21st Century Community Learning Centers:

Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

2014–15 through 2016–17 Evaluation Report

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List of Acronyms

21st CCLC	21st Century Community Learning Centers
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APT-O, APT-Q	Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool
ASB PQA	Academic Skill-Building Program Quality Assessment
CBO	community-based organization
CTE	career and technical education
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EL	English learners
EOC	end of course
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a second language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GED	General Equivalency Diploma
HLM	hierarchical linear modeling
KPI	key performance indicator
LEAG	Local Evaluation Advisory Group
LESI	Local Evaluation Support Initiative
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NIOST	National Institute on Out-of-School Time
NYSAN	New York State Association of Neuropsychology
PD	professional development
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
PQA	program quality assessment
PSM	propensity score matching
QA	quality assessment
RFA	Request for Applications
RFP	Request for Proposals
SACERS	School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale
SAPQA	School-Age Program Quality Assessment
SAYO	Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes
SEL	social-emotional learning
STAAR	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

TAPR	Texas Academic Performance Report
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
Texas ACE	Texas Afterschool Centers on Education
Tx21st	Texas 21st Student Tracking System
YPQA	Youth Program Quality Assessment

Executive Summary

Since 2002, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has provided funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) competitive grant program to support the provision of before school, afterschool and summer learning opportunities for students primarily attending eligible campuses. The program is authorized by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as renewed by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), providing funds to states to support "academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools" (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2018). Since the grant program launched in Texas in 2003–04, hundreds of grantees operating community learning centers, also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education® (Texas ACE®), across Texas have been funded. This report presents statewide program evaluation findings pertaining to Texas ACE programs funded as part of grant Cycles 7–9. The evaluation report focuses in particular on the program's operation and impact on student outcomes during 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 programming periods. TEA typically awards 21st CCLC grants for a 5-year period. In any given year, two cycles are in operation at different years of their grants. While grants generally operate on a fiscal year basis, beginning in August, the analyses in this report used data across three program years starting in June 2014 and running through May 2017. (Table ES.1).

Table ES.1: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycles 7–9 Grantees, by Grant Year and Reporting Years for the Evaluation

Grant Year	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Notes
2011–12	Year 1	—	—	Cycle 7 starts
2012–13	Year 2	—	—	
2013–14	Year 3	Year 1	—	Cycle 8 starts
2014–15	Year 4	Year 2	—	
2015–16	Year 5	Year 3	—	Cycle 7 ends
2016–17	—	Year 4	Year 1	Cycle 9 starts
2017–18	—	Year 5	Year 2	Cycle 8 ends
2018–19	—	—	Year 3	
2019–20	—	—	Year 4	
2020–21	—	—	Year 5	Cycle 9 ends

Notes: Blue shaded rows depict the time period and grant cycles assessed for the report, referred to throughout the report as the "reporting period." Grant Years for the purposes of program evaluation begin with summer operations in June and end with the academic year in May. The fiscal operating year for grants begins in August with fall operations and ends in July upon the conclusion of summer programming.

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

- **Objective 1.** *Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the Texas ACE program statewide.* This involved providing a descriptive profile of Texas ACE program implementation based on administrative data captured in the state's tracking system and information on program design and delivery obtained from site visits conducted at a sample of programs. The primary question guiding analyses related to this objective was as follows:

  Evaluation Question Objective 1: What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?

- **Objective 2.** *Conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Texas ACE program on a series of school-related outcomes.* This involved using a quasi-experimental design to explore how youth participating in Texas ACE programming at various levels of attendance performed on key outcomes relative to similar youth not participating in Texas ACE programming. This objective included an exploratory analysis of center-level effects on a series of school-related outcomes, which allowed the evaluation team to explore how different center characteristics and practices may be related to the achievement of different youth outcomes.

  Evaluation Questions Objective 2:

  – What impact does the program have for youth attending Texas ACE regularly during the school year relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?

  – What impact does the program have for youth attending Texas ACE regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?

  – What center-level characteristics derived from the Texas 21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st) are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among participating youth?

  – For center-level characteristics found to be related to center-level effect sizes, what impact do select center characteristics have on Texas ACE program participants who participate in the program regularly relative to similar youth enrolled in centers lacking that characteristic?

- **Objectives 3–5.** *Explore how the impact of the Texas ACE program may be related to different approaches to design and delivery and synthesize that information with the goal of identifying potential best practices to be shared with the Texas ACE community more broadly.* Objectives 3 and 4 also were addressed through the exploratory analysis of center-level effects on a series of school-related outcomes mentioned in Objective 2.

  Evaluation Questions Objective 3-4:

  – Based on site visit data, how do centers vary in terms of program quality, student engagement, and other key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?

  – Based on site visit data, how do center-level effects vary by key center characteristics?

  Objective 5 did not have associated research questions in the statewide evaluation as it relates to a separate format for sharing of best practices with the Texas ACE community.

- **Objective 6.** *Provide support and assistance to Texas ACE grantees and centers on how to undertake efficacious and meaningful local evaluation activities.* This involved the design and piloting of the Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI), which involved guiding a sample of centers through an intentional process of local evaluation design and implementation.

  Efforts to formulate the LESI as part of Objective 6 were not predicated on a set of formal evaluation questions but were guided by a set of principles. These principles involved a focus on collaborative

processes; intentional program design; the assessment of implementation; use of outcome measures that are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope; and the development of staff capacity to collect and use local evaluation data.

Analyses conducted to support each objective used the following data sources: (a) Texas ACE program characteristics from Tx21st data, (b) information about students served by the program and the schools they attend based on data collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), (c) State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR®) Reading and Mathematics for students in Grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessments for students in high school, and (d) 2014 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale classification boundaries. Additional information about grantees and centers were gathered from interviews, focus groups, and observations conducted during on-site data collection activities during site visits conducted by the state evaluation team in spring 2017. Additional student and activity leader surveys were also collected at these centers. The following text highlights each chapter associated with the evaluation objectives.

Summary Evaluation findings

Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics

- Site visits at 20 centers operated by Texas ACE indicated that the primary program objectives are to strive toward increasing student academic performance, provide engaging enrichment opportunities, prepare students for college as well as the workforce, and build student social and emotional knowledge and skills.
- The primary program objectives cited by the centers during site visits resonate with the federal program requirements articulated in ESSA, which emphasize alignment with the regular academic program of the school and the academic needs of participating students, including performance indicators and measures that can track student academic success, program improvement, and increased career competencies.
- Based on analyses of Tx21st data, 108 grantees were in operation in 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17. These grantees operated 734 unique centers during the three reporting periods analyzed across Cycles 7–9 (see Table ES.2).[1]
- The grantees included (a) Cycle 7 (5-year awards starting in August 2011 that had an extension and ended in 2015–16); (b) Cycle 8 (5-year awards starting in August 2013 with additional awards made in June 2014 and January 2015, with the initial awards set to end at the end of 2017–18); and (c) Cycle 9 (5-year awards starting in August 2016 and scheduled to operate through 2020-2021).

[1] 109 grantee records were initially identified from Tx21st data received from TEA by the statewide evaluation team. However, one grantee record did not have any associated center records. Also, operational and attendance data only exists for 728 centers as 6 centers from Cycle 7 and 8 grantees were found to not have operation and attendance data. Also, Cycle 7 grantees operated summer programming during the summer of 2016; however, since this period of operation represented only a portion of the total 2016-17 programming period, Cycle 7 grantees and centers have not been included in counts for 2016-17.

Table ES.2: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Grantees by Programming Period

	Grantees				Centers			
Program Year	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Total	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Total
2014–15	42	34	n/a	76	266	213	n/a	479
2015–16	42	34	n/a	76	264	213	n/a	477
2016–17	n/a[a]	34	32	66	n/a[a]	209	251	460
Unduplicated count 2014–15 through 2016–17	42	34	32	108	267	216	251	734

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data.
Note. n/a = not applicable because the cycle in question was not in operation during the specified academic year. Also, operational and attendance data only exists for 728 centers during this period as 6 centers from Cycle 7 and 8 grantees were found to not have operation and attendance data.
[a]Cycle 7 grantees operated summer programming during the summer of 2016; however, since this period of operation represented only a portion of the total 2016-17 programming period, Cycle 7 grantees and centers have not been included in counts for 2016-17.

- The largest share of centers was in urban areas, but increasingly during the final reporting period, a larger proportion of centers was in suburban areas.
- Across the three reporting periods, a combined total of 340,421 students were served in Texas ACE (not all students were unique across years). More than half of the students served in Texas ACE were in Grades 3–8, roughly one-fourth of the students were enrolled either in PreK–2 or in Grades 9–12, and two-thirds of the students were Hispanic.
- Students participating in Texas ACE largely resembled the larger makeup of schools being served by the programs across the following student characteristics: status as an English learner, racial/ethnic composition, at risk for dropping out of high school, rates for receiving special education services, average days of student absences, average number of disciplinary incidents (for those students who had any), and the likelihood of attaining a STAAR passing standard in reading and mathematics.[2]
- Texas ACE participants differed from students at the schools served by the program in the following ways: (a) slightly more Texas ACE students were classified as economically disadvantaged and (b) slightly more than half of Texas ACE students who took the English I EOC exam in 2016–17 achieved the passing standard, which was about five percentage points lower than the overall school passing rate, and c) nearly all of Texas ACE students who took the Algebra I EOC exam achieved a passing standard (88%), but this rate was still about five percentage points lower than the overall school passing rate in 2016–17.

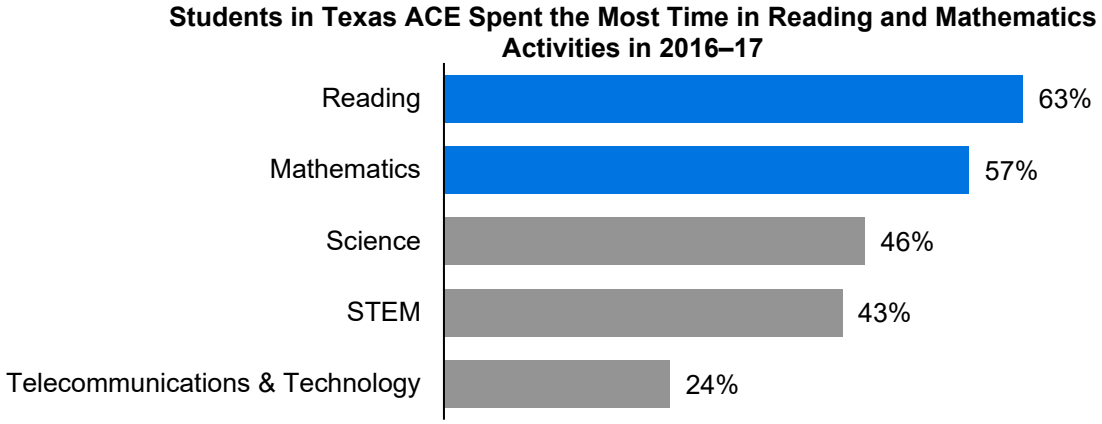
Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics

- Analyses of the 2016-2017 Tx21st data found that students spent the most time in Texas ACE participating in recreation, homework help, or academic enrichment activities.

