	-0.06	2.83	3.10	0.26↑
	Social studies	3.18	3.04	-0.14	2.89	3.25	0.35↑
Govalle	Reading	2.54	2.64	0.09↑	2.56	2.49	-0.07
	Math	2.65	2.73	0.07↑	2.56	2.47	-0.09
	Science	3.08	3.13	0.04	3.02	2.87	-0.14
	Social studies	3.05	3.21	0.16	3.04	3.01	-0.03
Houston	Reading	2.62	2.55	-0.06	2.56	2.68	0.12
	Math	2.61	2.34	-0.26↓	2.31	2.40	0.09
	Science	3.06	2.90	-0.16↓	2.71	3.03	0.31
	Social studies	3.25	3.08	-0.16↓	3.06	3.21	0.15
Linder	Reading	2.68	2.23	-0.44↓	2.31	2.16	-0.15
	Math	2.66	2.13	-0.53↓	2.22	1.63	-0.58↓
	Science	3.12	3.10	-0.02	2.86	2.72	-0.13
	Social studies	3.33	3.24	-0.08	3.04	2.95	-0.09
Ortega	Reading	2.52	2.34	-0.18↓	2.69	2.61	-0.08
	Math	2.56	2.45	-0.10↓	2.78	2.43	-0.35

Campus	Core subject GPA	Participation status					
		Regular participants			Non-regular participants		
		2014–2015	2015–2016	GPA change	2014–2015	2015–2016	GPA change
	Science	2.83	2.79	-0.10↓	2.92	2.59	-0.33
	Social studies	2.89	2.71	-0.17↓	3.10	2.72	-0.37
Palm	Reading	2.50	2.38	-0.12	2.25	2.25	0.00
	Math	2.47	2.20	-0.26↓	2.35	2.01	-0.33↓
	Science	2.74	2.81	0.06	2.50	2.64	0.14
	Social studies	2.91	2.81	-0.10	2.89	2.70	-0.18
Paredes	Reading	2.48	2.58	0.09↑	2.41	2.53	0.12
	Math	2.27	2.40	0.13↑	2.11	2.37	0.26↑
	Science	2.29	2.42	0.13↑	2.17	2.37	0.19↑
	Social studies	2.63	2.71	0.07	2.44	2.65	0.21↑
Perez	Reading	2.60	2.19	-0.41↓	2.67	2.51	-0.15
	Math	2.58	2.14	-0.43↓	2.54	2.07	-0.47↓
	Science	2.84	2.61	-0.23↓	2.91	2.66	-0.24↓
	Social studies	2.91	2.60	-0.31↓	2.86	2.61	-0.24↓

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student records (TEAMS_GRDS)
Note. Arrows indicate statistically meaningful changes from year to year ($p \leq 0.05$).

Table 8. Afterschool Center on Education (ACE) Participants' Course Completion, by School Year

Campus	Course pass percentage					
	Regular participants			Non-regular participants		
	2014–2015	2015–2016	Course pass percentage point change	2014–2015	2015–2016	Course pass percentage point change
Allison	98.27	97.72	-0.55	97.34	98.42	1.08
Blanton	97.52	96.44	-1.08	98.48	92.73	-5.75
Blazier	98.40	98.07	-0.33	98.63	96.35	-2.28
Govalle	98.07	96.92	-1.15↓	97.75	95.78	-1.97↓
Houston	98.94	97.48	-1.46↓	97.20	97.76	0.56
Linder	97.15	97.70	0.55	97.52	96.71	-0.81
Ortega	96.12	97.43	1.31	98.03	99.52	1.49
Palm	97.18	98.37	1.19↑	98.87	98.60	-0.27
Paredes	96.39	96.54	0.15	95.86	97.26	1.40
Perez	97.79	97.28	-0.51	97.96	97.69	-0.27

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student records (TEAMS_GRDS).
Note. Arrows indicate statistically meaningful changes from year to year ($p \leq 0.05$).

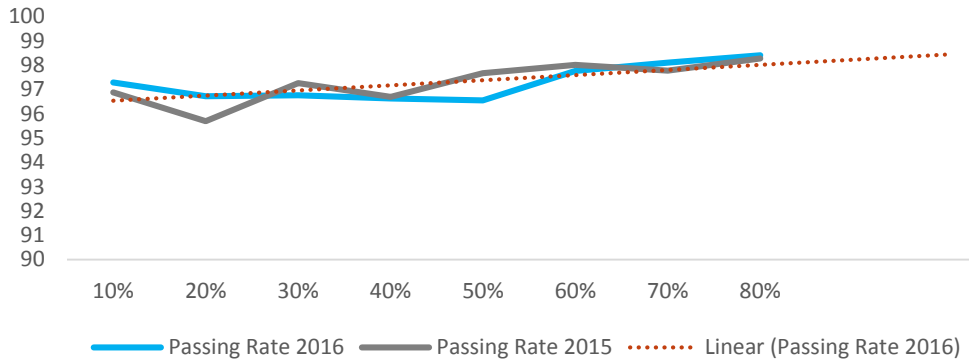
Figure 1.

ACE Austin students who participated in the program 60% to 80% of the time had significantly higher grade averages than did students who participated for less.

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student records (TEAMS_GRDS)

Figure 2.

ACE Austin students who participated in the program 60% to 80% of the time higher course passing rates than did students who participated less frequently.



Attendance Outcome

Program participants (regular and non-regular) at Blanton, Blazier, Houston, and Linder met attendance goals of decreased school-day absences from one year to the next (Table 9). Additionally, school-day absences significantly declined from 2014-2015 to 2015-2015 for regular participants at Houston and Perez. However, at Govalle and Paredes, program participants (regular and non-regular) experienced an increase in absences from year-to-year. Students who participated in the program more days had significantly better school-day attendance rates than did students who participated fewer days (Figure 3).

