

# Afterschool Centers on Education

Cycle 9 Foundation Communities

Final Report 2019–2020



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is the program administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the federally funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). The Foundation Communities received Cycle 9 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding to provide a comprehensive range of out-of-school-time (OST) academic assistance, academic enrichment, college and career readiness, and family engagement activities. Building on the existing infrastructure of evidence-based OST activities and partnerships, ACE Foundation Communities collaborates with a range of partners to provide a comprehensive menu of before-school, afterschool, and summer programming. ACE Foundation Communities' Cycle 9 program exists to provide intentional afterschool program experiences that are high quality, are challenging, and inspire all program participants to improve their school outcomes. The main goals of the youth and family afterschool programs offered by ACE Foundation Communities 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

## Key Accomplishments

The ACE Foundation Communities' Cycle 9 program was aligned with the campus needs assessments and goals identified in the campus improvement plans (CIP) of each center. Overall, program participation was significantly related to school-day attendance, controlling for students' demographics, such as socioeconomic status (SES), gender, English language learner (ELL) status, and race. Despite school building closures due to COVID-19, the ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 program remained committed to providing quality programming that was accessible, flexible, and supportive toward the development of students' full potential. Table 1 summarizes the major key accomplishments, based on Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ACE component areas.

## Areas for Improvement

ACE Foundation Communities' Cycle 9 program staff continue to identify opportunities to assist students in maximizing the benefits from participating in the ACE program. One area worthy of exploring for program improvement is the development of a monitoring system to track identified student needs linked to associated outcomes. At

present, students in the ACE program are recruited for a variety of reasons, such as to improve school-day attendance, discipline, or academic performance. While staff know where to place students in the program, no mechanism exists to record students’ needs and then to evaluate students’ outcomes based on those targeted needs. Tracking the unique reasons students are enrolled in ACE would make it possible to ascertain the effectiveness of the programming provided for those specific purposes. Additionally, all virtual lesson plans and online modules developed and created by the site directors, program directors, and facilitators should be systematically cataloged, based on Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ACE component area, subject area, grade level, or electronic platform. Finally, within the current situation due to the pandemic, the site directors, program director, and evaluators should continue to explore new ways to support students’ learning and development for program improvement.

Table 1.  
**Summary of Key Accomplishments**

Program measure and outcome	Result
Student population served	😊
Program quality	😊
Reading	😐
Math	😐
School-day attendance	😊
Discipline	😐

*Note.* Regression analyses were conducted using the number of days of program participation to predict each student outcome (i.e., reading and math grades, school-day attendance rate, and number of discipline referrals).

- 😊 Program participation was significantly positively related to the outcome.
- 😐 No relationship was found between program participation and the outcome.
- 😞 Program participation was significantly negatively related to the outcome.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	i
Key Accomplishments.....	i
Areas for Improvement .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
List of Figures.....	iv
List of Tables .....	iv
Introduction and Purpose of the Program .....	1
Evaluation Strategy .....	2
Expectations .....	2
Measurement .....	3
Grantee and Center Overview.....	4
Participants .....	5
Program Quality Implementation.....	5
Outcomes .....	6
Academic Achievement Outcomes: Grades in Reading and Math.....	7
Nonacademic Student Outcomes: School-Day Attendance and Discipline.....	7
After Required School Building Closures Due to COVID-19.....	8
Summary .....	10
Key Accomplishments.....	10
Areas for Improvement .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendices.....	12
Appendix A: Campus-Level Participants.....	12
Appendix B: Campus-Level Student Outcomes .....	14

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. ACE Foundation Communities Texas 21 <sup>st</sup> CCLC Core Component Areas .....	2
Figure 2. At the three campuses served, ACE regular participants ranged from 8% to 38% of the student body. ....	5
Figure 3. ACE Foundation Communities Continuous Quality Improvement Cycle .....	6
Figure 4. Texas 21 <sup>st</sup> CCLC ACE Program Impact Areas .....	7
Figure 5. ACE Foundation Communities Operations During COVID-19 .....	9