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

- Data from 2016–17 show that Texas ACE participants spent time in reading- and mathematics-related activities nearly two thirds of the time; slightly less than half of their time in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)–related activities; and nearly one fourth of their time in activities addressing telecommunications and technology (see Figure ES.1). A similar pattern was found in prior years.

Figure ES.1: Percentage of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Participants' Time (Hours) Spent on Activities Categorized by Subject in 2016–17



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System, data for 2016–17.
Note. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the numbers do not total to 100%. These data are based on the percentage of time (in hours) spent on programming activities based on the following: *n* = 463 (centers) in 2016–17 averaged across centers.

- An exploration of staffing at centers operated by Texas ACE found three main models: (a) centers staffed mostly by school-day teachers (teachers); (b) centers staffed by paraprofessionals and/or college students (other staff); and (c) centers staffed by a mixture of staff classifications (mixed model) that included school-day teachers, paraprofessionals who also work during the school day, youth development staff who work with partner agencies, college students, and volunteers.
- Across all three programming years studied, an average of 49% of the centers used paraprofessionals and/or college students (i.e., other staff), followed by school-day teachers at an average of 45% of the centers. Centers were staffed through a mixed model fewer than 6% of the time.

  Data from site visits and interviews with center staff at 20 sites visited in spring 2017 revealed that Texas ACE programs focused on academic and enrichment activities the most, whereas college and career readiness and parental involvement were lower priority activities. Also, students spent most of their time in academic enrichment, recreation, and homework help in the subjects of reading and mathematics.

- Center staff who were interviewed generally felt that their activities aligned with local goals while also trying to support the statewide Texas ACE objectives related to quality programming and improving student outcomes.
- Logic models were underused to support monitoring of alignment to Texas ACE program goals and objectives, based on interview feedback with the centers visited. These models were infrequently used to orient new staff to program goals and objectives.

On Academic Alignment

"One of our program goals, . . . increase academic performance . . . our tutoring, they're very intentional tutorial groups. We progress monitor them with grades and benchmark tests and things throughout the year to make sure that students are actually improving and so that specifically is one of those ways that we meet one of those goals."

—Site Coordinator

- Staff development occurred in a variety of ways according to the site visit data. Most Texas ACE programs offered staff orientation, either in traditional form or ways such as on-the-job training. Some Texas ACE programs had staff who were school-day teachers and participated in professional development (PD) through their school or district rather than Texas ACE. Other PD focused on student academic and behavior needs, as well as classroom management and program quality.
- Partners were important for Texas ACE implementation, and local nonprofit organizations were the most common partner provider, with many other types of organizations also supporting programs by providing enrichment activities, donations (e.g., monetary), and other opportunities, such as career days for participating students.
- Texas ACE program staff tended to view the program as an extension of the school day and sought to align the program with the school day. School-day and Texas ACE relationships were critical for creating strong school linkages, as seen through district and school support and site coordinator presence on campus.
- The role of Texas ACE advisory boards varied across centers, with approximately half of the centers reporting that both the advisory board and Texas ACE staff shared decision-making responsibilities. Advisory boards also generally supported programs in other ways, including contributing to planning, monitoring, and oversight.
- Family engagement was an important component of Texas ACE based on interviews and focus groups with program staff. Texas ACE programs connected with families through parent surveys, attendance at school events, communications sent home to parents, activities designed to build relationships with parents, attendance at citywide events, and home visits. Through the interviews, two broad categories of family activities emerged related to the types of activities that Texas ACE uses to engage with families: (a) activities to help family members support student development and (b) activities to advance parent life and job skills. English as a second language (ESL) classes paired with college and career readiness classes were most frequently cited as a high need for family members and offered at centers.
- Texas ACE felt that high-quality staff who connected with youth were by far the most important feature of a high-quality program, followed by relationships with youth and youth engagement.

- Formal quality assessment measures, however, were not widely used; informal observations were more common to support monitoring. Student-level data were commonly mentioned to support performance assessment efforts. Student data from teachers—both formal grades and informal feedback—were the most important source of data for programs in relation to understanding student needs, whereas other data such as Texas ACE participation data or standardized test scores were secondary.

On Formal Quality Assessments

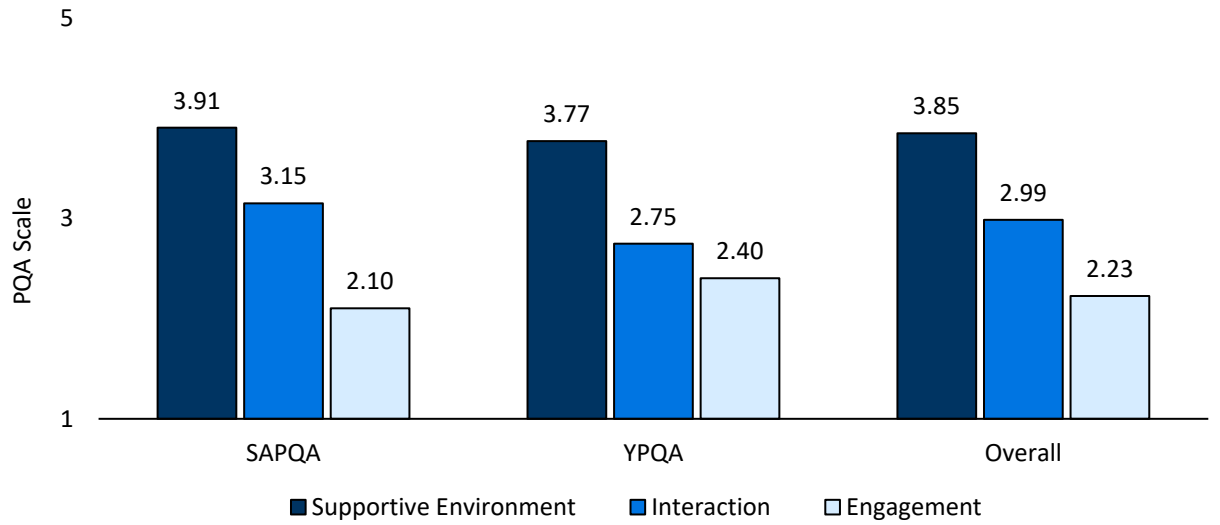
"We actually developed a rubric, a quality rubric, and we're still revamping it because we went through all these descriptors and so we make observations, we give feedback, we redirect when need be, and we adjust course."

—Project Director

Chapter 4: Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Programming

- Analysis of program quality data collected at 20 centers in spring 2017 found moderate levels of quality. This finding suggests that opportunities for growth exist across elementary, middle, and high school centers to achieve high and consistent quality program delivery.
- Overall, many centers are still developing practices and supports that facilitate meaningful interactions among participating youth and promote high levels of engagement.
- Higher scores on the program quality assessment (PQA) in the supportive environment domain give reason to believe that many centers are moderately successful in adopting practices that help create a supportive learning environment for participating youth (see Figure ES.2).
- The results also demonstrated that program quality may have an influence on youth experiences in programming. Youth participating in centers with higher PQA scores were more likely to report experiencing positive affect and a greater sense of relevance in terms of Texas ACE programming they participated in on a given day compared with centers with lower PQA scores.

Figure ES.2: Average School-Age Program Quality Assessment and Youth Program Quality Assessment Scores by Program Quality Assessment Domain



Source. PQA scores obtained during spring 2017 site visits conducted at 20 centers.
Note. PQA: program quality assessment; SAPQA: School-Age Program Quality Assessment; YPQA: Youth Program Quality Assessment.

- Youth in centers that referenced using an externally developed quality assessment tool to assess programming and inform quality improvement efforts reported more positive experiences than youth in centers that did not. Youth at these centers reported being significantly more challenged, experiencing a greater sense of relevance, and being more engaged.
- Center characteristics related to youth experiences differed the most when comparing elementary and middle and high school centers. Youth in middle and high school centers reported greater relevance, more positive affect, and greater engagement than youth in elementary centers. This result may be related to youth in middle and high school centers having more choice than youth in elementary centers and spending more time in activities that promote autonomy and leadership.
- Activities that resulted in positive experiences being more frequently reported by youth included working on group projects, making or building things, practicing a new skill, and exploring learning on their own. Such activities were perceived by youth as having greater relevance to their lives and as significantly more engaging than other types of activities examined.

Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth

- The objective of the analyses summarized in Chapter 5 was to understand whether Texas ACE programs can be linked to the academic development of participating youth and promote behaviors that will contribute to academic and overall student success.
- Results from the outcome analyses conducted for Texas ACE programming delivered during the 2014–15 to 2016–17 school years indicated that Texas ACE did not have a positive association with STAAR Reading and Mathematics scores for youth attending programming in Grades 4–8. This finding is a deviation from prior Texas ACE evaluations, which demonstrated that the program had a small, positive effect on mathematics scores when youth attended programming for 60 days or more

(Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). For the present evaluation, a positive effect on mathematics scores was found only when youth in Grades 4–8 participated in 120 days or more of programming during the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years.

- Youth demonstrated higher levels of school-day attendance and fewer disciplinary incidents the more they attended Texas ACE programming.
- Texas ACE programming was found to have a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Reading and Mathematics scores across several of the attendance bands examined. Notably, as youth attended more programming, the negative statistical effects tended to grow smaller. This finding seems to indicate that participation in Texas ACE programming is negatively associated with reading and mathematics assessment scores at some levels of attendance, but the negative effects are reduced to an immeasurable level, at least for mathematics, once youth have higher program attendance. on the other hand, it may be the case that some important unobservable differences exist between Texas ACE participants and nonparticipants that are serving to bias results from the impact analyses related specifically to achievement that are not being controlled for through the matching process.
- Texas ACE was found to have a significant positive association with grade-level promotion, specifically for high school students. For all other groups, promotion to the next grade was found to be negatively associated with Texas ACE participation across specific attendance bands. . These negative effects went away, however, when attendance bands were collapsed, and program effects were considered for youth who attended programming for 60 days or more across two consecutive years. Conducting these outcome analyses using more narrowly defined attendance bands perhaps served to result in more inconsistent findings that masked the broader manner in which Texas ACE participation was associated with this outcome.
- The study provided preliminary exploratory findings that centers using an external quality assessment tool to inform the design and delivery of programming and scoring higher on the PQA during site visit observations was positively associated with some youth outcomes under consideration.
- Although these findings are based on very small sample sizes, it is advised that use of these program quality tools continue to be explored in the future in terms of how tool use may be related to positive youth outcomes.

Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

- AIR and the Diehl Consulting Group began work in summer 2017 to enhance the local evaluation support that TEA provides for Texas ACE, with the goal of producing a new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide.
- The new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide, which replaced the Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, along with a supplemental Texas ACE Toolkit, was completed in August 2018.
- The guide walks grantees step-by-step through how to plan and conduct an evaluation and provides a toolkit of templates, tools, and measures to support implementation of the new guide. To aid the development process, the statewide evaluation team engaged a Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG) made up of key Texas ACE stakeholders and conducted an evaluation initiative (LESI), with a group of centers to test out new evaluation approaches and gather feedback. The two groups provided feedback on the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and the supplemental toolkit during the 2017–18 academic year.