Table 9. Average Absent Days of Afterschool Center on Education (ACE) Participants, by School Year

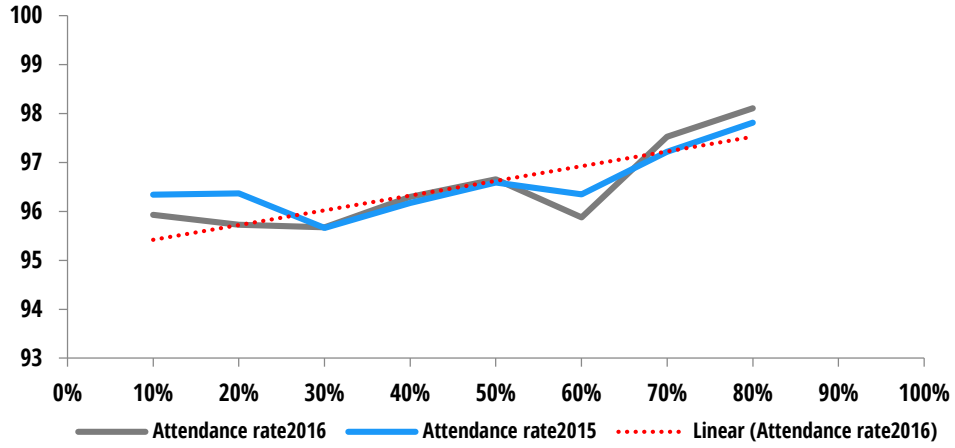
Mean days absent	Participation status					
	Regular participants			Non-regular participants		
	2014–2015	2015–2016	Days absent change	2014–2015	2015–2016	Days absent change
Allison	6.06	6.35	0.28	8.0	5.28	-2.72
Blanton	5.34	4.94	-0.40	10.3	6.2	-4.13
Blazier	5.15	4.90	-0.25	6.50	5.61	-0.89
Govalle	6.14	6.69	0.55	7.0	8.29	1.29
Houston	5.91	4.71	-1.19↓	5.0	4.94	-0.06
Linder	6.02	5.92	-0.10	6.26	6.22	-0.04
Ortega	5.52	6.66	1.14	9.32	7.81	-1.50
Palm	5.30	5.55	0.25	5.11	4.74	-0.37
Paredes	6.04	6.81	0.77	6.11	7.48	1.37↑
Perez	5.74	4.89	-0.86↓	4.61	5.29	0.68

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student attendance records.

Note. Attendance was calculated for students who were enrolled at ACE Austin campuses during the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school years. Arrows indicate statistically meaningful changes from year to year ($p \leq 0.05$).

Figure 3.

ACE Austin participants who participated in the program more number of days had significantly better school-day attendance rates than did students who participated fewer days.



Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2014–2016; AISD student attendance records.

DISCIPLINE OUTCOME

Program participants (regular and non-regular) met discipline outcome goals of either no removals or decreased removals from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 at Allison, Houston, and Linder (Table 10). Discipline outcomes were mixed for the remaining seven Cycle 8 AISD campuses. Participants who attended the program more often had fewer disciplinary referrals in both years than did students who participated fewer days (Figure 4).

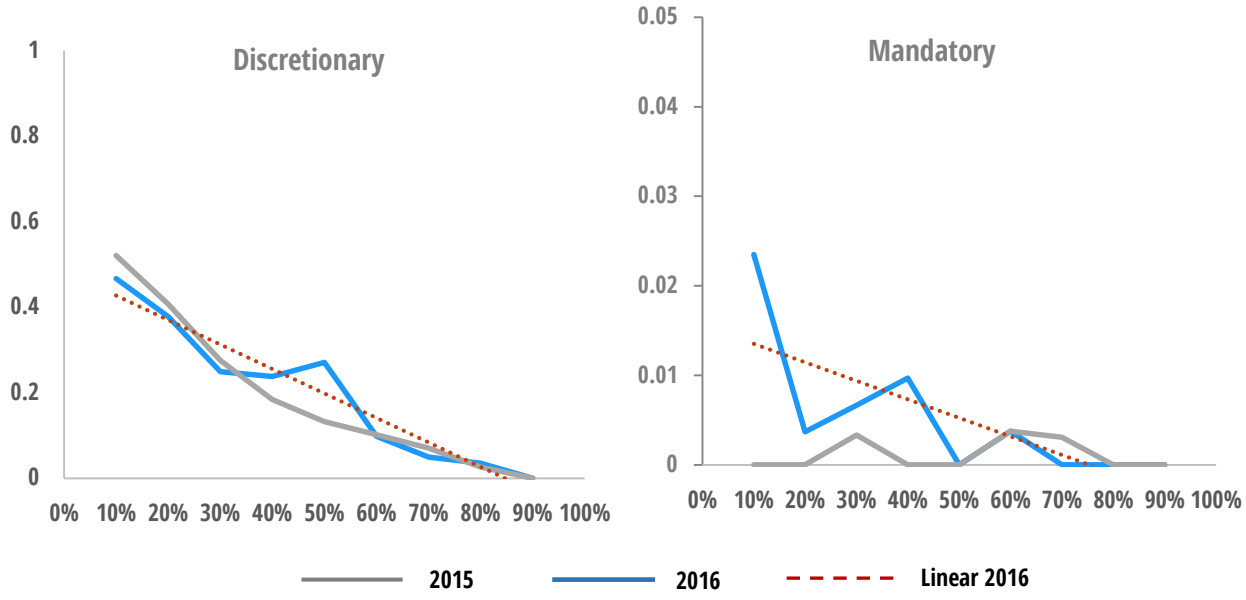
Table 10. Mandatory and Discretionary Discipline Removals of Afterschool Center on Education (ACE) Austin Participants, by School Year