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Summary of Key Accomplishments .....	ii
Table 2. Summary of Program Methodology Prior to Required School Building Closures Due to COVID-19 (March 13, 2020) .....	3
Table 3. Summary of Program Methodology After Required School Building Closures Due to COVID-19 (March 13, 2020) .....	4
Table 4. Cycle 9 Campuses Served and Relevant Demographics .....	4
Table 5. Summary of Key Accomplishments .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table A.1. ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants ..	12
Table A.2. ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Demographics .....	12
Table A.3. ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Grade Level .....	12
Table A.4. ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Race .....	13
Table B.1. ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Student Outcomes.....	14

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is the program administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the federally funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). The Foundation Communities received Cycle 9 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding to provide a comprehensive range of out-of-school-time (OST) academic assistance, academic enrichment, college and career readiness, and family engagement activities. Building on the existing infrastructure of evidence-based OST activities and partnerships, ACE Foundation Communities collaborates with a range of partners to provide a comprehensive menu of before-school, afterschool, and summer programming. ACE Foundation Communities' Cycle 9 program exists to provide intentional afterschool program experiences that are high quality, are challenging, and inspire all program participants to improve their school outcomes. The main goals of the youth and family afterschool programs offered by ACE Foundation Communities 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

The ACE program is at 32 schools across the district, with the support of the TEA. Foundation Communities was granted Cycle 9 CCLC funding to support 3 campuses at AISD. At each center, activities are offered at least 15 hours per week for 30 weeks during the academic year and 16 hours per week for 6 weeks during the summer. All activities are in one or more of the four Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC core component areas: academic assistance, enrichment, family engagement, and college and career readiness (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

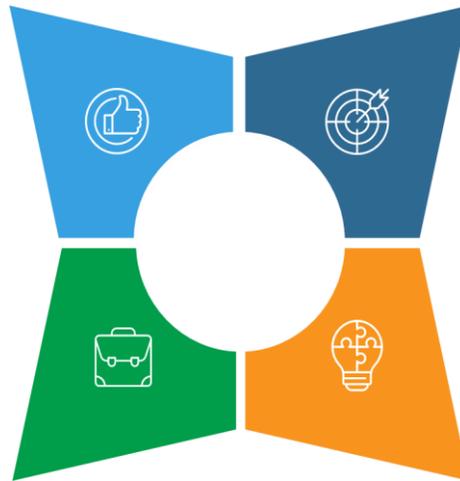
## ACE Foundation Communities Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Core Component Areas

### Family engagement

ACE Foundation Communities staff partner with the AISD Adult Education Department and parent support specialists to provide family engagement activities that help connect families to schools and enable them to support their student's academic achievement.

### College and career readiness

The ACE Foundation Communities participants are provided with activities to help them prepare for college and career. Students investigate careers, visit area colleges and universities, practice public speaking skills, and participate in service projects.



### Academic assistance

ACE Foundation Communities offer activities designed to improve students' achievement by providing extra assistance and support through tutoring and homework help for students who are struggling in core subjects, including science, math, reading, and social studies.

### Enrichment

ACE Foundation Communities offer 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.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY

### Expectations

The Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) staff and ACE Foundation Communities 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, by monitoring program operation; (b) staying on track, by ensuring the program stayed focused on the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes; (c) efficiency, by streamlining service delivery and lowering the cost of services; (d) accountability, by producing evidence of program effects; and (e) sustainability, by providing evidence of effectiveness to all stakeholders.

The ACE Foundation Communities program staff used the TX21<sup>st</sup> Student 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 the TX21<sup>st</sup> Student Tracking system to ensure accurate reporting to the TEA.

## Measurement

Program participation files and AISD student records provided demographic information and results for each of the school-related outcomes. Due to COVID-19, AISD closed all school buildings and facilities on March 13, 2020, and pivoted to a distance learning model. School buildings remained closed through the end of the school year. No State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) or end-of-course (EOC) exams were conducted for this school year, and the program was not able to collect student or parent surveys.

