

Hope Through Housing Foundation's

After School & Beyond

2010-2011 Program Evaluation



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Executive Summary

After School & Beyond (AS&B) is the signature out of school time program provided by Hope Through Housing Foundation (HTHF) serving youth from kindergarten through 12th grade. Nearly all AS&B programs are located onsite of affordable housing communities, ensuring that children and youth receive services where they live. All programs are offered at no cost to participants and their families.

Key Accomplishments

- **Program quality has achieved targets across all sites.** AS&B's emphasis on behavior management, staff development and administrative infrastructure has helped sites attain good program quality overall.
- **Attendance continues to grow.** More sites are reaching attendance goals more frequently throughout the year. This growth is important as it signals that Hope is expanding its reach and is perceived as a valuable program by parents.
- **The percent of participants attending program consistently is steadily increasing.** Consistent attendance is necessary for curricula to be delivered effectively and for changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors to be measured.
- **The violence prevention program is being faithfully implemented.** Most sites are consistently posting and saying the pledge, using PraiseNotes to encourage positive behavior, and supporting kids in learning to praise one another. Most youth are giving and receiving PrasideNotes to staff and one another.
- **Parents see non-academic benefits to children's program attendance.** While parents still rate homework support as the most important reason for attending program, they also recognize the value of program for supporting their child's social and emotional development.
- **Program curricula expanded to include KidzLit and Virtual Vacation.** These additions enhance the program and offer project-based activities that encourage student leadership, academic self-efficacy, and the application of academic concepts.

Key Challenges and Recommendations

- **Establish targets for the percent of participants that reach the 100-day threshold and monitor progress towards the goal at the site level.** Currently the program's ability to demonstrate impact is limited by the fact that a majority of participants do not receive "enough" of the interventions (no matter how well implemented) to see the benefit.
- **Some sites still struggle with meeting levels of program quality despite the fact that initiative-wide quality goals have been met.** However, the assessment of quality should not stop there. Program leadership is encouraged to use site-level SACERS reports to develop improvement plans and to monitor progress toward target levels of quality.
- **PeaceBuilders should be better incorporated into the program culture.** This includes staff using and encouraging the use of PeaceBuilders language with kids and drawing out PeaceBuilders concepts during other types of activities. This may require a deeper level of staff training, modeling and coaching visits to accomplish.
- **Program leadership should strategically consider how to increase the level of parent involvement.** Parents are getting to know AS&B better and are coming to appreciate that it serves the whole child, not just academic needs. This is the time for the program to leverage budding parent support. This could include things like more aggressively incorporating home aspects of PeaceBuilders, offering additional family engagement activities or service learning projects. Families value and are open to seeing AS&B as more than a homework club or child care.
- **Youth workers will benefit from receiving additional training on working with children with special needs.** Only 41% of the program staff feel very well/well prepared to work with special-needs children. Program leadership suspect there is a high rate of special needs among program participants so further training in this area may be warranted.
- **Reconsider measurement of school engagement in the evaluation.** Based on research on the impact of after school programs and the improved quality at most AS&B sites, it is likely that the program is having an impact on school engagement. However the tool currently used to measure engagement should be reassessed to ensure it is well-aligned with the program participant's age, grade and program curricula. Newer measures may capture broader dimensions of school engagement and the program's impact on children and youth.

Background

After School & Beyond (AS&B) is the signature out of school time program provided by Hope Through Housing Foundation (HTHF) serving youth from kindergarten through 12th grade. Nearly all AS&B programs are located onsite of affordable housing communities, ensuring that children and youth receive services where they live. All programs are offered at no cost to participants and their families. While most AS&B programs are delivered directly by HTHF staff (under the Youth Development Initiative) a handful of programs are delivered in partnership with community based organizations, including the City of Montclair, National City Collaborative, Rialto Unified School District, Pazzaz, Family YMCA of the Desert, Corona/Norco Family YMCA, Yorba Linda-Placentia Family YMCA, YMCA of Riverside City and County, Camp Fire USA – Compton Council, and Camp Fire USA – San Diego and Imperial Counties Council.

Hope Through Housing Foundation contracted Harder +Company Community Research in April of 2011 to evaluate After School and Beyond program for 2010-2011 using existing evaluation tools, including attendance data, student, staff and parent surveys, and program quality observations. Data were collected by research staff contracted and managed by National Community Renaissance's Department of Research and Evaluation.

About This Report

This evaluation report represents the fourth year Hope Through Housing Foundation has completed a program evaluation of After School & Beyond. What began as an exercise to document AS&B's services has evolved into a report that summarizes how AS&B is growing in quality, impact, and reach. More importantly, **the report reflects Hope Through Housing Foundation's commitment to self-reflection, program improvement, and transparency to stakeholders.**

This program evaluation has two purposes: first, it is a summary of 2010-11 accomplishments and lessons learned. This summary is gleaned from program observations, satisfaction surveys, and measures of program impact. Secondly, this evaluation serves as a benchmark of how AS&B is growing and how staff can prioritize areas for improvement. It is our hope that this information can not only guide the HTHF team in their efforts to expand and enhance their program, but can inform the field of housing-based after school providers who serve similar populations.