- Another part of the work included the opportunity to test out new local evaluation approaches that could support further development before rollout to grantees statewide through LESI. This initiative consisted of training and hands-on support with up to 20 centers on a variety of topics related to program involvement and quality improvement from fall 2017 through summer 2018. Eleven grantees and 19 centers completed the entire LESI process, which included three core approaches to conducting a local evaluation:
  - Implementing a quality assessment process
  - Using key performance indicators
  - Deriving local evaluation questions
- As part of LESI, participating centers were trained on the three core approaches through a webinar training series as well as regular reminders and check-ins from the statewide evaluation team and hands-on activities and assignments for centers in which feedback from the state evaluation team was provided.
- One of the primary successes of LESI was the diverse stakeholder participation and the teamwork that it encouraged, providing space for many voices and perspectives to be heard.
- Feedback from respondents indicated that the process gave them the time and space to observe, reflect, and think about their vision for the center, allowing them to see both strengths and areas of improvement.
- Many respondents commented on the specific tools, resources, webinars, and trainings they received as being helpful to understanding quality programs and evaluation, as well as helping them feel valued. They also found the connections to other districts and a local evaluator as key supports. Overall, many respondents noted that this initiative helped them understand their impact and areas that they can act on to improve that impact.
- Feedback on challenges with the initiative centered on timing of the initiative because the timeline was short and off schedule from a number of the required Texas ACE evaluation activities. Other feedback included the need for additional training on the content either through webinars or in person with the state evaluation team. Also, that the content itself was challenging because the content was unfamiliar to many of the centers.

Future Evaluation Reports

Steps will be taken in future evaluation reports to build from the findings described in this report to further explore the relationship between key center characteristics and student outcomes. In particular, a focus will be placed on those characteristics that distinguish higher and lower implementing Texas ACE centers and how certain types of student experiences in programming may be related to positive student outcomes.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, authorized by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as renewed by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides grant funding to states to support "academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools" (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2018). By means of state-level subgrant competitions, states allocate this funding to schools, community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based institutions, and other agencies to provide this programming in their communities. The community learning centers are meant to "offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs, technology education programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy programs, mathematics, science, career and technical programs, internship or apprenticeship programs, and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students" (ED, 2015).[3]

Since 2002, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has provided 21st CCLC funding to hundreds of grantees and supported thousands of community learning centers, also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education® (Texas ACE®), across the state. This report presents statewide program evaluation findings pertaining to Texas ACE programs funded as part of grant Cycles 7–9. The evaluation report focuses in particular on the program's operation and impact on student outcomes for the 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 programming periods.

TEA typically awards 21st CCLC grants for a 5-year period. In any given year, two cycles are in operation at different years of their grants. Grants generally operate on a fiscal year basis with their years and cycles starting in the fall and ending after the summer term. However, for purposes of this report the programming years analyzed consists of the summer, fall and end with the spring term, which aligns with the federal definition of a programming year and the format the Tx21st Student Tracking data was reported to the statewide evaluation team. The analyses in this report used data across three program years starting in the summer of 2014 and running through the spring of 2017. (Table 1.1).

[3] "The definition of a community learning center is: an entity that—
(A) assists students to meet the challenging State academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities during nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess) that—
(i) reinforce and complement the regular academic programs of the schools attended by the students served; and
(ii) are targeted to the students' academic needs and aligned with the instruction students receive during the school day; and
(B) offers families of students served by such center opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development" (ED, 2015, p. 234).

Table 1.1: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycles 7–9 Grantees, by Grant Year and Reporting Years for the Evaluation

Grant Year	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Notes
2011–12	Year 1	—	—	Cycle 7 starts
2012–13	Year 2	—	—	
2013–14	Year 3	Year 1	—	Cycle 8 starts
2014–15	Year 4	Year 2	—	
2015–16	Year 5	Year 3	—	Cycle 7 ends
2016–17	—	Year 4	Year 1	Cycle 9 starts
2017–18	—	Year 5	Year 2	Cycle 8 ends
2018–19	—	—	Year 3	
2019–20	—	—	Year 4	
2012–21	—	—	Year 5	Cycle 9 ends

Notes: Blue shaded rows depict the time period and grant cycles assessed for the report, referred to throughout the report as the "reporting period." Grant Years for the purposes of program evaluation begin with summer operations in June and end with the academic year in May. The fiscal operating year for grants begins in August with fall operations and ends in July upon the conclusion of summer programming.

The Texas ACE evaluation for the years described was undertaken by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with the Gibson Consulting Group and the Diehl Consulting Group. The design of the evaluation of the Texas 21st CCLC program was driven by the following six objectives:[4]

- **Objective 1.** *Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the Texas ACE program statewide.* This involved providing a descriptive profile of Texas ACE program implementation based on administrative data captured in the state's tracking system and information on program design and delivery obtained from site visits conducted at a sample of programs.
- **Objective 2.** *Conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Texas ACE program on a series of school-related outcomes.* This involved using a quasi-experimental design to explore how youth participating in Texas ACE at various levels of attendance performed on key outcomes relative to similar youth not participating in Texas ACE programming. This objective included an exploratory analysis of center-level effects on a series of school-related outcomes, which allowed the evaluation team to explore how different center characteristics and practices may be related to the achievement of different youth outcomes.[5]

[4] The six objectives here are a summary of those specified in TEA's Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation of the Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (released in 2016).

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

- **Objectives 3, 4 and 5.** *Explore how the impact of the Texas ACE program may be related to different approaches to design and delivery and synthesize that information with the goal of identifying potential best practices to be shared with the Texas ACE community more broadly.* Objectives 3 and 4 also were addressed through the exploratory analysis of center-level effects on a series of school-related outcomes mentioned in Objective 2.
- **Objective 6.** *Provide support and assistance to Texas ACE grantees and centers on how to undertake efficacious and meaningful location evaluation activities.* This involved the design and piloting of the LESI, which involved guiding a sample of centers through an intentional process of local evaluation design and implementation.

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

Table 1.2: Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers Evaluation Objectives Aligned With the 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 Evaluation Report Chapters and Best Practice Briefs

Objective	Report chapter(s)
Objective 1: Evaluation of the Implementation of the 21st CCLC Program Statewide	• Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics • Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics
Objective 2: Evaluation of the Impact of the 21st CCLC Program Statewide	• Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth
Objective 3: Evaluation of the Implementation of the 21st CCLC Program for a Sample of Centers Objective 4: Evaluation of the Impact of the 21st CCLC Program for a Sample of Centers	• Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics • Chapter 4: Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Programming • Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth
Objective 5: Analysis of Best Practices from the Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of the 21st CCLC	• Best Practices Briefs (separate documents not in report)[a]
Objective 6: Annual Local Evaluations	• Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

[a]These briefs were created to highlight specific practices identified through the evaluation that were considered conducive to the effective implementation of Texas ACE programming and designed to better convey this information to Texas ACE grantees and centers. These briefs will be disseminated directly by TEA to the Texas ACE community.

Evaluation Questions

The collection and analysis of data underpinning the findings outlined in this report were guided by the following set of evaluation questions organized by evaluation objective.

Objective 1

- What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?

Objective 2

- What impact does the program have for youth attending Texas ACE regularly during the school year relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?

- What impact does the program have for youth attending Texas ACE regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming?
- What center-level characteristics derived from the Texas 21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st) are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among participating youth?
- For center-level characteristics found to be related to center-level effect sizes, what impact do select center characteristics have on Texas ACE program participants who participate in the program regularly relative to similar youth enrolled in centers lacking that characteristic?

Objectives 3–4

- Based on site visit data, how do centers vary in terms of program quality, student engagement, and other key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?
- Based on site visit data, how do center-level effects vary by key center characteristics?
- No research questions were addressed under Objective 5 and it is separate stand-alone documents focused on best practices for the Texas ACE community.

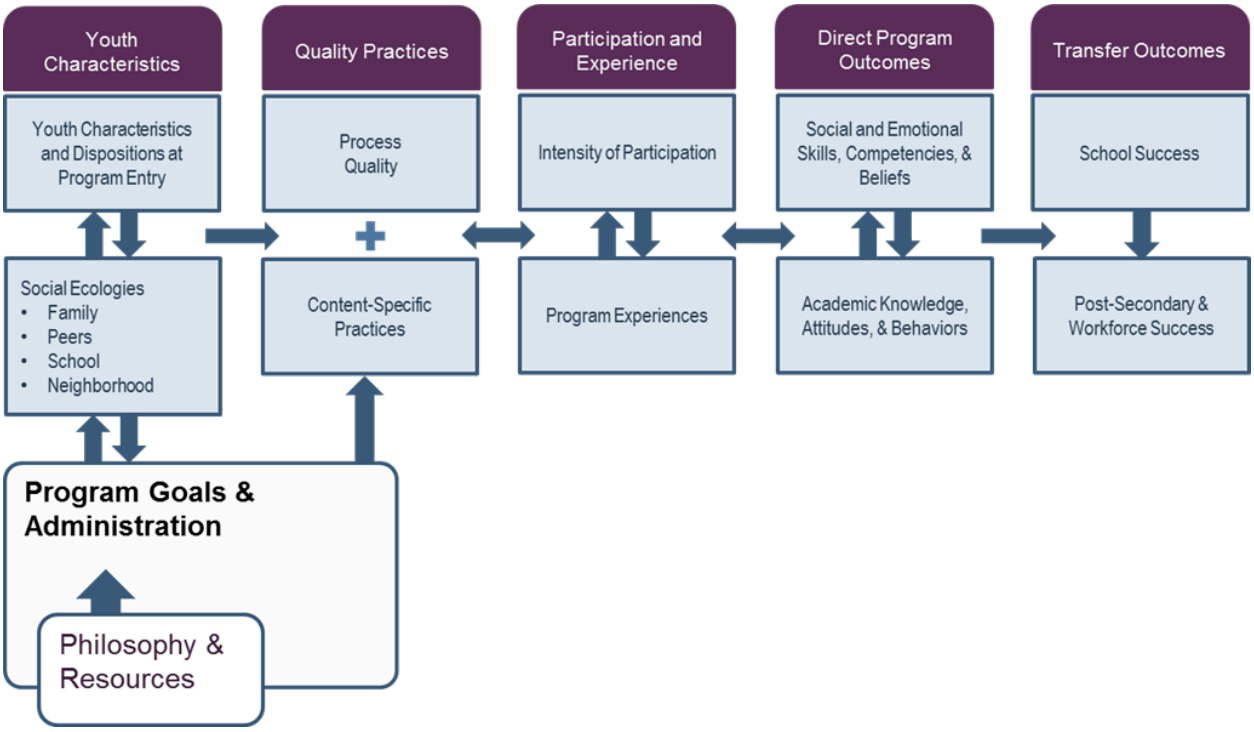
Objective 6

- Efforts to formulate the LESI as part of Objective 6 were not predicated on a set of formal evaluation questions but were guided by a set of principles. These principles involved a focus on collaborative processes; intentional program design; the assessment of implementation; the use of outcome measures that are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope; and the development of staff capacity to collect and use local evaluation data.