Campus	Type of discipline removal	Regular participants			Non-regular participants		
		2014–2015	2015–2016	Discipline removal change	2014–2015	2015–2016	Discipline removal change
Allison	Mandatory	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.14	0.02	-0.12↓	0.32	0.20	-0.12↓
Blanton	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.03	0.26	0.23↑	0.00	0.00	0.00
Blazier	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.10	0.13	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.00
Govalle	Mandatory	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.07	0.09	0.02	0.11	0.15	0.04
Houston	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.11	0.09	-0.02	0.06	0.00	-0.06
Linder	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.13	0.02	-0.11↓	0.18	0.02	-0.16↓
Ortega	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.04
	Discretionary	0.04	0.13	0.09↑	0.04	0.07	0.03
Palm	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.05	0.07	0.02	0.19	0.10	-0.09
Paredes	Mandatory	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.03
	Discretionary	0.62	0.70	0.08	0.81	0.72	-0.09
Perez	Mandatory	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Discretionary	0.15	0.07	-0.08	0.13	0.15	0.02

Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student discipline records (ADIS)
Note. Discipline removals refer to only those discipline offenses for which the resulting disciplinary action was removal from the classroom (e.g., out-of-school suspension, placement in disciplinary alternative education program [DAEP]). All mandatory discipline offenses result in removal from campus. Discretionary removals are those offenses that do not require a removal by law. Arrows indicate statistically meaningful changes from year to year ($p \leq 0.05$).

Figure 4.

ACE participants who participated in the program more often had significantly fewer discipline removals (discretionary & mandatory) in both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years than did students who participated fewer days.



Source. ACE Austin participant records for 2015–2016; AISD student discipline records (ADIS).

Evaluator Commentary and Recommendations

Overall results were mostly mixed on all three outcome goals for the Cycle 8 AISD campuses. None of the 10 Cycle 8 AISD campuses met all three outcome goals- increased academic achievement, decreased school -day absences, and decreased disciplinary referrals from year to year.

Academic goals: Regular and non-regular program participants at Paredes experienced a significant increase in mean GPA in all four core subject areas, as well as an increase in course completion rates from 2014–2015 to 2015–2016 Regular participants at Palm had significantly better course completion rates in 2015–2016 compared to the previous year. Academic achievement outcomes were mostly negative for Blanton and Perez.

Given the mixed results for ACE Austin participants related to GPA, it is recommended that academic-related afterschool programs implement changes to better align with program goals. In addition, identifying the specific programs and strategies used to address academic issues, specifically, at Paredes, where all the academic goals were met, would be useful in understanding what may have contributed to this finding in order to influence the adoption of similar approaches at other campuses as well.

Attendance Goals: Program participants (regular and non-regular) at Blanton, Blazier, Houston, and Linder met attendance goals of decreased school-day absences from one year to the next. Additionally, school-day absences significantly declined from 2014-2015 to 2015-2015 for regular participants at Houston and Perez.

Findings indicates that increased participation in the afterschool program has an effect on attendance rates. Therefore it is recommended that program staff utilize strategies to encourage increased program participation by students in order to better their attendance outcomes at other campuses. Refinements to components that are effective should be ongoing at campuses where the goal was met.

At campuses where the attendance goal was not met: Govalle and Paredes, it is recommended that afterschool programs identify and implement effective recruitment strategies while providing services that cater to the needs and interests of students at their campus. These strategies could encourage increased attendance in the afterschool program which in turn will hopefully encourage regular school-day attendance.

Discipline goals: Program participants (regular and non-regular) met discipline outcome goals of either no removals or decreased removals from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 at Allison, Houston, and Linder. Discipline outcomes were mixed for the remaining seven Cycle 8 AISD campuses.

Based on this finding refinement to components that are effective should be ongoing so that they may continue to meet the needs of students at campuses where the discipline outcome goal was met. Campuses where disciplinary goals were not met could be due to the fact that students who already have a history of high disciplinary issues are specifically targeted and therefore the program would have difficulty in

demonstrating a significant reduction in referrals over the course of program participation. In these cases, the specific program goals need to be examined in order to better understand the desired outcomes for these students.

Program participation: Findings indicate that increased participation in the afterschool program had an effect on all three outcomes (academic performance, attendance rates and discipline referrals). Students who participated in the program more days received higher GPAs, higher course passing rates, higher school attendance rates and fewer disciplinary referrals than did students who participated fewer days. This finding underlines the importance for students to attend the afterschool programs on a regular basis in order to reap the benefits of the classes and activities being offered. Program providers should identify and implement appropriate retention strategies such as incentives, point reward systems, better snacks/food, which would increase student engagement and improve attendance.

Next Steps

Based on the evaluators' recommendations and commentary, the following next steps are recommended to help the Cycle 8 AISD campuses further improve the ACE program to meet the needs of students and parents.

Training: Sufficient training opportunities should be provided to afterschool program teachers throughout the course of the school year. Trainings should focus on topics such as program implementation fidelity, developing logic models, and the YPQ model. In addition, opportunities should be provided for school-day teachers and afterschool teachers to train together and work collaboratively in providing effective afterschool services and activities.

Identifying needs and aligning program goals to these needs: Overall program activities at each campus should be aligned with students' needs and interests. This will help achieve better program specific outcomes and help increase program attendance.