About HTHF

HTHF was founded in 1998 as the social services provider for National Community Renaissance, a nonprofit that develops, builds, and manages affordable apartment housing. **HTHF seeks to create community change by providing services that are proven to have long-term benefits to individuals and neighborhoods threatened by crime, poverty, blight and isolation.**

While this organization has been offering services for 12 years, HTHF's approach underwent a significant shift in 2006. At this time, HTHF organized its programs around three key initiatives: Youth Development, Child Development, and Senior Wellness. All services offered within each initiative utilize evidence-based strategies and discipline-specific best practices that are shown to have a measurable impact on low-income children, families, and seniors. After School & Beyond is the key service strategy within the Youth Development Initiative.

Communities Served

In 2010-11 33 AS&B programs were offered in five California counties, including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego. An additional program was operated in Little Rock, Arkansas. Three programs served multiple apartment communities. Of the 33 programs, five focused on homework help because of limited program space. Four programs closed before a full school year was completed: two (Parkside, Spring Valley) because of budget issues; one (Hawthorne Terrace) because of a leadership transition in the partner organization; and one (Colony) because the property was sold.

Twelve programs were delivered in partnership with third-party providers and 21 by Hope Through Housing Foundation staff.

This evaluation summarizes results from all full-service after school programs and excludes “homework only” sites delivered by third party providers (Summer Ridge, Spring Valley, and Parkside).





Table 1. Key Program Goals 2010-11

- Increase the number of sites meeting attendance goals, thereby serving more participants
- Increase the percent of participants attending program 100 days or more
- Increase the number of program sites that achieve quality ratings of 5 or better on the SACERS

Program Overview

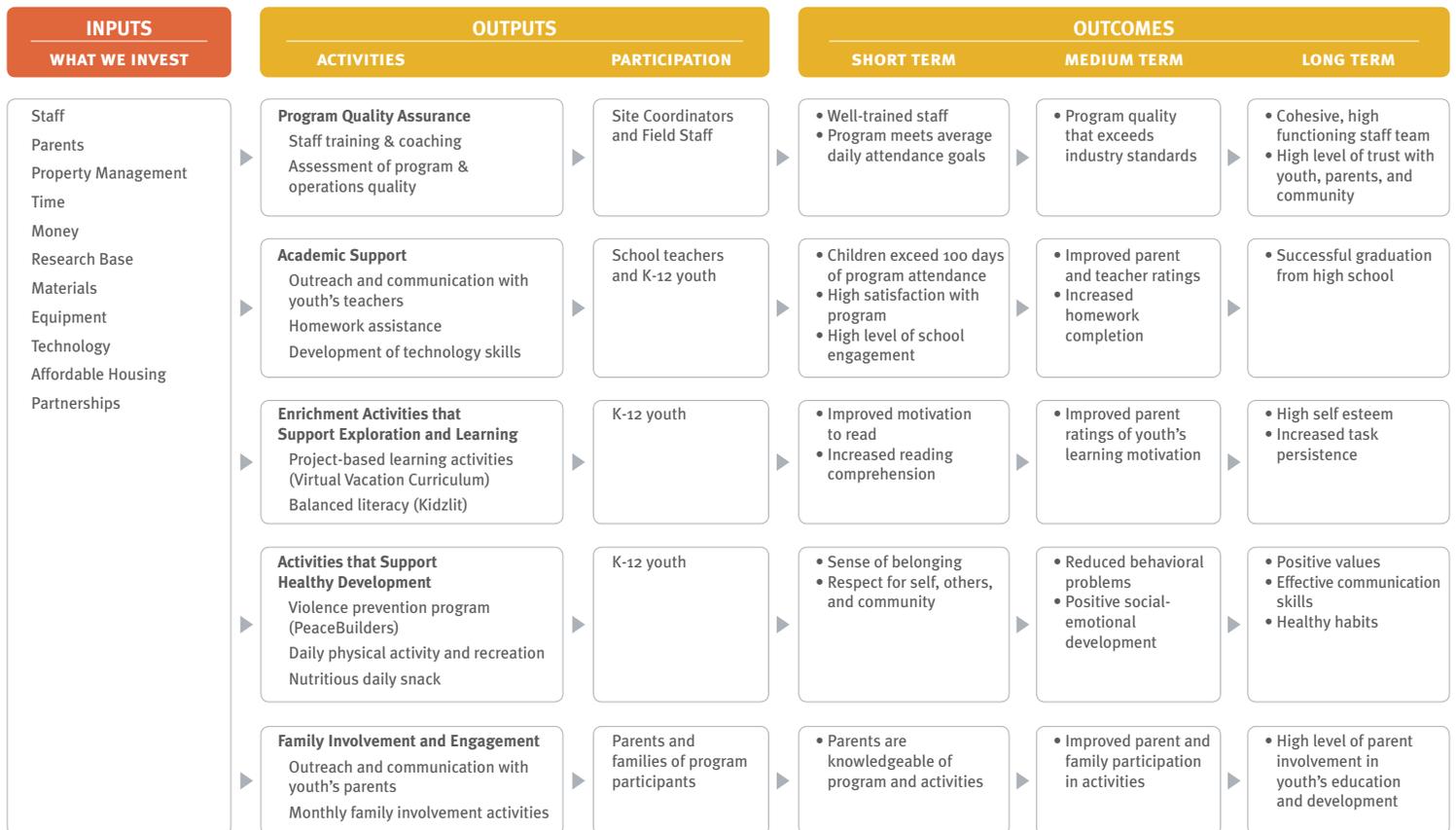
The purpose of After School & Beyond is to provide children and youth with a well-rounded program that supports development of the “whole child”, including social, emotional, and academic development. To do this, AS&B program activities emphasize hands-on learning using a variety of structured and unstructured curricula. Program staff is provided extensive training to ensure the program environment supports physical safety and healthy emotional development, including positive peer and adult-child relationships. Our philosophy, based on decades of research, is that these elements are essential to academic, social, and life success.