Connection to a 21st CCLC Conceptual Framework

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

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



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

Organization of the Report

This report is organized by seven chapters and appendices as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides an overview of the evaluation objectives and organization of the report.
- Chapter 2 reviews Texas ACE grantee and center characteristics.
- Chapter 3 summarizes the characteristics of Texas ACE program implementation.
- Chapter 4 examines program quality and youth experiences in programming.
- Chapter 5 describes the impacts of Texas ACE on youth outcomes.
- Chapter 6 summarizes a LESI conducted with a set of centers operated by Texas ACE.

- Chapter 7 is a brief summary of the findings.
- Appendixes A, B, D, and E contain additional data tables and figures for Chapters 2, 3, and 5.
- Appendixes C, F, G, and H contain a comprehensive description of evaluation methods for the report, including statistical methodology, data sources, site visit description and methodology, and interview protocols and surveys instruments.
- Appendix I contains additional documents and artifacts from the LESI.

Chapter 2. Grantee and Center Characteristics

Objective 1. What are the primary characteristics of Texas ACE programs?

Introduction

Texas ACE programs are designed to support the academic achievement of students primarily attending economically disadvantaged and low performing schools.by providing supplemental academics, academic enrichment and related supportive programming primarily after school, before school, and during the summer. Texas ACE programs are funded through 21st CCLC grant competitions held periodically by TEA, which typically provide funding for one to 10 centers per grant for a period up to 5 years. Each center serves students from one or more eligible campuses and designs and delivers programming that is meant to address student needs and support the positive development of the participating students.

A typical Texas ACE program operates twelve hours a week four days a week, or fifteen hours a week over five days, depending on the grant cycle. Time in the centers is often set aside for nutritional snacks or meals; activities with an academic focus, which could be homework help or tutoring; enrichment activities with an academic focus in reading and mathematics; and a wide variety of other enrichment offerings, including sports, art, music, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) activities. Summer program requirements include grantees to be in operations at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 6 weeks. Elementary programs are more apt to be characterized by grade-level groupings, with most youth participating in a similar set of activities on a given programming day. Middle and high school programs are more likely to include club-based components, where youth choose to participate in activities in which they are interested and may be offered once or a few times per week during a given programming session. Programs commonly offer varied learning opportunities in different sessions during the school year engage students in the program in alignment with student needs and student choice. .

Given the variety of communities that can be served through the Texas ACE program, and the flexibility that programs have in using grant funds, programs were characterized by a range of program delivery, staffing, and operational models; student populations; and types of organizations involved in providing Texas ACE programming. This chapter provides an overview of the grantees and centers and describes the students participating in Texas ACE programming. To answer Objective 1, descriptive analyses were conducted of data in relation to Texas ACE program delivery during the 3-year reporting period. Data sourced from systems housed at TEA included (a) Texas ACE program characteristics from Tx21st data, (b) information about students served by the program and the schools they attend based on data collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), (c) State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR®) Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores for students in Grades 3–8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessments for students in high school, and (d) 2014 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale classification boundaries. Additional information about grantees and centers were gathered from site visits conducted by the state evaluation team in spring 2017.

Overview of Grantees and Centers

This section contains information on key grantee and center characteristics. First, site visit data set the context for understanding Texas ACE programming objectives broadly, as well as the target populations served through the program. Next, Tx21st data provide an overall summary of grantees, centers, and students served in Cycles 7–9. In this report, the term *grantee* refers to the organization that serves as the fiduciary agent on the 21st CCLC grant in question. The federal 21st CCLC statute allows for a variety of organizations to receive 21st CCLC grants, including but not limited to school districts, CBOs, private schools, colleges and universities, and other units of local government. Grantees are ultimately responsible for administering grant funds at the program level.

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

Grantee-Reported Texas ACE Objectives

At the federal level, the primary goal of the 21st CCLC program is to support alignment with the regular academic program and the academic needs of participating students as measured by indicators of student success and improvement. These indicators are described in ESSA as "performance indicators and performance measures that will be used to evaluate programs and activities with emphasis on alignment with the regular academic program of the school and the academic needs of participating students, including performance indicators and measures that—(i) are able to track student success and improvement over time; (ii) include State assessment results and other indicators of student success and improvement, such as improved attendance during the school day, better classroom grades, regular (or consistent) program attendance, and on-time advancement to the next grade level; and (iii) for high school students, may include indicators such as career competencies, successful completion of internships or apprenticeships, or work-based learning opportunities" (ED, 2015, p. 238). Historically, programs receiving 21st CCLC funding include purposeful design elements to support the development of academic-related behaviors that impact school-related outcomes. Interviews with center-level staff from the 20 centers visited in spring 2017 helped illuminate their alignment of programming objectives with the required program guidelines (TEA, 2016). Nine major programming objectives emerged from the interview and site visit data with centers (see Figure 2.1 and Table A2.1 in Appendix A).

Program Objectives

Interviews with staff from 20 centers indicated that staff and leaders strive to increase student academic performance, provide engaging enrichment opportunities, prepare students for college and the workforce, and build students' social and emotional skills.

Figure 2.1: Major Objectives Reported by 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education in Spring 2017

- Address academic needs (e.g., tutoring, homework help): 19 centers
- Provide academic and creative enrichment opportunities: 19 centers
- Build social and emotional learning skills: 18 centers
- Promote college and career readiness: 16 centers
- Support parent involvement: 13 centers
- Foster a sense of belonging and supporting school connectedness: 12 centers
- Promote sustained attendance in programming: 9 centers
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe learning environment: 6 centers
- Foster community engagement and culture through programming: 5 centers
- Meet the nutritional needs of students: 5 centers

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Given the federal goals associated with the 21st CCLC program, it was not surprising that almost all centers confirmed program objectives related to addressing the academic needs of participating students (19 of 20 centers). Most centers also mentioned building SEL skills or promoting college and career readiness as a major program objective. Slightly more than half of the centers cited program objectives related to creating a sense of belonging, supporting school connectedness, and building SEL skills as critical. Supporting sustained attendance in programming was identified as an objective by fewer than half of the centers.

One third of the centers cited providing a physically and emotionally safe environment as an important objective. Interviews with center staff indicated that the communities, neighborhoods, and family homes of the students are not always safe or supervised environments for school-aged children when school is not in session and family members are away at work. Many quality frameworks design afterschool and summer programs to support both a physically and emotionally safe learning environment to foster learning and development by providing afterschool programming. Meeting students' nutritional needs, another objective identified by program staff serving elementary students, also could be classified under this broader mantle of ensuring that the basic needs of students are being met. Some of the objectives that staff identified were related to the idea of exposing students to new experiences and potential new areas of interest by providing academic enrichment activities and supporting student and family engagement with community and culture.

Some objectives identified by center-level staff were more specifically aligned to the age of the students being served. For example, supporting parent involvement was more relevant to centers serving elementary students given the important role that parents play during this phase of child development (nine of the 12 elementary centers identified this as an objective), whereas programs serving middle school students were more apt to talk about objectives related to college and career readiness (all five middle school centers).

Target Student Populations

The evaluation team sought to understand how Texas ACE programs define the target population of students they enroll in afterschool and summer programming. Five primary approaches to targeting particular student populations emerged among Texas ACE programs from the

spring 2017 site visit data (see Table 2.1). Two thirds of the centers identified explicitly targeting students at risk, and about half of the centers mentioned targeting students from high-need or highly mobile households. Middle school centers visited, in particular, mentioned targeting students academically at risk of not graduating (four of five centers).[6] Slightly less than half of the centers mentioned recruiting students at risk because of disciplinary or behavioral issues, but elementary centers were most likely to recruit this population (seven of 12 centers). To a lesser degree, centers mentioned prioritizing some populations but seeking to serve all students generally (four of 20 centers). Only two centers mentioned having no defined target student population. Generally, how centers conceptualized their target populations was reflective of the objectives they hoped to accomplish by providing programming to participating students.

Table 2.1: Student Target Population Reported by 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education in Spring 2017

	Elementary (*n* = 12)	Middle school (*n* = 5)	High school (*n* = 3)	Across grade levels (*N* = 20)
Students academically at risk	58%	80%	33%	60%
Students from high-need or highly mobile households	50%	40%	67%	50%
Students at risk because of disciplinary or behavioral issues	58%	20%	33%	45%
Prioritizing some populations, but the center seeks to serve all students	8%	40%	33%	20%
Having no defined student target population	8%	20%	0%	10%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Texas ACE Operations

The subsequent sections in Chapter 2 describe Texas ACE program characteristics statewide across the reporting periods for Cycles 7–9 as described in Tx21st data in terms of the number of grantees, the number of centers, center maturity, locale type, grantee organization type, and students and schools served by Texas ACE. Each center has defined hours of operation, dedicated staff members, and a full-time site coordinator to manage center-level operations. Each 21st CCLC grantee operates at least one center and can operate up to 10 centers per grant.[7] TEA posts requests for competitive grant applications every two to three years. Every group of awards under each competition is referred to as a "cycle" of grantees. Grantees active during the 2014–15 to 2016–17 evaluation reporting period were funded in three different Texas 21st CCLC grant cycles: (a) Cycle 7 (5-year awards starting in August 2011 and ending in July 2016); (b) Cycle 8 (5-year awards starting in August 2013 with additional awards made in June 2014 and January 2015, and all awards offending in July 2018); and (c) Cycle 9 (5-year awards starting in August 2016 and scheduled to operate through July 2022).[8]

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

[7] 2016–2017 Texas 21st CCLC, Cycle 9, Year 1 Program Guidelines.

[8] Most Cycle 9 grants originated as 3-year grants that eventually became 5-year grants. For Cycle 9, grants to new entities with all new center locations were awarded for 5 years. Grantees that were grantees prior to Cycle 9 and/or

During the 2014–15 programming period, 42 Cycle 7 grantees and 34 Cycle 8 grantees operated 479 centers. During the 2015–16 programming period, the same 42 Cycle 7 grantees and 34 Cycle 8 grantees together operated 477 centers. During the 2016–17 programming period, Cycle 7 had ended, and Cycles 8 (34 grantees) and 9 (32 grantees) operated 460 centers. Overall, 108 unduplicated Texas ACE grantees managed 734 unduplicated centers during the three reporting years covered for Cycles 7–9 (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantees and Centers by Cycle and Programming Period

	Grantees				Centers			
Program Year	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Total	Cycle 7	Cycle 8	Cycle 9	Total
2014–15	42	34	n/a	76	266	213	n/a	479
2015–16	42	34	n/a	76	264	213	n/a	477
2016–17	n/a[a]	34	32	66	n/a[a]	209	251	460
Unduplicated count all years	42	34	32	108	267	216	251	734

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st data from 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. n/a = The cycle in question was not in operation during the specified academic year. Also, grantees and centers may be duplicated across years and within each cycle. The unduplicated count across reporting years is provided in the final row of the table. 109 grantee records were initially identified from Tx21st data received from TEA by the statewide evaluation team. However, one grantee record did not have any associated center records. Also, operational and attendance data only exists for 728 centers as 6 centers from Cycle 7 and 8 grantees were found to not have operation and attendance data.
[a]Cycle 7 grantees operated summer programming during the summer of 2016; however, since this period of operation represented only a portion of the total 2016-17 programming period, Cycle 7 grantees and centers have not been included in counts for 2016-17.