To accomplish this, site coordinators along with afterschool teachers at each campus should conduct a needs assessment at the beginning of the school year. In addition, feedback from parents and students should be solicited, and focus groups should be conducted with afterschool teachers, parents, students, site coordinators, and program directors to help determine the appropriate services for students at each campus.

Program implementation fidelity: To successfully meet the needs of students participating in the afterschool program and achieve outcome goals, it is crucial that appropriate curricula, activities and services of the program are implemented consistently and accurately. In particular issues with implementing a program for the first time, as is the case for the Cycle 8 AISD campuses, should be identified so that appropriate modifications and or additions can be made for the upcoming school year. These issues could relate to recruitment, marketing, resource allotment, staff training, and scope and appropriateness of activities being offered.

Furthermore, program implementation fidelity should be monitored and measured at regular intervals by site coordinators, program directors and the program evaluator and requisite modifications should be made if and when issues of fidelity are identified.

Availability of and access to appropriate resources: Several campuses reported challenges related to availability of classroom space. In addition, it was reported that program staff were often given short notice regarding space issues making it challenging for them to find alternatives. Effective communication between campus and program staff must be established and resource related contingencies should be in place beforehand in order to be able to provide quality and effective programming to participants.

Evaluator Information

Evaluation of the ACE Austin program at Cycle 8 schools served by AISD was conducted by a team of evaluators from DRE at AISD. The evaluators' scope of work is detailed as follows:

- Meet with the project director to review TEA's evaluation requirements and create an evaluation plan; determine what additional data, if any, are going to be collected in addition to data collected through 21st CCLC and state-level evaluation
- Meet with the project director and site coordinators to develop the center logic models; review the minimum evaluation questions outlined in the *Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide 2015–2016*; and add additional evaluation questions, as desired
- Meet with program staff routinely; provide support to program staff for the two required interim reports, based on the evaluation questions and other findings from ongoing internal monitoring processes
- Help project directors and site coordinators use data to plan professional development activities, hire staff with different skills and interests, and link personnel evaluation with internal monitoring results
- Conduct unstructured or structured observations of program activities to assess the fidelity of program implementation and recommend modifications, when necessary
- Assist centers in administering student and parent surveys
- Conduct focus groups with afterschool program participants
- Provide data for the fall, spring, and year-end reports due to TEA
- Collect program participation information, analyze data, and write the final annual evaluation reports (grant and center level), which will answer research questions stipulated in the grant proposals and link student outcomes to program objectives

The total cost of evaluation allocated for the 20 centers served by AISD across two cycles (i.e., 7 and 8 in 2015–2016) was $30,000.

APPENDIX A

AISD Cycle 8 Parent Survey

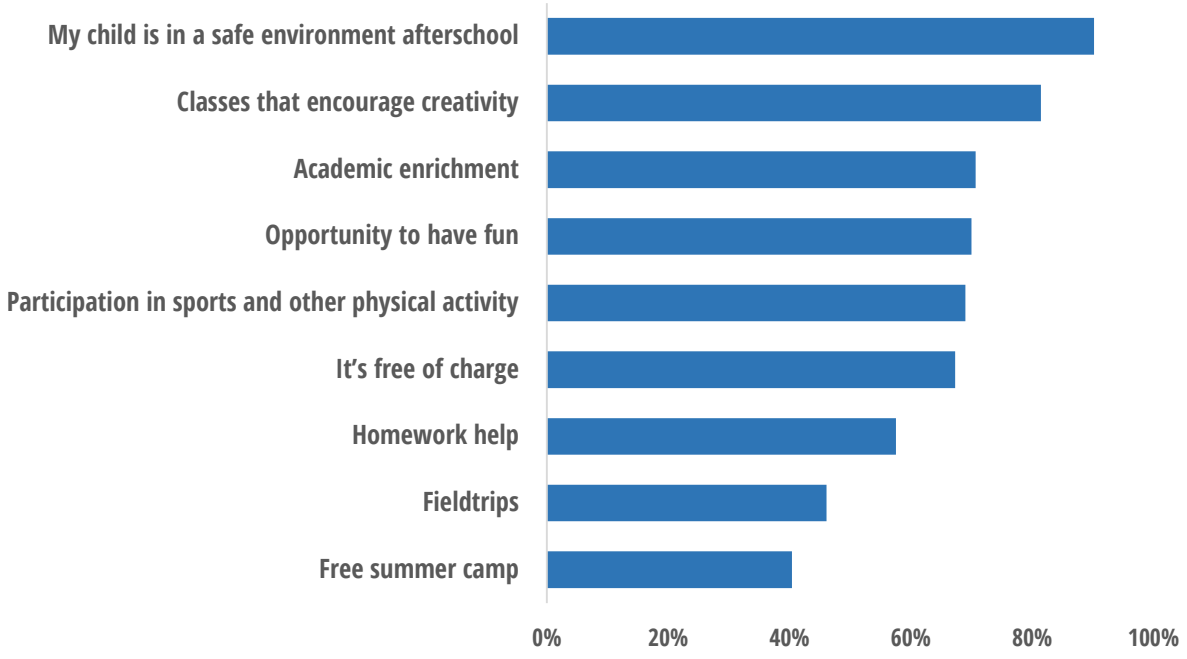
A parent survey was administered to ACE program participants to obtain parents' feedback on program implementation and on the program's impact on students' academic achievement and behaviors. A total of 297 parents of students who participated in ACE Austin Cycle 8 afterschool programs responded to the survey.

Results of the parent survey indicated that the following characteristics of the ACE afterschool program were considered most important (Figure 5): safe environment (90%), classes that encourage creativity (81%), and academic enrichment (71%). A large percentage of parent respondents felt their child showed better school attendance (68%), behavior (78%), and grades (78%) because of participation in the afterschool program (Figure 6).