These principles are embedded in HTHF’s Logic Model (see figure 1), which articulates how program activities are likely to lead to short-, mid-range, and long-term outcomes for youth. It is also how the evaluation of AS&B was organized: the program evaluation focuses on relationships between children and staff, children’s emotional and physical safety in program, and the impact of evidence-based curricula – all hallmarks of impactful programs.

Youth Development Logic Model

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Program staff are well-trained and deliver high quality programs that meet program benchmarks
- Youth are better prepared for their school day as a result of program participation
- Youth believe they are capable of learning new things and persist at difficult tasks
- Youth are emotionally healthy
- Parents are engaged in their children’s learning



Program Components

AS&B programs were designed to meet key best practices while allowing site teams to have flexibility and freedom to meet the unique needs of their participants. To do this, HTHF has a set list of program components that all sites must include in their weekly schedules. The content of program activities, however, is left up to the site team. For example, while all sites must serve a healthy snack that meets specific guidelines, sites may plan their own menus.

Program Components include:

- **Homework help:** The Youth Development Team chose early on to be more than a homework completion program. Consequently, staff offers homework help to give youth a head start on their homework. However, this time is specific and limited so that youth can participate in other enrichment activities. Typically, homework time is limited to 45-60 minutes per day.
- **Healthy snack:** All programs follow Federal Department of Agriculture guidelines for healthy after school snacks. Snacks are designed to sustain youth through the afternoon and expose them to healthy foods and fresh produce. A typical snack is milk, broccoli and carrot sticks, and ranch dressing.
- **Physical activity:** Staff schedule daily time for movement and recreation, including physical games or free play. Physical activity not only helps youth “burn energy” after a long day in school, but helps promote health and wellness, teambuilding, and leadership skills.
- **Access to high-speed internet and computers:** Our research shows that the majority of program participants do not have access to the internet or computers at home. As homework becomes increasingly digital, youth need computers and internet to research, complete assignments, or communicate with teachers. Computer exposure also ensures that children and youth are computer literate.
- **Violence Prevention:** For the past four years, HTHF has implemented PeaceBuilders, an evidence-based violence prevention program that promotes problem solving, conflict resolution, and behavior management in the after school setting. Each day, youth are exposed to the principles and language of peace through the PeaceBuilders curriculum.
- **Balanced Literacy:** Since 2009, HTHF has implemented KidzLit to promote reading comprehension, reading motivation, and exposure to vocabulary. Designed for after school programs, KidzLit is focused on getting youth excited about reading – an important first step to becoming literate.
- **Hands-On Learning:** Virtual Vacation, a hands-on curriculum, was introduced into AS&B in 2009. Students virtually travel to different locations and explore the language, history, and culture of their destination while developing their academic skills. For example, students who go to China may learn new words (language), study fireworks (science), or make and use a Chinese abacus (math).

Program Goals

AS&B has grown tremendously since the first formal evaluation report, increasing in both number of sites and participants. This program year did not include the addition of any program sites, so growth efforts were focused on increasing attendance at existing sites (via a focus on attendance targets) and increasing attendance consistency, measured as the percent of participants attending program 100 days or more over the program year.

Children & Youth Served

Table 2. Overview of Children & Youth Served

Number of children and youth served:

- 1,784 in Enrichment Programs
- 64 in Tutoring Programs
- 2,200 in High School Program
- 918 in Summer Programs

Table 2 provides an overview of children and youth served in 2010-11 in four different types of programs offered by AS&B: Enrichment Programs, Tutoring Programs, High School Program and Summer Programs. A more full description of each type of program can be found in the Program Model Section. **In comparison with previous years, AS&B continued to show growth in the number of youth served in enrichment programs,** but a slight decrease in the number of participants in tutoring, high school and summer programs. See figure 1 for a year over year comparison from 2008 through 2011.

Figure 1. Number of Children and Youth Served by After School & Beyond Programs 2008-2011

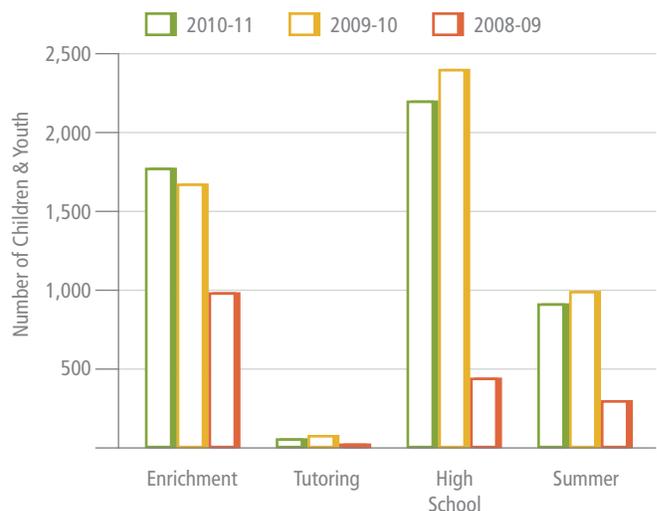


Table 3. Average Daily Attendance Percent to Goal 2009 to 2011

	2010-11	2009-10	% Change
SEP	68%	51%	17%
OCT	71%	48%	23%
NOV	69%	51%	18%
DEC	65%	51%	14%
JAN	69%	52%	17%
FEB	65%	60%	5%
MAR	67%	62%	5%
APR	75%	65%	10%
MAY	75%	67%	8%
JUN	67%	56%	11%