Grantee Maturity and Management

TEA began administering the 21st CCLC grant program in 2002, shortly after passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (ED, 2002). Now administered under the ESSA, the state's 21st CCLC program has been branded Texas ACE, and TEA has run 10 competitions to award new 21st CCLC grants. Across these competitions, numerous eligible organizations have received grants, some of them multiple times. As a result, during any given cycle, a portion of the recipient organizations are first-time 21st CCLC grantees, whereas others have received funds and operated programs in previous cycles. Experienced Texas ACE staff, especially those in a director or coordinator role, likely contribute to the stability and expertise of best practices related to programming and management at the grant and center levels. While attrition is expected over time, grantee maturity and staffing information are relevant because organizations managing Texas ACE programs are likely to gain experience in providing more effective and engaging programming for students, develop meaningful partnerships and linkages with the school day, and more efficiently administer their 21st CCLC grant.[9] Although an analysis of grantee maturity

proposed serving centers that had previously operated under the grant program were awarded 3 years based on an ESSA provision that allows states to renew grants under certain conditions without conducting a grant competition. In 2018, TEA used this provision to extend the 3-year grants to the same end date of the 5-year grants in Cycle 9.
[9] The Tx21st data did not have indicators of staffing experience or tenure across grantees, so a measure of grantee maturity was examined as a proxy for center maturity by examining whether a grantee was awarded a 21st CCLC

across the span of the program life (i.e., going back to Cycle 1) was not practicable, the following analysis examined data from Cycle 6 as a proxy to identify grantees with prior experience managing centers and/or grantees that were awarded more than one grant during Cycles 7–9.

One third of these centers operating across Cycles 7–9 were associated with new Texas ACE grantees, meaning the entities operating these centers had not received a prior Texas ACE award going back as far as Cycle 6 (see Table 2.3). As a result, two thirds of the centers were associated with entities that had received previous Texas ACE grants. It is worth noting that a center's association with an entity receiving previous Texas ACE funding could be assessed only going back to Cycle 6 because of data availability. Because grantees funded in Cycle 6 were not eligible to apply for funding in Cycle 7 specifically, some Cycle 5 grantees may have applied for funding in Cycle 7 and received grants. In this sense, the data outlined in Table 2.3 likely underestimate the actual number of centers associated with entities receiving Texas ACE grants in previous funding cycles.

Table 2.3: Centers by Grantee Maturity[a] , Cycles 7 and 9

Grantee	Number of centers[b]	Percentage of centers
Was not a prior Cycle 6 grantee and received one Texas ACE award during Cycles 7–9	238	33%
Received an award in Cycle 6 and/or received multiple Texas ACE awards during cycles 7–9	485	67%
Total	723[c]	100%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 and additional Texas Education Agency administrative data from 2013–14.
Note. Texas ACE = Texas Afterschool Centers on Education.
[a] Maturity is based on whether the grantee also received a grant during Cycle 6 and/or more than one grant in Cycles 7–9. Cycle 6 grantees could not receive Cycle 7 grants for the same centers.
[b]Duplicate counts of centers may exist where grantees were funded in both Cycles 7 and 9.
[c]Calculation was based on data available for 723 centers.

On average, a relatively large number of centers was associated with grantees. The majority of grantees active during the programming periods managed between six and 10 centers. It also should be noted that starting with the Cycle 8 competition, grantees were limited to 10 centers per 21st CCLC grant. (See Table A2.2 in Appendix A.)

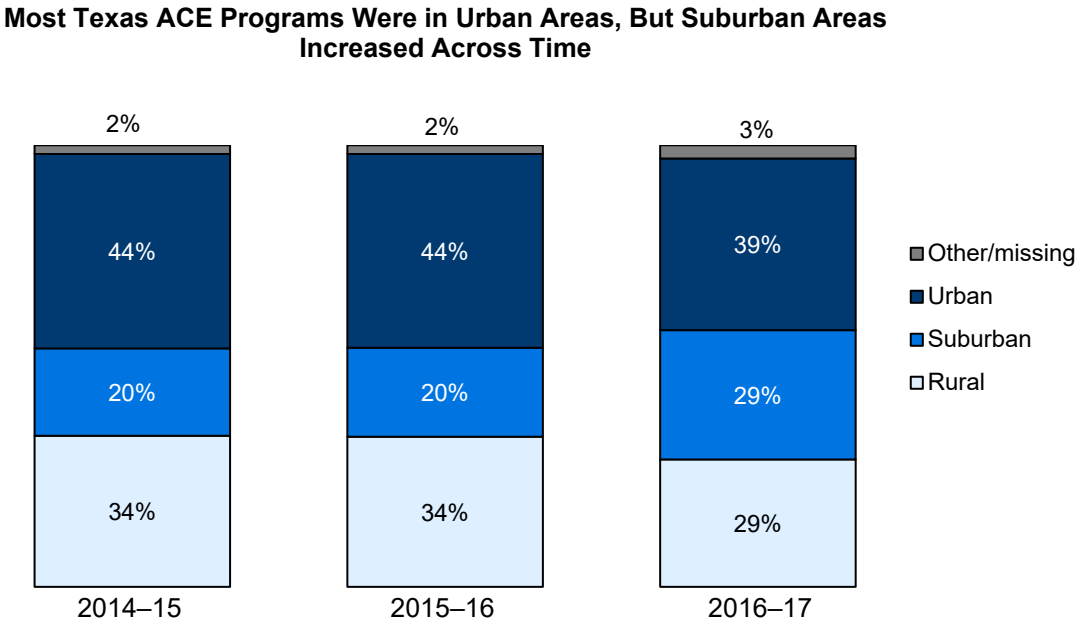
Locale Type

As shown in Figure 2.2, most centers active during the reporting period were in urban and suburban areas, followed by rural areas (see Table A2.3 in Appendix A). With the addition of Cycle 9 grantees in 2016, however, a higher proportion of centers were in suburban communities compared with the previous 2 years. Texas ACE programs in suburban areas grew by 9 percentage points between 2015–16 and 2016–17, increasing from 20% to 29%. At the same time, centers in urban areas decreased by 5 percentage points from 44% to 39%, although most centers were still in urban areas. Centers in rural areas decreased by a similar amount as urban areas during the period in question. In 2015–16, 34% of the Texas ACE programs were in rural areas compared with 29% in 2016–17. The analysis did not

grant prior to Cycle 7, as far back as Cycle 6, which was the earliest year of administrative data available from TEA for this evaluation report.

explore whether the trends for Texas ACE follow similar geographic trends in population growth or decline across Texas.

Figure 2.2: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) by Locale Type From 2014–15 Through 2016–17



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 and National Center for Education Statistics locale classification areas.
Note. The data are based on *n* = 479 centers in 2015, *n* = 477 centers in 2016, and *n* = 460 centers in 2017.

Grantee Organization Type

Eligibility for receiving a Texas 21st CCLC grant was based on ESSA requirements that allow a wide variety of entities to receive 21st CCLC grants, including but not limited to independent school districts, public charters, nonprofit organizations, local government entities, and universities/colleges (ED, 2015). Analyses found that the vast majority of Texas 21st CCLC grants were held by independent school districts and regional educational entities (between 79% and 88%; see Table 2.4 and Table A2.4 in Appendix A). A larger proportion of Cycle 8 and 9 grantees (88%) was managed by independent school districts and regional educational entities compared with Cycles 7 at 79%.[10] Nonprofit organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs and Communities in Schools) and other CBOs accounted for 19% in Cycle 7, 9% in Cycle 8, and 13% in Cycle 9. The remaining grants were held by colleges or universities in Cycles 7 and 8, but these institutions did not receive 21st CCLC grants in Cycle 9.

[10] Texas has 20 regional Educational Service Centers (ESCs) in the state that exist to support local school districts to attain and fulfill the mission, goals and objectives set forth by the Texas Education Agency (TEA, n.d.). Texas Education Code §2.8002 states that: "Regional education service centers shall:
(1) assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system;
(2) enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and
(3) implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner"

Table 2.4: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grantee Organization Type by Cycle

Organization Type	Cycle 7 Percentage	Cycle 8 Percentage	Cycle 9 Percentage
Independent school districts and regional educational entities	79%	88%	88%
Nonprofit organizations	19%	9%	13%
College or university	2%	3%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Total number of grants	42	34	32

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. Independent school districts and regional educational entities include regional education service centers. Nonprofit organizations include nationally affiliated and state or local nonprofit organizations.

Students and Schools Served by Texas ACE

Student data were analyzed for each year (see Tables A2.5 in Appendix A). A total of 118,282 students were served by Texas ACE in 2014–15; 116,992 were served in 2015–16; and 105,147 students were served in 2016–17 (or an average of 113,473 students). On average, students represented 561 Texas school campuses (see Table A2.6 in Appendix A). The following analyses describe student demographics of students participating in Texas ACE, their associated student outcomes, and their frequency of participation compared with the overall student population served by the feeder schools for Texas ACE programs.[11]

An average of 113,000 students were served in Texas from 2014–15 through 2016–17.

Student Characteristics

Fifty-one percent of the students in Texas ACE programming were in Grades PreK–5 in each programming year (see Table A2.5 in Appendix A). On average, 30% of the Texas ACE students were in Grades 6–8, and the remaining 19% of students were in Grades 9–12. Steps also were taken to examine whether the student population served by Texas ACE programs was like the general student population served by the schools in which Texas ACE students were enrolled. Results were explored for students who were identified as English Learners, (EL), at risk for dropping out, identified for special education services, classified as economically disadvantaged, or having earned credit for participation in career and education (CTE) courses. Racial/ethnic categories also were explored.

On average, 80% of the students enrolled in Texas ACE were in PreK–8.

ELs comprised 22%–23% of the Texas ACE participants from 2014–17, which was slightly lower than the 25%–26% in the feeder school population associated with Texas ACE programs during the 3-year programming period (see Tables A2.5, A2.6). The percent of students identified as at risk for dropping out or receiving special education services from 2014–17 was nearly identical to the feeder school populations. An average of 60.5% of Texas ACE students were considered at risk compared to 61.5% of

[11] Feeder school in this report refers the campus(es) that students attend during the regular school day.

the feeder school population during 2014–17, while 9% of Texas ACE students received special education services compared to 10% of students in feeder schools during the same time period. Students in Texas ACE averaged 7 days absent from school in 2014–17, while students at the feeder schools served by the program averaged 8 days absent. For students with disciplinary incidents, Texas ACE students averaged 7 to 8 days absent from school and less than one disciplinary referral annually (see Tables A2.7, A2.8 in Appendix A). A greater proportion of students economically disadvantaged were served by Texas ACE compared with the feeder school population (between 77% and 84% across the three programming years in Texas ACE versus 67% to 68% in the Texas ACE feeder schools). The analysis for students earning CTE courses found that slightly more students in Texas ACE earned CTE credits than students in the feeder schools (92% of Texas ACE students, on average, earned CTE credit compared with 89%, on average, across schools from 2014–17) (see Tables A2.9, A2.10).