While end-of-year program participants' outcomes for the 2019–2020 school year were limited, efforts were made to keep the measurement of program outcomes consistent. School-day attendance, grades, and discipline data were still examined, but were limited to the time period for which data were available (i.e., from August 12, 2019, through March 13, 2020). Data analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between students' outcomes (i.e., academic achievement in reading and math, school-day attendance, and discipline) and program participation. Tables 2 and 3 present a summary of the methodology used in this report, based on program objectives.

Table 2.

**Summary of Program Methodology Prior to Required School Building Closures Due to COVID-19 (March 13, 2020)**

Program objective	Measurement and data analysis	Data collection/source
Improve participants' academic performance in reading and math	Multiple linear regression examined relationships between program participation and academic outcomes (grades in reading and math), controlling for gender, English language learner (ELL) status, SES, and race	Program participation file; AISD student grades and demographic records
Improve participants' school-day absences	Multiple linear regression examined relationships between program participation and school-day attendance, controlling for gender, ELL status, SES, and race	Program participation file; AISD student attendance and demographic records
Improve participants' behavior	Multiple linear regression examined relationships between program participation and discipline, controlling for gender, ELL status, SES, and race	Program participation file; AISD student discipline and demographic records

Table 3.

**Summary of Program Methodology After Required School Building Closures Due to COVID-19 (March 13, 2020)**

Program objective	Measurement and data analysis	Data collection/ source
<b>Create continuous learning</b>	<b>Number and type of learning modules, virtual lessons or catalog developed; platform used; and services provided to support students with their learning and development</b>	<b>Program manager's description</b>
<b>Provide family support and engagement</b>	<b>Services, training, or support given to parents to help them assist their students with "new" learning</b>	<b>Program manager's description</b>

**GRANTEE AND CENTER OVERVIEW**

Foundation Communities has three on-site community learning centers at each of their housing communities in Austin. These centers provide services to students attending the three AISD neighborhood elementary schools and their families. The Trails at Vintage Creek Learning Center provides services to Andrews Elementary School students and parents, M Station Learning Center provides services to Campbell Elementary School students and parents, and St. Elmo Neighborhood Learning Center provides services to St. Elmo Elementary School students and parents. District data indicated that the percentage of students at Cycle 9 campuses who were low SES (i.e., qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch) was above the district and state averages. The percentage of students who were considered at risk of dropping out of school and the percentage of students who were classified as ELLs were at least or above district and state averages at two of the three ACE Foundation Communities Cycle campuses (Table 4).

Table 4.

**Cycle 9 Campuses Served and Relevant Demographics**

School	Percentage Low SES	Percentage at risk	Percentage ELL
<b>Campbell Elementary School (M Station)</b> ( <i>n</i> = 188)	87%	50%	14%
<b>St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center)</b> ( <i>n</i> = 299)	86%	69%	57%
<b>Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center)</b> ( <i>n</i> = 353)	89%	84%	77%
<b>AISD</b>	54%	49%	27%
<b>State</b>	61%	50%	20%

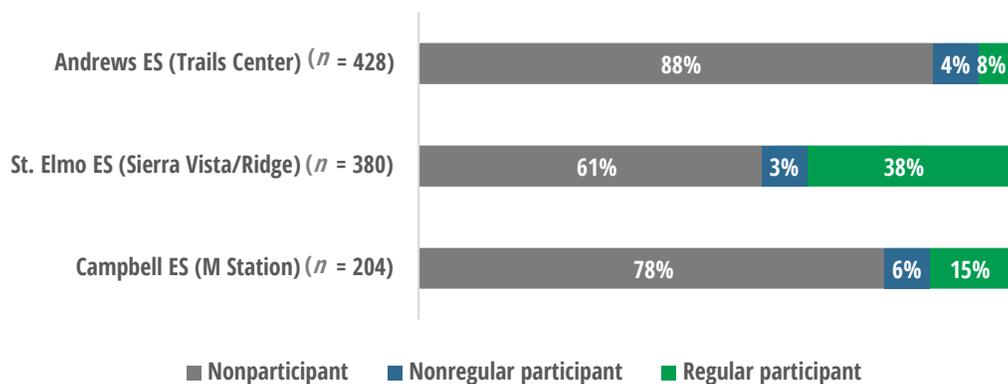
Source. 2019–2020 AISD student data; 2018–2019 TEA Academic Performance Report