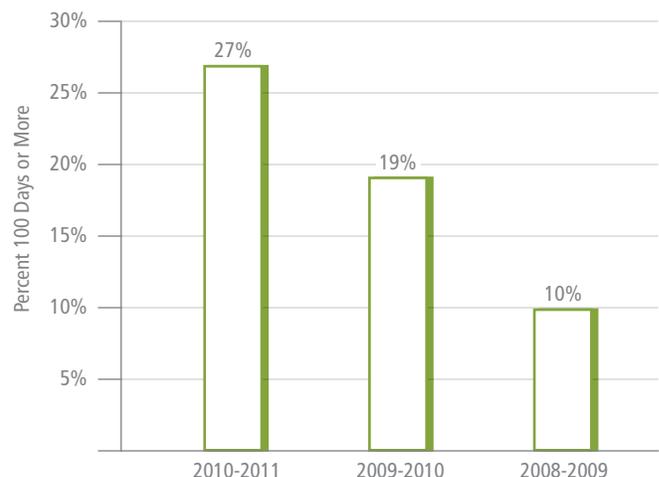
Attendance increased primarily due to two reasons: more sites reached average daily attendance (ADA) goals and more participants attended program for one hundred days or more. **In 2010-11 more sites reached or exceeded monthly average daily attendance goals compared to the same month in 2009-10 (see table 3)** due to a targeted effort to increase attendance program wide.

Some of the strategies used to increase ADA included:

- Individual meetings with low performing sites to understand attendance challenges and define attendance goals
- Consequences for sites with chronic low attendance, including decreasing staffing in order to maintain a reasonable staff:child ratio
- Individual coaching for sites by the HTHF team
- Increased outreach, including community events, personal invitations, and follow through with students who stopped attending
- Ongoing marketing efforts

Over the past three program years, **program retention has shown dramatic improvement as measured by the percent of participants who achieve 100 days or more of attendance (see figure 2)**. The 100 day threshold has been used by other programs as an indicator of enough program exposure to make an impact. In 2008-09 only 10% of participants achieved 100 days or more of participation. In 2010-11 this percentage increased to 27% -- nearly a 200% increase over two program years. This is an important accomplishment for AS&B: As larger numbers of participants achieve the 100 day threshold, it will become possible to measure program impact in a more reliable and meaningful way than in past evaluations. This data can now be used to establish explicit targets for each site and to measure progress toward targets on a regular basis.

Figure 2. Percent of participants attending program 100 days or more (2008-2011)



Participant Characteristics

AS&B primarily serves children in grades K-6th; in 2010-11 nearly half of all participants (48%) were in grades K-3rd, 32% were in grades 4th-6th and 13% were in 7th or 8th grade. High school aged participants made up of only 6% of participants in enrichment and tutoring programs.

As in prior years, nearly equal percentages of boys and girls participated in AS&B in 2011; 51% of participants were girls and 49% were boys. Forty-eight percent (48%) of participants in 2010-11 were from grades K-3rd, 32% from grades 4-6th, and 13% from middle school. Only 6% of participants (excluding the high school based program) were high school aged (see figure 3). Ethnicity of participants remains similar to distributions in previous years and is consistent with the ethnic make-up of the properties that these programs serve. Nearly 60% of program participants are Hispanic/Latino, 27% are Black/African American and 11% are White/Caucasian (see figure 4).

Figure 3. After School & Beyond participant grade level

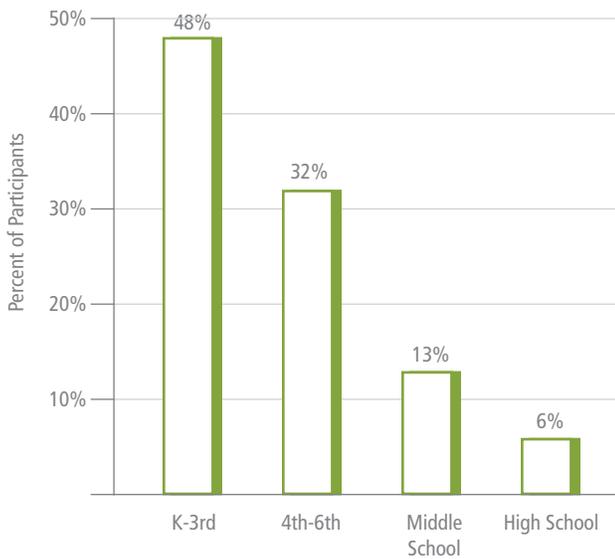
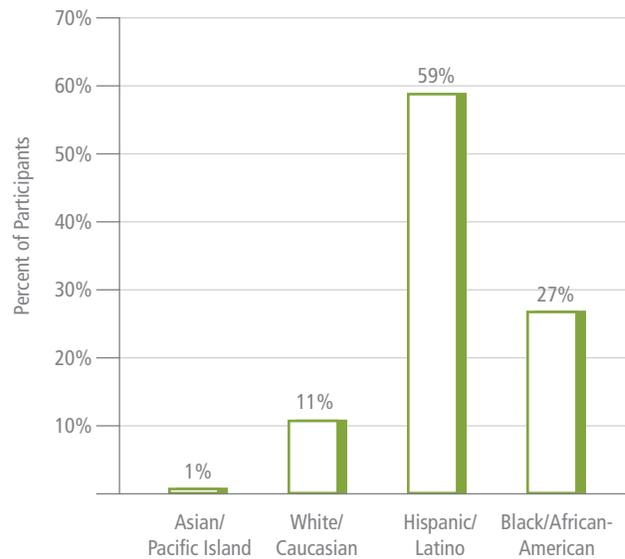