The racial/ethnic composition of students in Texas ACE mirrored the demographics of the schools that were served by Texas ACE programs (see Tables A2.5, A2.6). Generally, both in Texas ACE and at the corresponding schools, Hispanic students comprised the largest share of students served by Texas ACE (67%) in 2016–17, followed by African American students (17%), White students (14%), and other racial/ethnic groups (3%). The number of Hispanic students from 2014–15 to 2016–17 increased slightly during the 3 years (by 4 percentage points), whereas the number of White students served fell slightly by 4 percentage points.

Student Outcomes

Texas ACE students achieved the STAAR passing standard in mathematics, reading, Algebra I, and English I EOC examinations at similar rates as schools served by Texas ACE centers across all three programming years.

Student performance on indicators of early reading, STAAR Reading, STAAR Mathematics, and STAAR EOC examinations were analyzed for students in Texas ACE. Approximately 41% of the Texas ACE students in Kindergarten to Grade 2 were reading below their expected reading levels and qualified to receive mandatory supplemental accelerated reading instruction in 2016–17, which is approximately 4 percentage points lower than 2014–15 (see Table A2.11 in Appendix A). On STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics outcomes, Texas ACE students performed similarly across subjects, with 60% and 67%, respectively, achieving STAAR passing standards in 2016–17 (see Table A2.12 in Appendix A).[12] These results looked very similar to schoolwide averages for schools served by Texas ACE, with 62% and 68% students achieving the STAAR passing standard in reading and mathematics, respectively, during the same year (see Table A2.12 in Appendix A). Although STAAR Mathematics outcomes were relatively unchanged in the 2 years prior for Texas ACE students, there was an approximate 7 percentage point decrease in students attaining a passing standard on STAAR Reading from 2014–15 to 2016–17 (a similar pattern was found for the school-level analysis).

Texas ACE students were more likely to achieve the passing standard on the STAAR Algebra I EOC than the English I EOC. Although 83% of the Texas ACE students achieved the passing standard on the Algebra I EOC, only 53% of students achieved the passing standard on the English I EOC in 2016–17. An additional analysis looked at differences between Texas ACE students compared with schoolwide passing rates on the Algebra I EOC. The results indicate small differences in passing rates between Texas ACE students compared with schoolwide passing standards in 2014–15 and 2015–16 on the English I EOC, although the gap grew to 5 percentage points by 2016–17. In that year, 53% of the Texas

[12] In 2016–17, the STAAR terminology for the passing standard changed from Level II Phase-In to Approaches Grade Level. For the purposes of this report, both passing standards are referred to as having achieved the STAAR passing standard.

ACE students passed the English I EOC compared with 58% schoolwide pass rates. The gaps between Texas ACE students and schoolwide pass rates on the Algebra I EOC decreased somewhat during the same period of time. In 2014–15 and 2015–16, there was a 7 and 8 percentage point gap in passing rates on the Algebra I EOC that favored schoolwide students compared with Texas ACE students. But by 2016–17, the gap between Texas ACE students and schoolwide pass rates went down to 5 percentage points (53% and 58%, respectively).

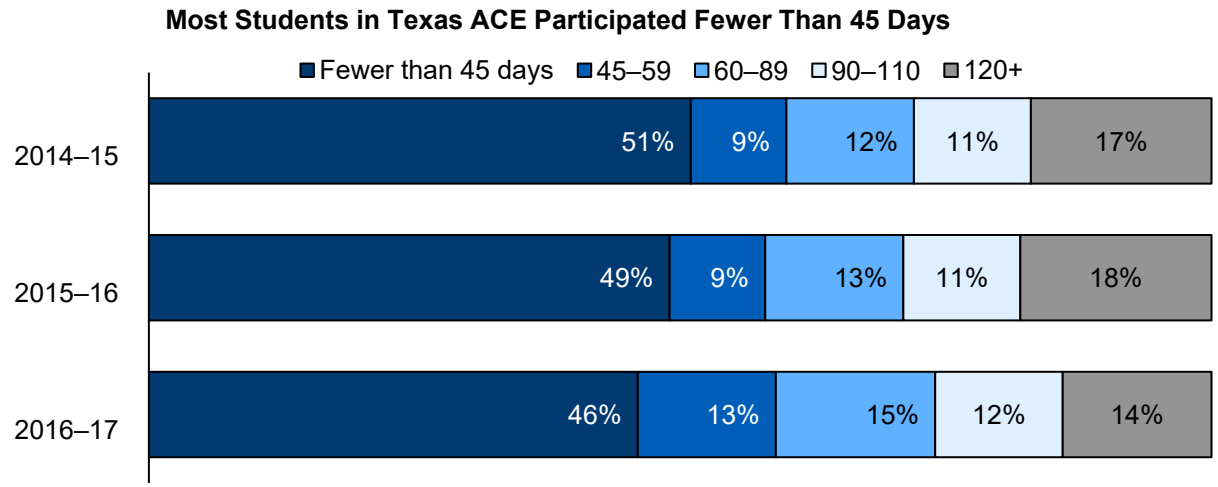
Student Participation in Texas ACE as Measured through Attendance

The federal definition for regular participation in 21st CCLC is 30 days or more during a given programming period. However, Cycle 9 Texas 21st CCLC program guidelines updated program requirements to target 45 days or more participation in Texas ACE programming.

Program attendance is an outcome indicator that reflects the potential breadth and depth of exposure to afterschool programming. In this regard, attendance can be considered in terms of the (a) frequency (e.g., days per week) and intensity (e.g., hours per session) with which students attended programming when it was offered, including the degree of participation across multiple programming periods, and (b) the types of activities in which students participated. Student attendance in Texas ACE programs was examined across five discrete categories that ranged from fewer than 45 days to up to 120 days or more during the academic year.[13] On average, 49% of the Texas ACE students across Cycles 7–9 averaged fewer than 45 days during the 2014–15 through 2016–17 programming years (see Figure 2.3 and Table A2.13 in Appendix A). On average, 35% of the students attended between 45 and 119 days during the three programming years. Approximately 17% and 18% of students attended at least 120 days or more in 2014–15 and 2015–16; only 14% of the students attended more than 120 days in 2016–17. When Texas 21st CCLC minimum guidelines shifted from 30 to 45 days for grantees, 46% of the Texas ACE participants attended 45 days or more compared with 49% in 2015–16. Table A2.14 in Appendix A also details some additional information regarding participation in Texas ACE summer session.

[13] Differences in attendance figures may exist between this report and other Tx21st public reports for the following reasons: For this report, attendance was calculated using the federal definition of a programming year (summer, fall and spring) which differs than the state's definition (fall, spring and summer). In addition, TEA Tx21st reports on Texas ACE attendance vary due to differences in grant cycle requirements. For Cycles 7 and 8, a student is considered a regular attender if they have attended 30 days or more. For Cycle 9 students are considered regular attenders if they have attended 45 days or more.

Figure 2.3: Percentage Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) as Measured in Days



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. These data are based on the number of students as follows: *n* = 115,282 in 2014–15, *n* = 116,992 students in 2015–16, and *n* = 105,147 in 2016–17. Centers associated with Cycle 9 did not operate programming during the summer of 2016 given when they received their Texas ACE grant.

Conclusion

This chapter described the Texas ACE grants in this study, including the characteristics of the students who participated in Texas ACE and the general population of the campuses at which the students in the program attended school during the reporting period. There were 734 centers in operation across the 108 grants funded by the program. During the reporting period, an average of 113,000 students participated in Texas ACE in 2014–17.

Focus group data gathered in spring 2017 from 20 centers were examined to understand how Texas ACE programs articulated their local goals and objectives and whether they aligned with 21st CCLC program guidelines (TEA, 2016). Qualitative analysis found that centers pursued the following program objectives most frequently: (a) address student academic needs, (b) provide academic support and academic enrichment opportunities, and c) build SEL skills. Other program goals included a focus on college and career readiness, increased parental involvement, and supporting school connectedness and belonging. Less frequently, centers highlighted sustained student attendance during the regular day; providing a safe learning environment, community engagement, access to cultural activities, and meeting nutritional needs as main program goals. Supporting sustained attendance in programming was identified as an objective by less than half of the centers, although it is a necessary element of positive youth development because students need to be present consistently during a period of time to benefit from the programming.

During site visits with Texas ACE programs, center staff were asked about target populations for their Texas ACE program, and the majority identified students academically at risk and students from high-need or highly mobile households as their primary target student population. Students at risk because of disciplinary or behavioral issues also were mentioned by nearly half of the centers visited, whereas fewer said they prioritize some populations but serve all students or did not explicitly target a defined student population.

Tx21st data provided a broad overview of Texas ACE program characteristics statewide. One area studied was local management of Texas ACE programs. The results indicated that most Texas ACE grants were managed by independent school districts and regional educational entities followed by nonprofit organizations, and a small number was managed by colleges and universities. Texas ACE grantees most frequently managed between six and 10 centers.

Additional analysis of Tx21st data revealed the following:

- The highest proportion of students served in Texas ACE were in Grades 3–8 (greater than 50%), and an average of 40% of students served were in Grades PreK–2 and Grades 9–12 from 2014–17.
- Students participating in Texas ACE closely resembled the population of the feeder schools served by Texas ACE, but some differences or patterns were noted:
  - Similar proportions existed between the Texas ACE participants and the general population of schools served by the program with regard to status as an ELL, racial/ethnic composition, being classified as at risk for dropping out of high school, receiving special education services, average days of student absences, average number of disciplinary incidents (for those students who had any), and the likelihood of achieving a STAAR passing standard in reading and mathematics.
  - Slightly more students enrolled in Texas ACE were categorized as being economically disadvantaged.
  - Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic/racial group served by Texas ACE from 2014–17. This group was more than three times the size of the next two largest racial/ethnic group enrolled in programming (African American and White students). African American and White students each composed a little less than one-fifth of the Texas ACE enrollment during the programming periods analyzed, followed by other racial/ethnic groups. This trend is similar to the feeder schools served by Texas ACE.
  - Most Texas ACE students who took the Algebra I EOC in 2016–17 achieved the passing standard (83%), which is similar to the rate at the feeder schools (88%). Comparatively, slightly more than half of the students in Texas ACE passed the English I EOC (53%), which also was akin to rate at the feeder schools served by Texas ACE (58%) in 2016–17.
- About half of the students who participated in Texas ACE attended the program for less than 45 days, whereas another one third of the students attended between 45 and 90 days, and less than one fifth of the students attended for 120 days or more.

The next chapter will explore key implementation components of Texas ACE in greater detail, largely relying on information collected during the site visits undertaken in spring 2017.

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Chapter 3. Texas ACE Program Implementation

Objectives 1, 3, 4, and 5

- What are the primary activities of Texas ACE programs?
- Based on site visit data, how do centers vary in terms of key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?