## Participants

During the 2019–2020 school year, the ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 program provided afterschool services to 242 students and hosted events or activities for 84 families at the ACE centers mentioned. Of the 242 students served, 200 of them were regular participants (i.e., attended the afterschool program for 45 days or more). Program participants represented less than a fifth of the students enrolled at Cycle 9 campuses. The percentage of ACE Foundation Communities’ regular participants ranged from 8% to 38% of the students from the campuses they served (Figure 2). Campus-level demographics mirrored the cycle-level demographics, and all campuses served similar student groups (Appendix A).

Figure 2.

**At the three campuses served, ACE regular participants ranged from 8% to 38% of the student body.**



Source. TX21<sup>st</sup> Student Tracking system 2019–2020; AISD student records

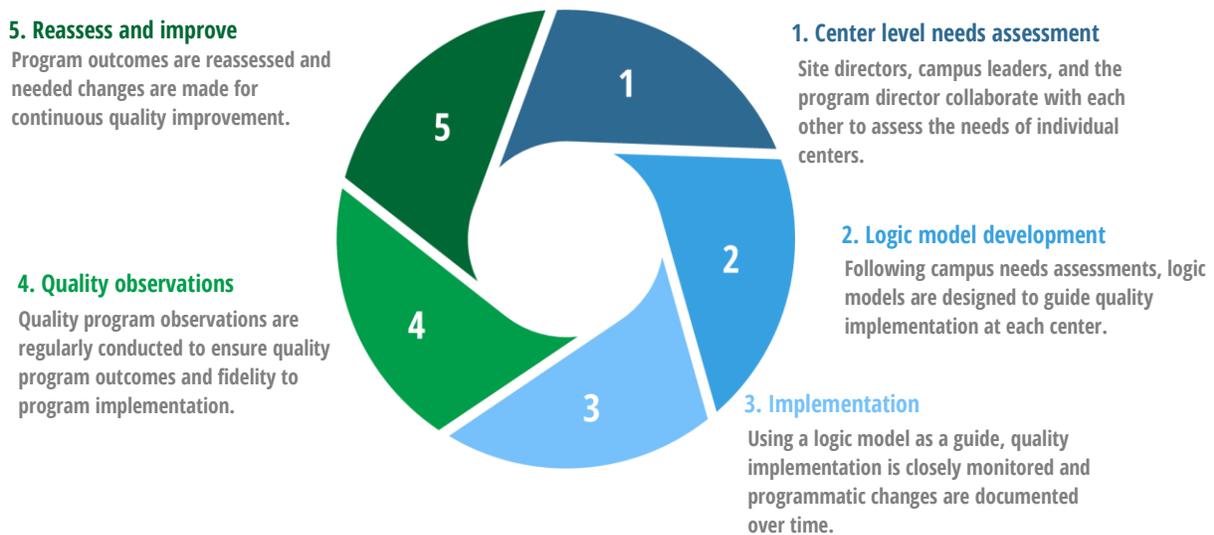
## PROGRAM QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION

Guided by the ACE Foundation Communities’ program quality implementation cycle, programming was developed based on the needs of each campus (Figure 3). Campus needs assessments were conducted at these schools through interviews with the principals, review of campus demographic information, surveys with parents, and (at St. Elmo only) an advisory council. The needs assessments indicated that students and their families had few options for out-of-school time programs that were affordable and met the needs of working parents. To address these needs, Foundation Communities’ sites provided free, out-of-school time programming for children, both after school and during the summer months. The centers provided students with quality academic assistance through homework help. Adult staff who were familiar with diverse student backgrounds and family structures helped to bridge the gap for ELLs. The programs provided times for practicing standardized test skills in all subject areas as well as

standards-aligned enrichment activities, allowing students to practice classroom skills that challenged and engaged them. Foundation Communities afterschool programs offered students and their families additional support, providing them with stability to be successful in school and in life. Each learning center ran the following programming:

- academic assistance
- fitness (CATCH curriculum)
- green and healthy (environmental / health lessons created by the sustainability team)
- I-Ready (digital reading program)
- fun Friday activities/clubs

**Figure 3.**  
**ACE Foundation Communities Continuous Quality Improvement Cycle**



Following campus needs assessments, logic models were designed to guide quality implementation at each center. Site directors, in collaboration with the project directors, developed the logic models, which also served as a tool for documenting programmatic changes over time. Each center logic model included six components: resources, implementation practices, outputs/activities, outputs/participation, intermediate outcomes, and impact.

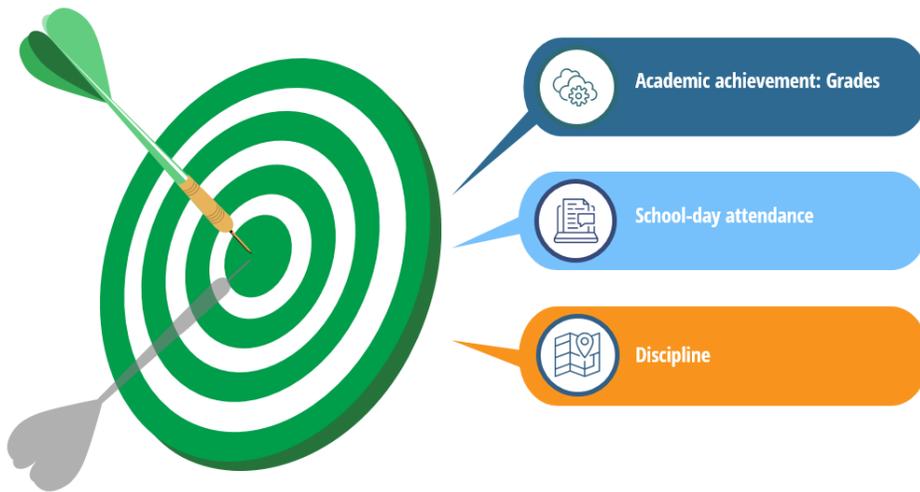
## OUTCOMES

Because we expected the program would have a bigger impact on students who participated more than on students who participated less, we examined the relationship between the number of days of program participation and each of the expected student

outcomes (i.e., academic achievement in reading and math, school-day attendance, and discipline). Due to school building closures because of the pandemic, some of the proposed student outcome measures (e.g., STAAR and EOC) were not available this year, and so are not included in this report.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between program participation (i.e., total number of days in the program) and each anticipated outcome (Figure 4), controlling for SES, ELL status, gender, and race. Due to very few participants not in the free or reduced lunch category, SES was eliminated from all analyses. Table 5 shows the results for all students in the program; see Appendix B for campus-level results.

**Figure 4.**  
**Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ACE Program Impact Areas**



### **Academic Achievement Outcomes: Grades in Reading and Math**

One of the ACE Foundation Communities program goals was to have a positive impact from program participation on reading and math achievement. We examined the relationships between students' number of days of program participation and their grades in reading and math. Because different grading systems are used at different school levels, and because we wanted to examine across grade levels, we transformed all grades into z scores to standardize grades within subjects. Results did not find a relationship between program participation and either reading or math grades.

### **Nonacademic Student Outcomes: School-Day Attendance and Discipline**

We also examined the relationships of program participation with two nonacademic student outcomes: school-day attendance rates and discipline referrals (including both

discretionary and mandatory referrals). Results revealed that program participation was significantly related to school-day attendance. However, program participation was not significantly related to discipline. In other words, students who participated more days in the program had better school-day-attendance than did those who participated less, but the number of discipline referrals they experienced was not related to their participation in the afterschool program.