Figure 4. After School & Beyond participant ethnicity



"It's not just about homework but teaching kids how to make better choices to become productive adults."

~AS&B Parent

Table 3. About the SACERS

The School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) is an observational assessment of program quality across six domains of after school using a total of 43 items. All items are measured on a 1 to 7 scale ranging from inadequate to exceptional quality. HTHF has established a target score of 5 on each scale program wide. This represents a “good” quality program. Each SACERS scale yields a score that can be used to target areas for improvement, identify strengths, and gauge progress towards goals. Scale scores can be averaged to create a single program quality measure.

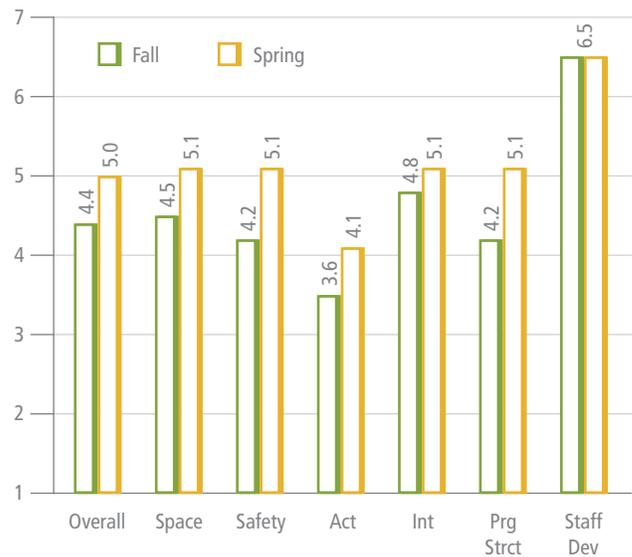
SCALE	DESCRIPTION
Space & Furnishings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness of the physical environment for various types of indoor activities • 11 items
Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and practices that ensure the physical safety of participants and staff • 8 items
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variety of age-appropriate activities and materials available in the program. • 8 items
Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of behavior management, peer relations, parent relations, and staff relations. • 9 items
Program Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling, flexibility, and the use of community resources by the program. • 4 items
Staff Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for professional growth, evaluation, and quality of staff supervision. • 3 items

Program Quality

AS&B programs are held to the highest industry standards of quality. Quality is assessed biannually using the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). This tool has been in use by HTHF and its partners for the past four years. AS&B’s objective is for every site to have an average SACERS score of 5 or better, representing good quality program. Scores between 5 and 7 indicate programs approaching “exceptional” quality. More information about the SACERS and its subscales can be found in Table 3.

In 2010-11, 24 sites were rated using the SACERS in both the fall and the spring. The average total score across all sites increased from 4.4 in the fall to 5.0. In the spring, **for the first time in the program’s history the average final SACERS score reached the objective score.** Analyses of scores by domain can be used to identify where resources or training may be of benefit to the program. Figure 5 shows quality by content area over time.

Figure 5. SACERS scores by scale and assessment time



Quality improved from fall to spring in every area except for the Staff Development subscale which has already attained nearly perfect ratings at many sites.

Quality is still below the overall target of 5.0 for the Activities subscale, which assesses the variety of materials and activities offered during program. In order to achieve a high quality rating in this domain, most program sites will require additional materials to support music, dance/movement, art, and dramatic play. It is not surprising that this area remains a challenge, as many sites have been in operation only one or two years and have not yet built up a large variety of program materials.

PeaceBuilders

PeaceBuilders is an evidence-based curriculum designed to prevent violence by supporting children's appropriate emotion regulation and by encouraging prosocial behaviors. While the program includes specific activities, such as a daily pledge and thematic projects, **the real thrust of the program revolves around creating shared values and positive behavior, healthy emotion expression, and clear communication.** PeaceBuilders has been used in AS&B programs since 2007.

In 2010-11 the PeaceBuilders' curriculum was evaluated at 25 sites. Site observations (conducted concurrently with the SACERS) were used to establish the implementation level at each site. Implementation was assessed using multiple sources of information such as the presence of PeaceBuilders materials in the program space, observation of staff and participant behavior and follow-up interviews with staff.

Most sites had the pledge clearly posted (96%), had an up-to-date PraiseBoard (88%) and recited the PeacePledge (84%) during the observation.

Fewer sites had a PraiseBoard in the leasing office (4%) or conducted a PeaceBuilders'-themed activity during the observation. These findings are generally consistent with participant reports. Eighty percent (80%) of participants at PeaceBuilder sites report they have given a PraiseNote, 70% say they have received a PraiseNote, and 45% indicate that they say the pledge all the time at program.