In addition, most respondents who participated in ACE parent classes or events indicated they were happy with their instructors and the schedule (Table 11). Ninety-one percent of parent respondents reported they knew whom to contact when they had questions about the ACE program. Finally, most respondents (89%) felt that they were more connected to the school community as a result of attending these classes.

Figure 5.

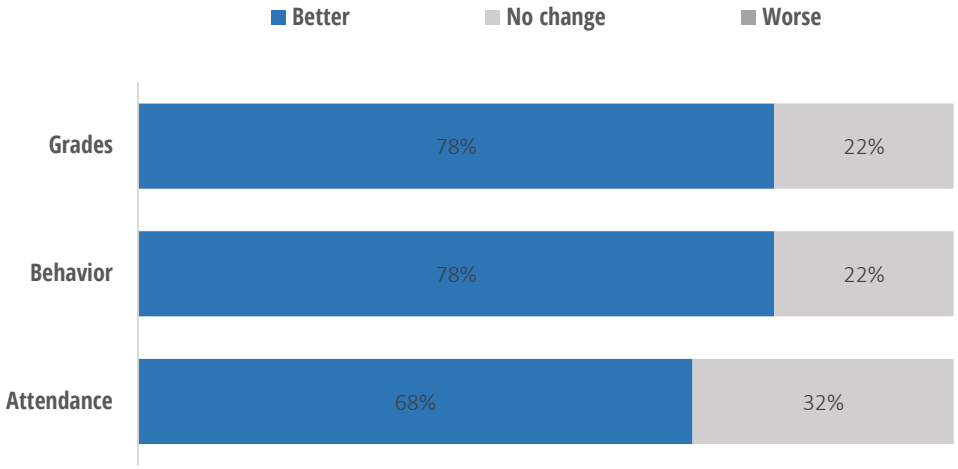
ACE parents reported that the following qualities of the ACE Afterschool Program were most important.



Source. ACE Austin Parent Survey 2016

Figure 6.

ACE parents reported that their child did better because of the Afterschool Program.



Source. ACE Austin Parent Survey 2016

Table 11.

Percentage of Parents Indicating They Liked the Instructor or the Schedule of ACE Classes or Events, by Events/Activity Type

	% liked the instructor	% liked the schedule
Coffee with principal	97%	92%
English as a second language	94%	83%
Family Nights/Performances	98%	95%
Love & Logic	98%	85%
Social and emotional learning	96%	95%
Strengthening families	96%	91%
Zumba	96%	88%

Source. ACE Austin Parent Survey 2016

APPENDIX B

AISD Cycle 8 Student Survey

The AISD ACE Program Student Survey was administered in Spring 2016 to gather information about students' perceptions of the afterschool programs offered at AISD campuses. The survey was administered by the site coordinators or other program staff during the afterschool program time to students in grades 4 and above. A total of 345 students from Cycle 8 AISD campuses completed the survey (response rate of 31%). Nearly half of the survey participants were 4th graders. The demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and LEP status) of the survey respondents were similar to those of the population of program participants (Figure 7).

Most of the survey respondents reported that they participated in enrichment programs (93%). About half of the students were never home alone, and about one-fifth were home alone or with friends after school without an adult present 3 or more days a week before they started coming to the afterschool program (Figure 10). Students who participated in enrichment activities attended school more than did peers in other programs (Figure 11). Participation in enrichment programs did not have an effect on students' discipline removal rates (Table 13). Participation in academic program did not have an effect on students' GPA in reading or math (Table 14). Student survey respondents rated items on the survey using a 4-point scale, ranging from *agree a lot* to d*isagree a lot*. The majority of the student survey participants *agreed a lot* or *agreed a little* on most of the items (Table 15).

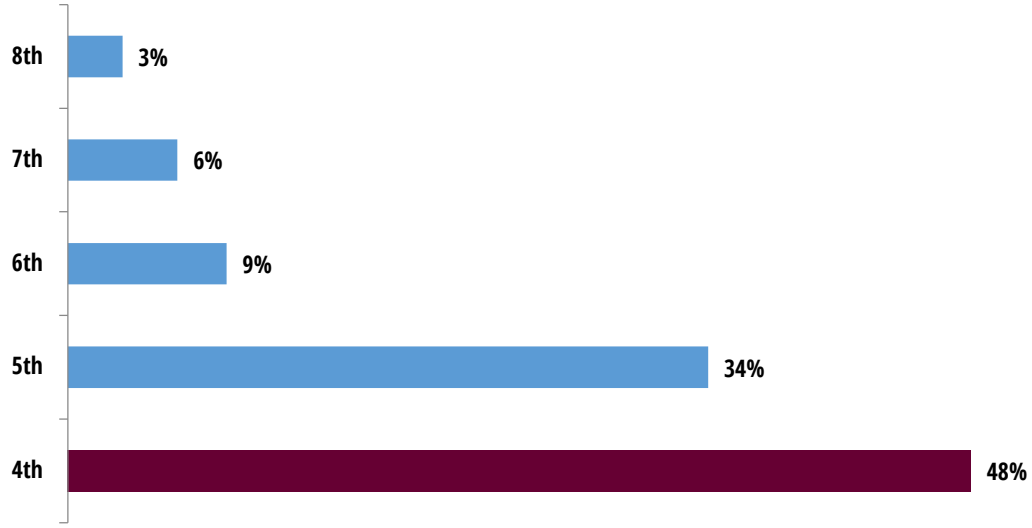
Table 12.
Survey response rates were low at most campuses

Campus Name	# of program participants*	# of survey respondents	Response rate
Allison Elementary School	46	33	71.7%
Blanton Elementary School	45	36	80.0%
Blazier Elementary School	81	36	44.4%
Govalle Elementary School	65	30	46.2%
Houston Elementary School	61	36	59.0%
Linder Elementary School	80	34	42.5%
Ortega Elementary School	72	34	47.2%
Palm Elementary School	82	27	32.9%
Paredes Middle School	506	59	11.7%
Perez Elementary School	76	20	26.3%
Cycle Total	1,114	345	31.0%

Source. AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016; ACE Austin participant record for 2015–2016
* *Note*. The AISD Afterschool Program Survey was sent to students at grades 4 and above. The number of program participants listed in the table is the number of students in grades 4 and above, instead of the total number of program participants this year.