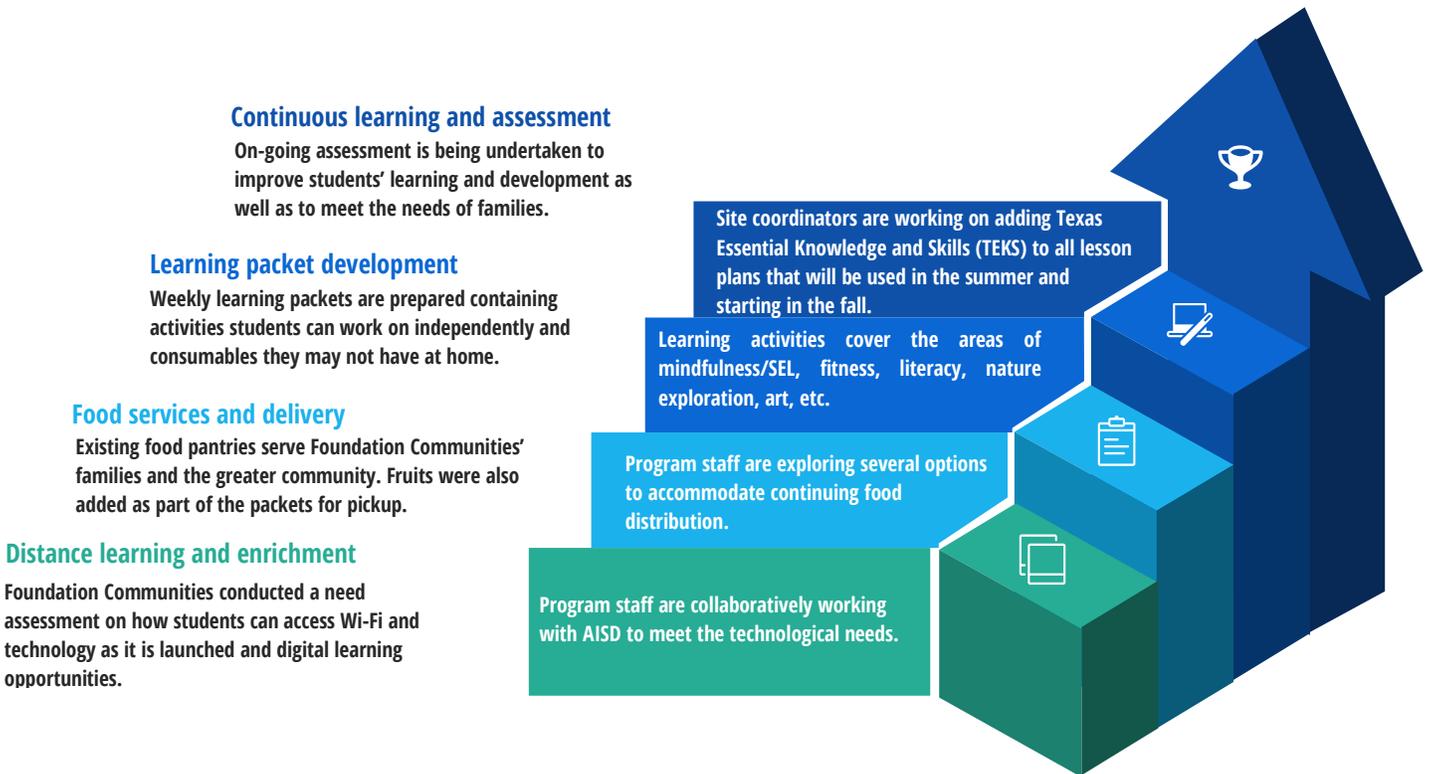
## **AFTER REQUIRED SCHOOL BUILDING CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19**