The more subtle part of implementing this curriculum requires staff to establish a PeaceBuilders "culture" in program. This was assessed by observing the degree to which there are signs and posters illustrating PeaceBuilders principles, observing students

giving PraiseNotes to one another and to staff, and hearing staff and students use PeaceBuilders language throughout the course of the program day. Overall there were very few signs that PeaceBuilders has been implemented beyond the basics. Most telling was that at 64% of sites staff were rated as never/rarely using PB language during the observation. Table 4 summarizes the strengths and challenges of the PeaceBuilders implementation at AS&B sites for 2010.

A focus group with Site Coordinators by Youth Development Leadership underscored this finding. Most Site Coordinators indicated that the flexible nature of PeaceBuilders is a challenge: SCs do not know how to faithfully implement the program beyond the basics or how to integrate PeaceBuilders with other activities. The result is that site staff view PeaceBuilders basics as "things to do" versus a system for creating a positive after school climate.

This is especially important because the relationship between PeaceBuilders implementation and program quality that has been observed in previous years was not evident in the data for this year. This may be because all sites are doing a good job with the basics, which is encouraging. **However, building on these basics and establishing a true PeaceBuilders culture may enhance quality program-wide.**

PeaceBuilders implementation level was also not related to any student outcomes measured this year, including ratings of trust in staff and in other students – relationships that have been robust in previous years. This could also reflect increases in implementing the basics across the board. It is also important for the evaluation team to revisit the observation protocol to ensure that it is adequately capturing implementation level at the sites and to ensure observers are using the rating scales consistently during their visits. It may also be of benefit to add a site self-assessment to next year's evaluation efforts to add additional meaning.

Table 4. PeaceBuilders Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Kids give PraiseNotes to each other
- Kids give PraiseNotes to staff
- There are PraiseBoards in all programs
- The Peace Pledge is posted and recited daily

Challenges

- Staff and kids do not regularly use PeaceBuilders language in program
- There is little evidence of PeaceBuilders principles in the work displayed in the program
- Leasing staff is not consistently participating in efforts to establish a PeaceBuilders culture on site
- PeaceBuilders is not yet fully integrated into other activities

Program Impact on School Engagement

Through controlled studies, researchers have found that after school programs can have positive impacts on school engagement, and this has been true in previous evaluations of AS&B. School engagement has been defined in many different ways and can include three components: Behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement. Historically AS&B has focused evaluation efforts on the motivational component of school engagement, specifically children and youth's beliefs that they are capable learners. High levels of school engagement are related to higher levels of academic achievement, better school attendance and decreased levels of risky behaviors. This year pre/post data from the Feelings About School Scale (FAS) was available for 246 participants, 217 of whom were regular attendees with 100 or more days of program participation. There were no statistically significant changes in FAS score from Fall to Spring in feelings about math or feelings about reading. The findings for all students with fall and spring data are displayed in table 5 below.

This lack of findings does not necessarily mean that AS&B is not having a positive impact on school engagement. It is more likely a measurement issue. Scores on the FAS were near ceiling in the fall already, with feelings about reading averaging 4.4 out of 5 and feelings about math averaging 4.47 out of 5, so as a result, there was very little room for scores to grow. The FAS has been shown to be highly predictive of school engagement with younger kids (K – 2nd grade) but many AS&B program participants are older, so the FAS may not be as reliable a measure with this population. And finally, there are at least two other components of school engagement that the FAS does not measure: behavioral and cognitive engagement. A different measure of school engagement may be more appropriate for the program's population (especially children older than 2nd grade) and components at this time.

Table 5. School Engagement

	Reading	Math
Fall	4.40	4.47
Spring	4.42	4.50

N=246 participants with both fall and spring results; differences not statistically meaningful



Participant Perspective

Program participants were asked about program via a survey administered in the fall and the spring. Table 5 highlights key findings related to support for learning and program climate from the spring survey, which included 437 program participants.

Participants report high levels of support for learning in the after school program. Most feel that AS&B helps them do a better job on homework than they can do by themselves and 87% went so far as to say that AS&B helps them do better at school. As in previous years, participants feel the program does a better job of supporting learning in math than reading. Of note is the result that 76% of respondents feel more interested in school due to AS&B. This suggests that the program is positively impacting school engagement, an important program objective.

Overall program climate, as reported by participants is positive. Most report trusting the adult staff members, feel they can talk to staff about their problems and feel adults really listen when they have something to say. However relationships with other kids in the program are less positive than those with the adults. Only 45% of respondents said they trust the other kids at program compared to 78% who trust adults. We recommend that the program leadership and staff more fully explore this issue. Low levels of trust among participants could be due to participant turnover, which results in limited opportunities to develop trusting relationships. However, staff should also pay special attention to whether behavior management is adequate at each site to allow kids to form trusting relationships. This finding can also serve to further motivate staff to fully implement the PeaceBuilders curriculum – one of the most robust outcomes in the evidence base for this program is improved peer relations.