Figure 7.

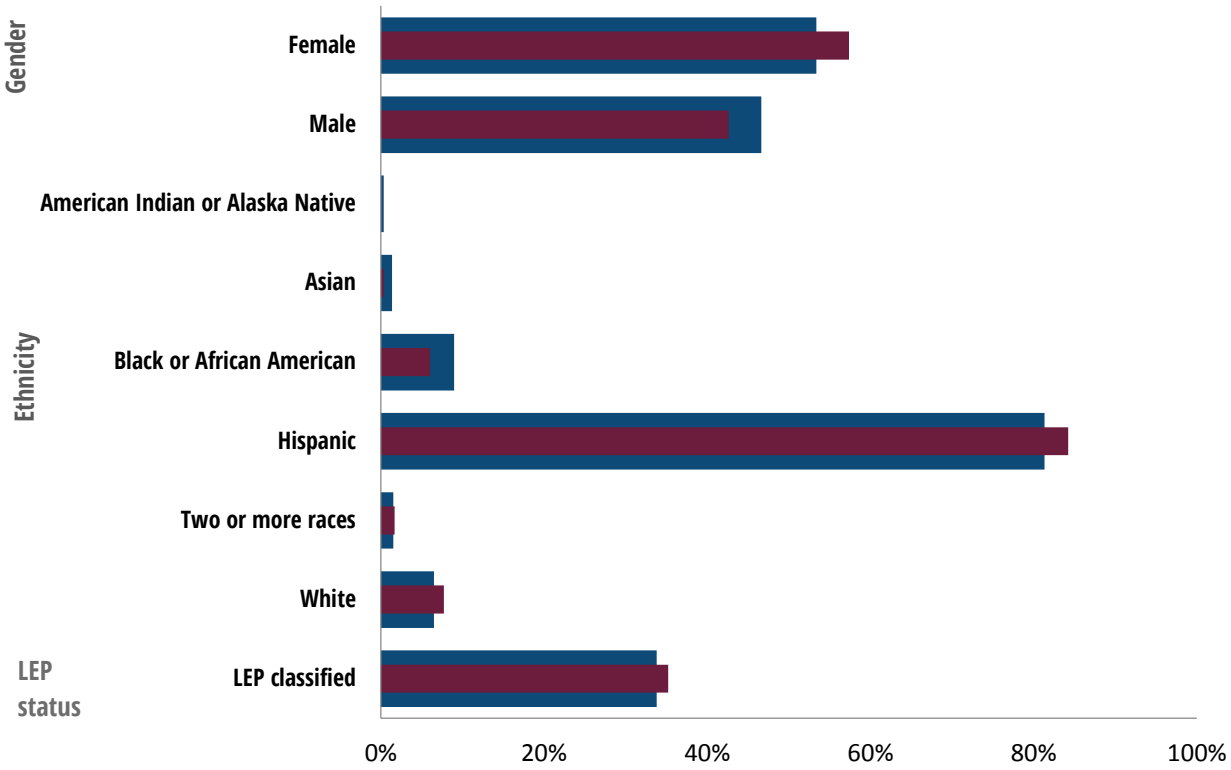
The percentage of student survey participants was higher in 4th grade than any other grade.



Source. AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016

Figure 8.

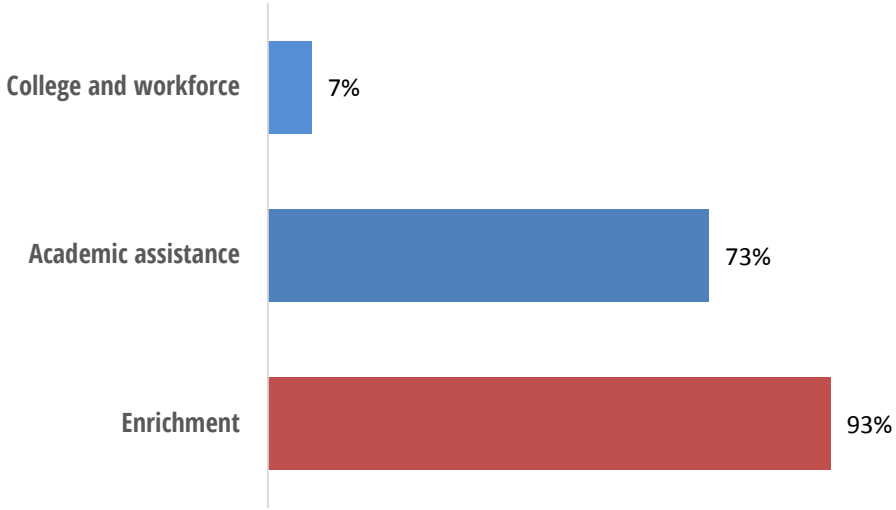
Survey participants matched program participants in nearly all cases.



Source. ACE Austin participant record for 2015–2016; AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016

Figure 9.