The Foundation Communities' mission is to provide affordable housing, which "empowers our residents and neighbors to achieve educational success, financial stability, and healthier lifestyles." One of the biggest strengths that sets Foundation Communities apart from other afterschool and summer programs is that their learning centers are based in the community. They serve some families directly where they live, as the learning center is located in the apartment complex where their housing is. This increases accessibility and decreases usual barriers, such as transportation. As COVID-19 has changed circumstances for everyone, the Foundation Communities' organization has done its best to meet the community where they are. Along with housing, they regularly provide wrap-around services to residents and the greater community. These services include case management for high-needs cases, counseling and referral services, financial coaching, food pantries, and general resident service hours. As general needs increased due to the economic impact of the shutdowns and health precautions, program staff prioritized providing these supplemental services at the forefront of their afterschool programming.

At the end of March, the decision was made to let frontline staff go. At that time, ACE Foundation Communities' Cycle 9 site coordinators switched operations to help their Health Initiatives Department in providing needed food services to their residents on top of their expected and continued duties (Figure 5). In April, a needs assessment was completed that helped them better understand the ever-changing needs of their communities. With those results, they were able to develop a game plan to address what needed to be accomplished. Technology needs were high on the list. Site coordinators and a family engagement specialist helped families connect to resources through the school district to alleviate barriers to participating in distance learning opportunities provided by the schools. They also provided technology for students who were not able to access those services or were not eligible, including kindergarten through grade-2 students who were not eligible to receive technology from AISD at that time. AISD was also able to provide internet service to some of communities by parking hot-spot Wi-Fi-enabled buses at the apartment complex daily. Rather than working on digital content at

that point (as it was clear that this option would not work for many families at that time), they created weekly packets that students could work on independently. These packets included basic supplies and some fresh fruits. They set the pickups time as the same time for school pick-ups to reduce the times parents had to leave their homes to get learning tools for their children. ACE Foundation Communities staff also continued to serve as a resource and support for the families.

**Figure 5.**  
**ACE Foundation Communities Operations During COVID-19**



Another round of calls to parents was conducted to assess students who needed to participate in the virtual learning summer program. They also assessed the needs for technology as those changed over time with some families getting laptops from AISD with the purpose of identifying and filling the gaps to help students and families navigate the challenges brought by this pandemic.

The ACE Foundation Communities staff and project directors expressed excitement about moving to a digital learning model for their summer program and beyond, whereby students are engaged virtually by returning frontline staff and coordinators for part of the day, with other activities sent home for students to work on independently. They worked with their partners to create pre-recorded content that was implemented in

different ways. Site coordinators and frontline staff learned how to engage students in this new way through weekly trainings on various topics, such as effective use of platforms/tools, virtual classroom management, keeping students engaged safety, social and emotional (SEL) practices, and child abuse and online safety.

## SUMMARY

Despite school building closures due to COVID-19, the ACE Austin Cycle 9 program remained committed to providing quality programming that was accessible, flexible, and supportive toward the development of students’ full potential.

## Key Accomplishments

The ACE Foundation Communities’ Cycle 9 program was aligned with the campus needs assessments and goals identified in the campus improvement plans (CIP) of each center. Overall, program participation was significantly related to school-day attendance, controlling for students’ demographics, such as SES, gender, ELL status, and race.

Table 5.

### Summary of Key Accomplishments

Program measure and outcome	Result
Student population served	😊
Program quality	😊
Reading	😐
Math	😐
School-day attendance	😊
Discipline	😐

*Note.* Regression analyses were conducted using the number of days of program participation to predict each student outcome (i.e., reading and math grades, school-day attendance rate, and number of discipline referrals).

- 😊 Program participation was significantly positively related to the outcome.
- 😐 No relationship was found between program participation and the outcome.
- 😞 Program participation was significantly negatively related to the outcome.

## Areas for Improvement

ACE Foundation Communities’ Cycle 9 program staff continue to identify opportunities to assist students in maximizing the benefits from participating in the ACE program.