Table 5. Participant Perspectives

Support for Learning

- 89% do a better job on homework at program than by themselves
- 87% say AS&B helps them do better at school
- 82% report AS&B helps them do better at math
- 76% feel more interested in school because of AS&B
- 74% say AS&B helped them become a better reader

Program Climate

- 78% trust the adult staff
- 69% can tell staff about problems they have
- 64% say staff really listen to them when they have something to say
- 62% feel the staff goes out of their way to help kids
- 45% trust the other kids at program

Parent Perspective

Parents are important program stakeholders. Parents typically choose what after school program young children will utilize and can play an important role in encouraging older youth to attend and participate in program. Therefore AS&B values parent perspectives and actively solicits parent feedback about the program. Parent surveys were conducted in spring of 2011. The program received 270 surveys representing 436 program participants.

Why AS&B?

Parents have many options for their child's care after school; 52% of parents of AS&B participants indicated that an after school program is available at their child's school, yet they choose to attend AS&B.

All parents chose AS&B because it is closer to home and has better hours, but cost was also a factor for about half of parents as many school based programs are fee-based.

Program Value

We asked parents what aspects of program matter most to them. Homework help continues to be very important to parents, with 52% of parents rating this as the most important reason for sending their children to program. Although most parents reported that they had time to help children with their homework (83%) and know how to help children with their homework (86%), parents still prefer that all homework is completed at program (87%). Access to computers and the internet continues to be an important need, with 32% of households lacking a computer and 37% lacking an internet connection; commensurate with this need 33% of parents ranked access to computers and the internet as the most important reason for participating in program.

AS&B is seen as playing important roles in children's lives beyond providing academic support. Most frequently, parents see program as a place where children form relationships with staff who are positive role models (41%), and the teach children to get along with others (35%).

*"Children in this community get to stay and learn together, building healthy relationships as well as getting help with homework."
~AS&B Parent*

Parent Satisfaction

The parents who responded to the survey had a high degree of familiarity with the program. Most (86%) parent survey had visited the program in person and 80% knew about the PeaceBuilders curriculum used in Program. Twenty-three percent of respondents talked with program staff at least weekly; only 10% indicated they had never spoken directly with a staff member. The majority of parents (84%) learned about the program through leasing office staff.

Overall parents are highly satisfied with the program:

- 88% of parents believe the program spends the right amount of time on academics
- 96% say the program has many interesting activities for their child to participate in
- 94% report the program has good equipment and facilities

These results are consistent with previous years. Parents also are satisfied with program staff:

- 95% report that staff make them feel welcome
- 95% say the staff know their child well
- 91% feel staff keep them well-informed about how their child is doing
- 92% report staff give their child individualized attention
- 96% feel that staff respect parents and their opinions
- 95% say that staff know how to work with kids

“Staff is excellent. You can tell they love children and their jobs.”
~AS&B Parent

Parent satisfaction with the program and staff has remained consistently high across the last three evaluation periods and indicates staff members communicate effectively with parents. This may suggest another strategy to increasing consistent attendance, as most parent survey respondents have children who attend program regularly. It is not possible to know the causal nature of the relationship between satisfaction and consistent attendance from this evaluation; however, it is worth exploring as a strategy for increasing retention.

Youth Worker Characteristics and Perspective

Characteristics

Demographic information was provided by 95 staff members . Approximately three-quarters (74%) of program staff are female and ethnicity of program staff roughly reflects the ethnicity of participants. The majority of staff members are Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American and White/Caucasian (see figure 6 for a comparison of staff and participant ethnicity).

The overall experience level of AS&B staff is growing, with a large majority (44%) of staff reporting 3 to 5 years of experience as a youth worker. Typical of the youth worker field 18% of staff have less than a year of experience (see figure 8).

Figure 7. After School & Beyond participants and staff ethnicity

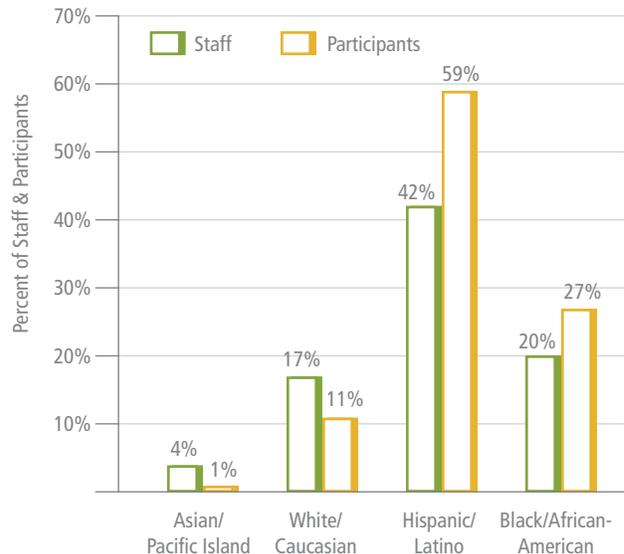
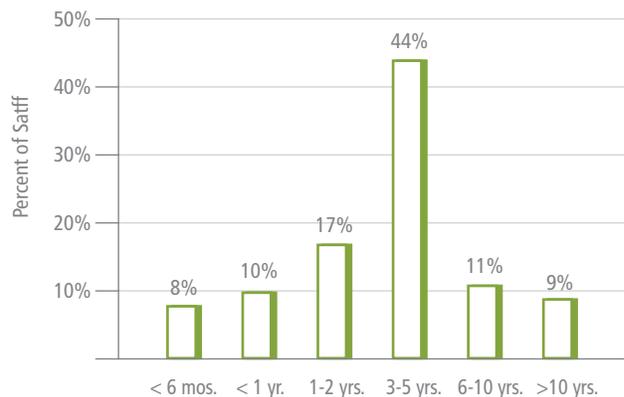