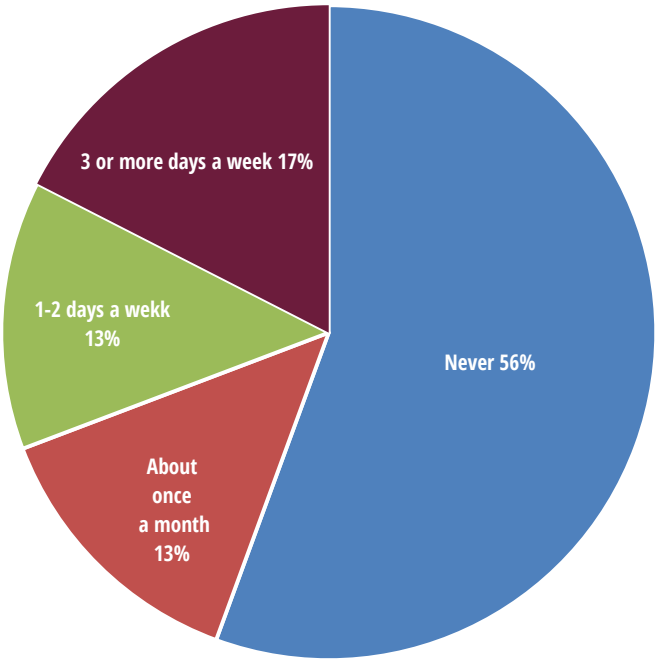
Many more program participants enrolled in enrichment activities than in other programs.



Source. AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016

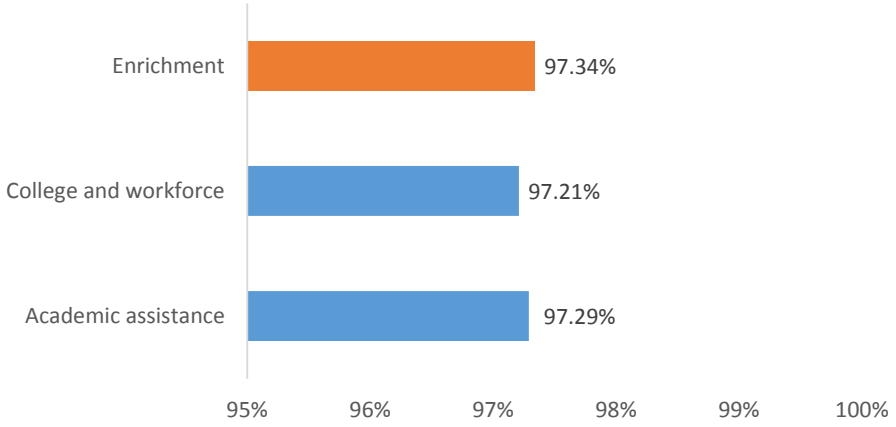
Figure 10.

Only 17% of the students were home alone or with friends after school without an adult present 3 or more days a week before they started coming to the afterschool program.



Source. AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016

Figure 11.
Students who participated in enrichment activities attended school more than did peers in other programs.



Source. ACE Austin participant record for 2015–2016; AISD student attendance records (TEAMS_ATTENDANCE)

Table 13.
The differences in discipline removal rates of survey respondents who participated in enrichment programs and respondents who participated in other program types were not significant.

Discipline removal rates	Enrichment program survey respondents			
	Mandatory removals		Discretionary removals	
	Participants (*n* = 320)	Non-participants (*n* = 25)	Participants (*n* = 320)	Non-participants (*n* = 25)
	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.04
Significant $p \leq 0.05$	-		-	

Source. ACE AISD participant record for 2015–2016; AISD student discipline records (ADIS)

Table 14.
The differences in math and reading GPAs of survey respondents who participated in academic programs and respondents who participated in other program types were significant.

	Academic program survey respondents			
	Reading GPA		Math GPA	
	Participants (*n* = 196)	Non-participants (*n* = 85)	Participants (*n* = 196)	Non-participants (*n* = 85)
	2.33	2.48	2.07	2.25
Significant $p \leq 0.05$	-		-	

Source. ACE Austin participant record for 2015–2016; AISD student records (TEAMS_GRDS)

Table 15.

The majority of student survey respondents agreed on the survey items

Survey item	%	n
1. I like my afterschool classes.	93.3%	329
2. I feel safe in my afterschool program.	92.9%	322
3. The afterschool program keeps me from getting into trouble.	74.1%	286
4. I come to school more because of the afterschool program.	72.3%	303
5. I get help with my homework in the afterschool program.	86.9%	314
6. The afterschool program helps me learn skills that will help me get a job.	83.7%	294
7. The afterschool program helps me learn about how to get into college.	76.9%	290
8. The afterschool program gives me a chance to help others.	86.7%	300
9. The afterschool program helps me learn skills that will help me be a leader.	87.2%	304
10. In the afterschool program I have the opportunity to do things I like.	89.6%	318
11. My afterschool program makes learning fun.	87.9%	321
12. School is easier because I come to the afterschool program.	78.6%	299
13. My afterschool program teachers make me feel my school work is important.	87.2%	304
14. Someone in my family went to activities or events held in my afterschool	65.9%	255
15. The afterschool program teaches me about my health (e.g. the importance of eating healthy, exercising, etc.)	83.8%	303
16. I get to do math and science projects in my afterschool program.	75.6%	307
17. I trust the afterschool program teachers here.	90.7%	321
18. I would sign up again for the afterschool program.	90.6%	297
19. I am sure that I will finish high school.	96.2%	315
20. I am sure that I will go to college.	94.8%	308
21. My life now is the best it could possibly be.	86.1%	302
22. My life in five years will be the best it could possibly be.	93.4%	271

Source. **AISD Afterschool Program Student Survey, 2015–2016**

APPENDIX C

AISD Cycles 7 and 8 Student Focus Group Findings

The evaluation team at AISD conducted student focus groups with 52 ACE program participants from 3rd grade to 11th grade at six schools (five elementary schools and one middle school) in Spring 2016. The focus group participants were asked about their favorite activities in the ACE program, their understanding of the purpose of the afterschool program, and their educational and career aspirations.