One area worthy of exploring for program improvement is the development of a monitoring system to track identified student needs linked to associated outcomes. At present, students in the ACE program are recruited for a variety of reasons, such as to improve school-day attendance, discipline, or academic performance. While staff know where to place students in the program, no mechanism exists to record students’ needs

and then to evaluate students' outcomes based on those targeted needs. Tracking the unique reasons students are enrolled in ACE would make it possible to ascertain the effectiveness of the programming provided for those specific purposes. Additionally, all virtual lesson plans and online modules developed and created by the site directors, program directors, and facilitators should be systematically cataloged, based on Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ACE component area, subject area, grade level, or electronic platform. Finally, within the current situation due to the pandemic, the site directors, program director, and evaluators should continue to explore new ways to support students' learning and development for program improvement.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Campus-Level Participants

Table A.1.

**ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants**

School	School enrollment	Number of participants	Number of regular* participants	Average number of days of participation
Campbell Elementary School (M Station)	204	44	31	72
St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center)	380	148	135	89
Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center)	428	50	34	76
<b>ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9</b>	<b>1,012</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>83</b>

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student records; 2019–2020 ACE data file

Note. Regular participants are those who participated in the ACE Foundation Communities program at least 45 days.

Table A.2.

**ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Demographics**

School	Female	Low SES	ELL	At risk
Campbell Elementary School (M Station) ( <i>n</i> = 44)	61%	95%	14%	57%
St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center) ( <i>n</i> = 148)	46%	87%	52%	65%
Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center) ( <i>n</i> = 50)	48%	92%	58%	68%
<b>ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 (<i>N</i> = 242)</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>64%</b>

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student records; 2019–2020 ACE data file

Table A.3.

**ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Grade Level**

School	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	6
Campbell Elementary School (M Station) ( <i>n</i> = 44)	11%	20%	18%	14%	16%	20%	
St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center) ( <i>n</i> = 148)	14%	22%	16%	21%	10%	18%	
Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center) ( <i>n</i> = 50)	12%	14%	24%	22%	16%	10%	2%
<b>ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 (<i>N</i> = 242)</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>&lt; 1%</b>

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student records; 2019–2020 ACE data file

Table A.4.

**ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Participants' Race**

School	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Two or more race	White
Campbell Elementary School (M Station) ( <i>n</i> = 44)	2%	55%	32%	7%	5%
St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center) ( <i>n</i> = 148)	1%	6%	80%	2%	11%
Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center) ( <i>n</i> = 50)	16%	44%	28%	2%	10%
<b>ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 (<i>N</i> = 242)</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10%</b>

*Source.* 2019–2020 AISD student records; 2019–2020 ACE data file

## Appendix B: Campus-Level Student Outcomes

Regression analyses were conducted for each campus to examine the relationships between each student outcome (i.e., reading, math, school-day attendance, and discipline referrals) and program participation, controlling for SES, ELL status, gender, and race. Due to the very high percentage (90%) of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, SES was eliminated from the analysis. Although a positive relationship between program participation and school-day attendance was found at the cycle level, at the campus level, this same relationship was only found at St. Elmo Elementary School. No other relationships were found between program participation and any of the student outcomes at other ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 campuses (Table B.1.).

Table B.1.

**ACE Foundation Communities Cycle 9 Campus-Level Student Outcomes**

School	Reading	Math	School-day attendance	Discipline referrals
Campbell Elementary School (M Station) ( <i>n</i> = 44)	☹️	☹️	☹️	.
St. Elmo Elementary School (St Elmo Center) ( <i>n</i> = 148)	☹️	☹️	😊	.
Andrews Elementary School (Trails Center) ( <i>n</i> = 50)	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️

*Note.* Regression analyses were conducted using the number of days of program participation to predict each student outcome (i.e., reading and math grades, school-day attendance rate, and number of discipline referrals).

- 😊 Program participation was significantly positively related to the outcome.
- ☹️ No relationship was found between program participation and the outcome.
- ☹️ Program participation was significantly negatively related to the outcome.
- .
- Campus had no or very few students with discipline referrals; analyses could not be conducted.

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