Figure 8. Experience as a Youth Worker



Perspective

Preparation to Work with Youth

Youth workers completed surveys in the fall and the spring to share their perspectives of the program. Overall, AS&B **youth workers feel very well prepared to work with children and youth** (see table 6). This is likely due to the result of a more experienced work force and a strong staff development program. AS&B provides a comprehensive 5-day orientation at the beginning of the program year (which was attended by 50% of respondents; many staff began their tenure with Hope after the training) and 186 hours of other trainings over the program year. Topics included management, conflict resolution, trauma response, homework assistance, and trainings focused on curriculum implementation. There is evidence in the data that trainings were effective, as over time, more youth workers reported feeling very well/well prepared to guide the use of technology, handle diversity issues, work with participants with special-needs and help kids acquire academic skills. In the spring, fewer staff felt well prepared to implement project based learning activities, to guide behavior and to help with problem solving.

Table 6. Staff Perspectives: Preparation

Percent of staff who felt very well/well prepared to...	Fall	Spring
Guide use of technology	77%	81%
Help with problem solving	97%	90%
Handle diversity issues	73%	83%
Work with special-needs	36%	41%
Implement project-based learning activities	89%	82%
Help kids acquire academic skills	82%	84%
Guide behavior	79%	74%

Program strengths and challenges

Staff members were also asked for their assessment of the program's strengths and challenges. Space for indoor activities and storage continue to be challenges for many programs at older sites that have minimal space (see table 7). There was a large increase in the percent of respondents who felt their sites had adequate staff, from only 57% in the Fall to 82% in the Spring and in those who felt the program reinforced school curriculum (86% vs. 94%).

Table 7. Staff Perspectives: Program Characteristics

Percent of staff who strongly agreed/agreed the the program...	Fall	Spring
Enough staff	57%	82%
Enough supplies	65%	67%
Enough storage	51%	64%
Enough space for outdoor activities	62%	75%
Enough space for indoor activities	66%	75%
Enough activities	86%	84%
Access to technology	80%	82%
Uses community resources	79%	82%
Ties to community resources	74%	77%
Serves all families	97%	97%
Positive relationships with adults	94%	97%
Tied to school	72%	77%
Reinforces school curriculum	86%	94%



Summary & Conclusions

Key Accomplishments:

- **Program quality has achieved targets across all sites.** AS&B's emphasis on behavior management, staff development and administrative infrastructure has helped sites attain good program quality overall.
- **Attendance continues to grow.** More sites are reaching attendance goals more frequently throughout the year. This growth is important as it signals that Hope is expanding its reach and is perceived as a valuable program by parents.
- **The percent of participants attending program consistently is steadily increasing.** Consistent attendance is necessary for curricula to be delivered effectively and for changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors to be measured.
- **The violence prevention program is being faithfully implemented.** Most sites are consistently posting and saying the pledge, using PraiseNotes to encourage positive behavior, and supporting kids in learning to praise one another. Most youth are giving and receiving PrasiieNotes to staff and one another.
- **Parents see non-academic benefits to children's program attendance.** While parents still rate homework support as the most important reason for attending program, they also recognize the value of program for supporting their child's social and emotional development.
- **Program curricula expanded to include KidzLit and Virtual Vacation.** These additions enhance the program and offer project-based activities that encourage student leadership, academic self-efficacy, and the application of academic concepts.

"What I like best about the program is the trainings and the fact that my supervisors care about how things are going."

~AS&B Staff Member

Key Challenges and Recommendations

- **Establish targets for the percent of participants that reach the 100-day threshold and monitor progress towards the goal at the site level.** Currently the program's ability to demonstrate impact is limited by the fact that a majority of participants do not receive "enough" of the interventions (no matter how well implemented) to see the benefit.
- **Some sites still struggle with meeting levels of program quality despite the fact that initiative-wide quality goals have been met.** However, the assessment of quality should not stop there. Program leadership is encouraged to use site-level SACERS reports to develop improvement plans and to monitor progress toward target levels of quality.
- **PeaceBuilders should be better incorporated into the program culture.** This includes staff using and encouraging the use of PeaceBuilders language with kids and drawing out PeaceBuilders concepts during other types of activities. This may require a deeper level of staff training, modeling and coaching visits to accomplish.
- **Program leadership should strategically consider how to increase the level of parent involvement.** Parents are getting to know AS&B better and are coming to appreciate that it serves the whole child, not just academic needs. This is the time for the program to leverage budding parent support. This could include things like more aggressively incorporating home aspects of PeaceBuilders, offering additional family engagement activities or service learning projects. Families value and are open to seeing AS&B as more than a homework club or child care.
- **Youth workers will benefit from receiving additional training on working with children with special needs.** Only 41% of the program staff feel very well/well prepared to work with special-needs children. Program leadership suspect there is a high rate of special needs among program participants so further training in this area may be warranted.
- **Reconsider measurement of school engagement in the evaluation.** Based on research on the impact of after school programs and the improved quality at most AS&B sites, it is likely that the program is having an impact on school engagement. However the tool currently used to measure engagement should be reassessed to ensure it is well-aligned with the program participant's age, grade and program curricula. Newer measures may capture broader dimensions of school engagement and the program's impact on children and youth.



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