Attitudes toward the Program

Favorite activities. Because various types of activities were offered in different schools, students' favorite activities varied across campuses. However, student participants reported that the activities in the ACE program were fun and different from the regular school activities. In ACE, they had the opportunity to participate in new and interesting activities, such as building robots, fishing, cooking, acting, and sports.

Purpose of the program. When asked about the goals of the afterschool program, 37 students offered their responses. The following represent the most frequent answers:

The program provided a safe place for children to be while parent(s) worked (*n* = 18);
Students could learn new or more things at the program (e.g., soccer, English as a second language [ESL], math) (*n* = 9);
Students could have fun at the program (*n* = 7);
Students could make new friends/improve communication skills with others (*n* = 3);
The program helped students do homework (*n* = 3).

Attitudes toward the school. The focus group was asked if being part of the afterschool program changed how they felt about school. Most of the focus group participants believed that the afterschool program was more fun than the morning school (*n* = 29 out of 34). Some of them agreed that the afterschool program made them more likely to attend regular school because they looked forward to participating in the afterschool program activities. One student said, "ACE gives me something to look forward to."

Participation in the Program

Most of the students interviewed reported that they participated in the afterschool program 4 or 5 days per week. Most of the students started attending the afterschool program as soon as the program became available on their campuses.

College and Career

Most of the student participants indicated they would go to college after high school. Their career choices varied across professions (e.g., basketball player, dancer, doctor, engineer, and lawyer). Students reported that their goal for this school year was to pass or make better grades, and pass State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing.

Most of the students (*n* = 48 out of 52 responses) reported that the afterschool program had helped them to achieve their goals by providing more learning opportunities and preparing them better for college and career. One student stated, "ACE will help me get into a good college." Another student said, "In the

program, we get to learn and do activities related to our goals." Only a few students (n = 4) believed that the afterschool program did not help them achieve their goals.

Program Environment

Friendship. Student participants reported that they met new friends at the afterschool program. Furthermore, students mentioned that the program helped them be more social and communicative with other participants.

Support. Student participants reported that they could go to the site coordinator of the afterschool program when they had a problem. Some sought help from friends in the afterschool program. A few students indicated that they talked to their teachers or parents.

Changes to the program. When asked about their suggestions for how to improve the program, all student participants suggested that the program offer more activities. The activities they suggested included increased outdoor time, baking/cooking classes, math club, art and music classes, and science activities. Students at several campuses also suggested providing better snacks during programming.

APPENDIX D

AISD Cycles 7 and 8 Parent Focus Group Findings

In December 2015, the evaluation team of the ACE Austin afterschool program did two focus group interviews with parents whose children were enrolled in the program during the school year 2015-2016. The focus groups were conducted to solicit opinions and feedback to the afterschool program from those parents. A total of 26 parents participated in the focus groups. Most of these participants' children had been in the ACE program for 2 to 3 years. This report presents findings from the two parent focus group interviews.

What are the main reasons you send your kid(s) to the afterschool program?

Economic reasons. Because ACE afterschool program is free for the participants, parents found it was a great opportunity that allowed them to do their full-time job, go back to college to complete a degree, or get a better job. Parents indicated that available extended care in this area was either expensive or of poor quality.

Fun and creative activities for children. Parents believed that their child enjoyed the various fun and creative activities the ACE program provided.

Safe and trusted environment. The ACE program was perceived as a safe place for the children of these participants. Parents trusted the ACE program teachers to treat their child well. One parent commented, "They are the teachers we see every day."

If the ACE program was not available, where would your child go after school?

Parents viewed not having the ACE program as a burden for them. Some indicated they did not know what they would do. Extended day care is usually expensive, and the parents felt they could not trust staff in extended care as much as they trusted the teachers in the ACE program. Some parents had had bad experiences with those extended care facilities. Parent would leave an older child at home or ask grandparents or other relatives for help. Parents from Cycle 7 campuses expressed their concerns about the sustainability of the program due to the ending of federal funding for the current cycle.

How is the ACE program meeting your needs?

Parents listed a variety of benefits the ACE afterschool program provided for their child, including improving reading skills, improving social and emotional skills, providing extra activities that the regular school normally did not offer, and helping their child complete homework.

What parent classes or events did you attend? Which ones did you like the most/the least? Why?

Some parents had participated in several family events, such as family nights, movie nights, and parent classes. Other parents reported that they had attended ESL classes and Zumba classes. The family events

and classes were viewed as enjoyable by these parents. However, some working parents indicated that most of the events or classes were offered during work hours, which made it hard for them to participate. In addition, a few parents indicated they never heard of any classes they could attend.

What changes would you make to the program?

The ACE program was offered for some of the student participants on Fridays, which made it inconvenient for some parents to find a child care provider for their child. Most of these parents hoped the program would be available from Monday through Friday.

Parents found it hard to reach the program staff in case of emergency (e.g., if they had to pick up a child on a particular day). It is recommended that the program improve communication with parents to let them know about (a) events and classes available to them, (b) requirements and policies of the program (e.g., attendance, early pick up), and (c) a contact person in case of emergency (i.e., so that a prompt response is guaranteed).

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