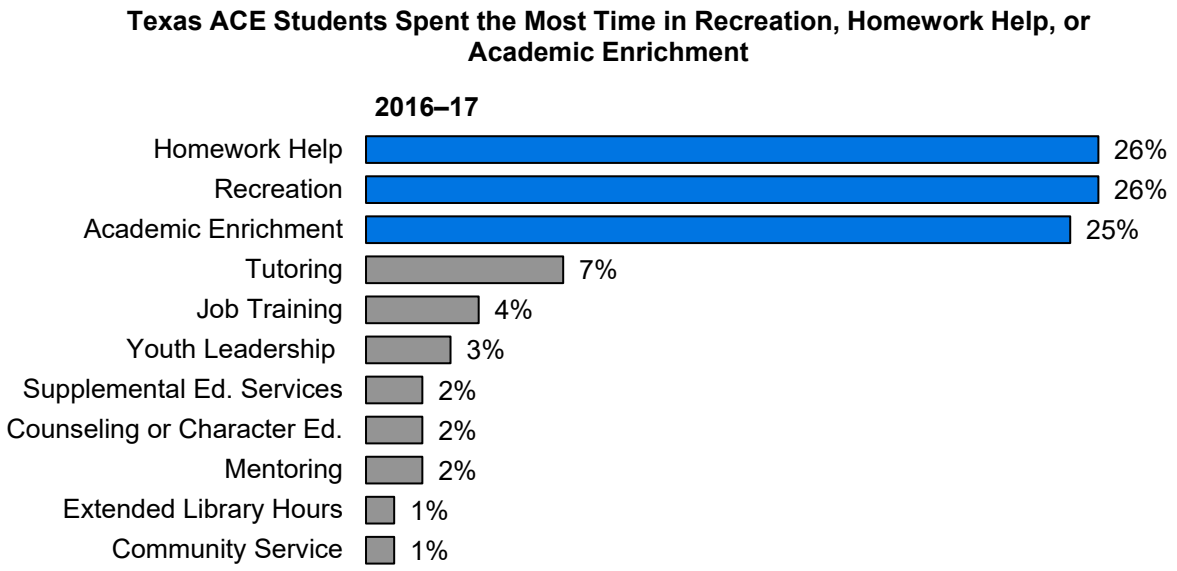
Introduction

To explore the implementation of Texas ACE programming, program activity and staffing information were analyzed for all programs. To gain a deeper understanding, implementation interviews and focus groups were conducted on site to gather data from a diverse sample of 20 geographically representative centers. Participants included project directors, site coordinators, youth activity leaders, family engagement specialists, school principals, and advisory board members. Additional information about these data collection activities can be found in Appendixes D and E. Data sources for this chapter came from the following: (a) Texas ACE program information from Tx21st data managed by TEA and (b) site visits conducted by the state evaluation team in spring 2017.

Program Activities and Staffing

The first area of program implementation examined was understanding which program activities were most often implemented. Analysis of the Tx21st data found that the foci of program activities clustered around three main kinds of activities, followed by a variety of other less frequently occurring activity types. As shown in Figure 3.1, in 2016–17, students participating in Texas ACE spent the most time in the following three activities: homework help, recreation, and academic enrichment. The same pattern appeared in 2014–15 and 2015–16 (see Figure B3.1 in Appendix B). Three additional activities account for the majority of the remaining time (about 17%): tutoring, job training, and youth leadership development. Very little time was spent on activities related to supplemental education services, counseling or character education, mentoring, extended library hours, community service, drug abuse prevention, parent involvement, violence prevention, family literacy, or those classified as “other.”

Figure 3.1: Student Time by Activity Type and Reporting Period During 2016–17

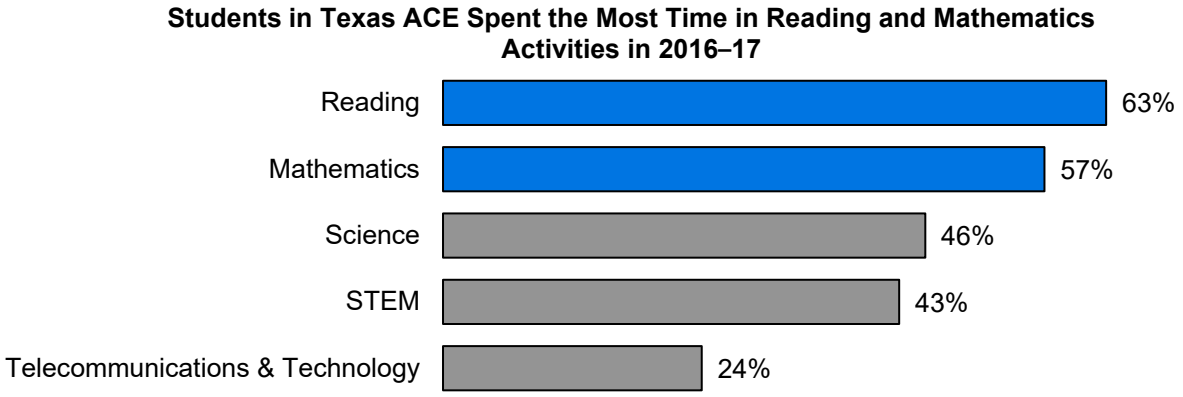


Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2016–17.
Note. These data are based on the average percentage of time (in hours) spent statewide on programming activities across 460 centers in 2016–17.

Another way of understanding student participation in Texas ACE activities was to examine time spent in subject areas during activities.[14] Figure 3.2 shows that youth spent more than 60% of their time (hours) in reading-related activities and 57% of their time in mathematics-related activities during 2016–17; a similar pattern was found in 2014–15 and 2015–16 (see Figure B3.2 in Appendix B). Students spent 46% and 43% (respectively) of their time in activities classified as science or STEM. Because activities could be categorized into multiple subjects, there may be overlap across subjects, especially STEM. The last subject category (as shown in Figure B3.2 in Appendix B) that students participated in approximately 24% of the time fell under the category of telecommunications and technology.

[14] An individual activity could be categorized as addressing more than one subject area, so the numbers do not total 100%.

Figure 3.2: Percent of Texas ACE Participants' Time (Hours) Spent on Activities Categorized by Subject in 2016–17



Source: American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2016–17.
Note: Texas ACE centers could select more than one subject for activities, so numbers will not total to 100%. This data is based on the percent of time (in hours) spent on programming activities for 463 hours in 2016–17 averaged across all Texas ACE centers.

Summer Activities

Study Question

Did summer programming differ from school-year programming?

Like regular school-year programming, summer programming provides students a safe environment and access to ongoing learning opportunities when school is not in session. Tx21st data were analyzed to compare similarities and differences between program offerings for students during the regular school year and in summer. Results from 2016–17 and 2015–16 indicated a similar pattern to that from the school year: On average, students spent most of their summer programming time in the following activities: academic enrichment and recreation (see Figure B3.3 in Appendix B). The exception was in the area of homework help, where students devoted more time during the school year. During the 2015–16 and 2016–17 summer programming periods, students participated in four other activities one fifth of the time: job training, tutoring, youth leadership development, and supplemental education services.

Approximately three fourths of the students participating in Texas ACE summer programming spent the majority of their time in academic enrichment and recreation activities.

In examining activities by subject area, on average, youth spent more than 60% of their time in reading-related activities in 2015–16 and 2016–17 (see Figure B3.4 in Appendix B). During the two summers, students spent an average of 56% of their time on mathematics-related activities. A notable difference between summer and school-year activities was less time spent in STEM-related activities in the summer (23%) compared with the 2015–16 school year (43%). In contrast, more time was spent in telecommunications and technology during the summer (44%) compared with the 2015–16 school year (21%). The findings were consistent between the two summer programming periods analyzed.

Staffing

Texas ACE programs must employ a full-time project director and family engagement specialist. In addition, the program must have a full-time site coordinator at each community learning center funded by the grant. Program guidelines align staff to student ratios with statutory requirements that apply to the regular school day setting. Beyond these requirements, however, the composition of center-level front line staff can vary. Five classifications of staff in Texas ACE programs were available in the Tx21st data: school-day teachers, school-day paraprofessionals, youth development staff who work with partner agencies, college students, and volunteers from the community. Analysis efforts related to staffing focused on whether most staff fell into the five classifications and whether the categories could be grouped into fewer categories. The majority of time related to defining a staffing model was based on 50% or more of activity time supported by a particular staffing classification. Analyses indicate that three types of staffing patterns across centers emerged: (a) centers staffed mostly by school-day teachers (teachers), (b) centers staffed by paraprofessionals and/or college students (other staff), and (c) centers staffed by a model that included a mixture across the five classifications (mixed model).

Data from the reporting period suggest that centers were staffed primarily by paraprofessionals and/or college students an average of 49% of the time (see Figure B3.4 in Appendix B). For the reporting period, an average of 45% of the centers were staffed by teachers. Fewer than 6% of the center staff across the three programming periods used a mixed staffing model that included school-day teachers, paraprofessionals who also work in the school day, youth development staff who work with partner agencies, college students, and volunteers.

Qualitative Insights

The information on program activities and staffing at centers gleaned from Tx21st data provides a broad overview of how the afterschool and summer programs function statewide. To understand program delivery at a deeper level, 20 centers were visited in spring 2017 and assessed for a variety of areas related to implementation. A total of 12 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools were visited, and the qualitative data were analyzed for the following four program implementation topics: (a) alignment of program activities with program goals and objectives and connections to the school day; (b) staffing, partnerships, and guidance through advisory boards; (c) family engagement and planning; and (d) key implementation and sustainability features.

Some of the questions asked during the site interviews in spring 2017 were oriented at gaining a high-level understanding of the nature of activities being implemented by Texas ACE centers, the types of professional development (PD) available for center staff, parent involvement activities and engagement, program quality monitoring, and the relationship between Texas ACE programs and their advisory boards in decision making. The interview protocol questions were aimed at understanding whether (a) there was intentionality in the various program design components to align with quality or (b) programming elements were being implemented merely to meet compliance requirements. Subsequent site visits in future years of the statewide evaluation refined the protocols to learn more in-depth information from Texas ACE programs. Although the results from these site visits cannot be generalized to Texas ACE programs statewide, they can provide insights into how selected centers function in terms of program implementation and provide some lessons learned.

Alignment of Program Activities and School-Day Connections

Program Activity Alignment

A critical component of program success requires programs to accomplish state and local program goals and objectives in addition to aligning implementation efforts with federally defined programming goals and objectives (if they are not equivalent). Ideally, these goals, objectives, and the expected youth outcomes would be outlined in a center logic model to ensure alignment between local, state, and federal goals and objectives. Texas ACE programs are expected to align programming and services with their planned goals and objectives to improve program quality and student outcomes. These outcomes include improving school-day attendance, increasing core course grades, reducing mandatory discipline referrals, improving on-time advancement to the next grade level, improving high school graduation rates, and developing career competencies for high school students.[15,16] The purpose of objectives-based programming is to encourage deliberate planning and tracking of student participation in Texas ACE activities that lead to the achievement of desired school-related outcomes.

Of the centers visited, staff indicated that they primarily focused on academic activities, such as tutoring and homework help, with academic enrichment as a secondary emphasis. Academic activities involved core subject areas such as mathematics, reading/English language arts, writing, and science. Examples of specific types of academic activities mentioned by Texas ACE staff included the following: student remediation for testing, tutoring, specific curricula used to address academic skill building, and aligning activities to the school day. Other examples included homework time, robotics activities to fulfill academic grant requirements, general academics, activities aimed to improve STAAR scores, activities linked to the school day, and collaboration with teachers on which Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) were not being met.

On Academic Alignment

"One of our program goals . . . [is to] increase academic performance . . . our tutoring, they're very intentional tutorial groups. We progress monitor them with grades and benchmark tests and things throughout the year to make sure that students are actually improving and so that specifically is one of those ways that we meet one of those goals."

—Site Coordinator

The results found that eight in 10 centers focused on providing academic activities, although the frequency varied by grade level served (see Table B3.1 in Appendix B). For example, about one-third of the high school centers sampled focused on academic activities in contrast to all the middle school centers and more than three-fourths of the elementary school centers. One example of a center addressing student learning needs and focused on academic activities was to "[have] some teachers come onboard to remediate [students]" and ensure that the center was "aligned with the school day." Analysis of the qualitative data found similarities with this approach across centers.

Academic enrichment activities were cited as the next most frequently offered activity type by staff at nearly two-thirds of the centers visited. Enrichment activities involving other center activities outside the academic realm included activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, gardening, and team-building (e.g., building and racing cars). These activities also included robotics, fine arts, project-based learning, hands-on learning, and career training.

[15] These expectations vary according to the cycle of the grant and are detailed in the Request for Applications (RFAs). See TEA (2016, 2018) for more information.

[16] Although Cycle 9 grantees were required to complete a logic model, only Cycles 7 and 8 grantees received logic model training. However, completing a logic model was not a requirement in Cycles 7 and 8.

College and career readiness, as well as parental involvement were lower priority activities in centers visited in spring 2017. A smaller proportion of centers had staff who indicated that activities centered on college and career readiness. None of the middle school centers and only one high school center mentioned college and career activities to support their program goals and objectives. This may be related to the fact that this area of youth development was a stated focus only for Cycle 9 grantees. Also, only five centers visited during the site visits were middle schools, and three were high school centers versus 12 elementary centers. A larger, more representative sample of secondary centers may have found a larger focus on college and career readiness.

Part of the Texas 21st CCLC grant requirements specified that centers offer parent involvement activities to increase parent engagement in their children's lives. Three of the 12 elementary centers offered activities designed for promoting parental involvement, as well as activities for family member skill building. In contrast, neither the five middle school centers nor the three high school centers mentioned providing these activities (see Table B3.1 in Appendix B). As noted with college and career readiness, a smaller group of secondary centers may have contributed to the distribution of the findings. It has been well documented in research that parent involvement generally decreases as students enter secondary school (Epstein, 2008), especially at an age developmentally where skills related to independence are being fostered in school and/or through afterschool programming. Finally, a smaller proportion of centers at the elementary level mentioned other key program activities to support their center goals, including activities designed specifically to increase program attendance, focusing on holistic enhancement and using logic models to gauge alignment of program activities with goals and objectives.

Logic models were not commonly used to monitor program activities and goals alignment. Use of logic models varied across centers. Staff from fewer than half of the five middle school centers, only one of the 12 elementary centers, and no high school center referred to using their program logic model to monitor how activities aligned with center goals (see Table B3.1 in Appendix B).

On Using Logic Models

"We have our logic model with all of our goals . . . all of the people in our cycle sit together and we go back over [our goals] and double-check making sure that our goals are very close to being met."

—Site Coordinator

School-Day Connections

Based on ESSA, the state's Texas ACE program outlines objectives related to supporting school outcomes for students, including school-day attendance, core course grades, grade advancement, and high school graduation rates.[17] To meet these objectives, Texas ACE programs establish connections to school-day activities by aligning programming and communicating with school- and district-level staff. During interviews with program staff in spring 2017, four types of school-day connections were identified (see Figure 3.3).

[17]Refer to the Texas ACE Cycle 9 RFA (TEA, 2016) and the Texas ACE Cycle 10 RFP (TEA, 2018).

Figure 3.3: Connections to the School Day, Spring 2017

- Texas ACE was considered an extension of the school day and connections were made deliberate (17 of the 20 centers)
- Texas ACE aligned with the district education strategy and the school day (15 centers)
- District and school support was demonstrated for Texas ACE (14 centers)
- Site coordinator is on campus during the school-day (13 centers)

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

On School Linkages

"It's a huge extension of what we're trying to accomplish throughout the day."

—Principal

Texas ACE was viewed as extending – and aligning to – the school day. As mentioned earlier, Texas ACE programs are expected to align programming and services with their planned goals and objectives to improve program quality and student outcomes. Programs might achieve this goal by incorporating complementary instructional techniques or learning strategies that enhance the school day experience, collaborating with school-day teachers on content, or using learning tools or schedules that support school-day learning. To accomplish these goals and objectives, it makes sense that Texas ACE staff align their programming with district or campus strategies to strengthen existing initiatives aimed at improving student outcomes. When center staff were probed in interviews about aligning Texas ACE programming with the school day, staff at 17 of the 20 centers visited indicated that the Texas ACE program was considered a "seamless" extension of the school day. The Texas ACE programs aim to support the regular school-day program by ensuring that programming is aligned with school-day lessons and providing students time and assistance to complete school homework (see Table B3.2 in Appendix B). Staff interviewed at all the high school and middle school centers indicated that they viewed Texas ACE as an extension of the school day, along with the majority of elementary centers visited.

A separate but closely related way in which Texas ACE staff established links to the school day was by aligning programming with the district strategies and the regular school day. Seventy-five percent of the centers, especially the high school and middle school centers, mentioned aligning programming with district strategies. Texas ACE project directors and site coordinators mentioned that their working relationships with district staff provided them with access to new opportunities, as well as donations of materials and equipment. Texas ACE programming often was able to address areas of weakness identified by the school or district, and "the district knows [that Texas ACE is] an important part of the overall experience for the child." Future data collection efforts might probe whether these results vary by centers managed by the districts (the majority of grantees, as noted in Chapter 2).

School-day and Texas ACE relationships were critical for creating school linkages, as seen through district and school support and site coordinator presence on campus. Site coordinator presence on campus was key; the site coordinator often was the conduit between Texas ACE and the school and/or district. 21st CCLC requirements ensure that programs hire a full-time site coordinator who can be available during the school day to facilitate coordination with school staff. The coordination between Texas ACE and school staff resulted in various benefits. Staff at 14 centers visited indicated that Texas ACE received district and school support, reporting that the school encouraged school-day teachers to assist with tutoring or homework help hour of programming or providing program space or materials (see Table B3.2 in Appendix B). Good communication allowed Texas ACE and school staff to collaborate on school and district goals, to jointly work toward program interventions and activities for the school year that would support these goals.

Staffing, Partnerships, and Advisory Boards

New Staff Orientation

Staff orientation is an important first step in supporting new staff as they join the team at a center. Orientation ensures that new staff understand the roles, expectations, policies/procedures, and overall program goals. It is a key component to making sure that the program is implemented well (see Table B3.3 in Appendix B).

New Staff Orientation

"For our site coordinators, they get a lot of professional development. New coordinators get a pretty intensive orientation that includes everyone. A grant director, a grant administrator, and our family engagement specialist. We pair new site coordinators with a mentor coordinator. Because there's just a lot of little details and things. And, for them to have somebody to call that's not their supervisor, sometimes to just say like, we know about this . . . "

—Project Director

Analysis of the site visits found that most (more than two thirds) Texas ACE programs provided staff orientation. These orientations varied in terms of length and topics covered. When describing the orientation content, center staff mentioned a range of topics, including job training/mentoring, first week check-ins, reviewing the logic models, or other kinds of training. Some centers held several orientations or modeled theirs after organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs. Staff at three of the five middle school centers reported that Texas ACE staff receive some other kind of training as part of their training compared with one fourth of the elementary and one third of the high school centers visited. Centers also were probed about their use of logic models as part of their orientation. Staff at five centers specifically mentioned that they do not typically discuss the logic model during orientation. Staff from only four centers specifically mentioned that discussion of the logic model was included in the orientation.

Professional Development

Study Question

How are activities staffed? What kinds of training and support are provided for staff orientation and development?

Beyond orientation to Texas ACE, ongoing PD can be vital to building a skilled workforce. Center respondents, including project directors, site coordinators, youth activity leaders, family engagement specialists, school principals, and advisory board members, were asked to describe the focus of the PD they have attended and if they found the PD sessions to be helpful.[18] Overall, about one third of the respondents at the 20 centers indicated that they did not attend any PD sessions related to their position in the program since summer 2016 (or such PD was not offered to them). Staff from two of five middle school centers reported that PD sessions were not made available them, as did staff from one third of the elementary centers and one third of the high school centers (see Table B3.4 in Appendix B). Staff who reported no PD was made available to them also happened to be centers that used regular school-day staff who get their professional teaching PD through their regular school-day position, so it is possible that the question posed during the interviews was not specific enough to distinguish between regular school-day and out-of-school time PD.

[18] Data were not collected during the site visits about whether Texas ACE staff indicated not attending PD if their center used regular school-day staff exclusively in their staffing model. An examination of the Tx21st data specifically on the 20 centers visited found that 19 of those centers used a mix of staff categorized as paid teachers and other paid staff.

Most felt that PD was helpful. Overall, a wide variety of PD was offered to Texas ACE staff through both local districts and the Texas ACE program. PD topics were especially focused on helping staff meet student academic and behavior outcomes, as well as more generally manage the classroom and program environment. Trainings were seen as useful to staff who received them; however, one third of the respondents indicated that they were not receiving any training (see Table B3.4 in Appendix B).

When PD was made available to Texas ACE staff, more than half of the 20 centers visited reported that the PD sessions they attended were helpful. One center described the PD as follows: "In the training, some things might be brought up that might not have crossed my mind . . . then it just gives you new ideas . . . it opens the door for you to ask questions about things you're not sure about."

Staff from 17 of the 20 centers visited reported participating in center-provided PD. General Texas ACE–related PD typically referred to staff meetings, unspecified PD offerings, or PD more generally related to Texas ACE standards.[19] General PD offered by the school or district included school-day-related PD that could be adapted for use in Texas ACE, whereas some staff mentioned other PD sessions covering topics such as basic school-day standards and expectations. In addition to center-provided PD, staff from two thirds of the centers reported engaging in PD provided by the school, the district, or charter school (see Table B3.4 in Appendix B).

PD most commonly focused on supporting academic success and behavior management. Supporting academic success was the most common form of PD, with staff from two thirds of the centers identifying this form of PD during interviews (see Table B3.4 in Appendix B). These PD sessions included teaching strategies, such as those related to a specific content area (e.g., mathematics or reading). Another academic success PD topic focused on the TEKS. One center noted that this type of PD "taught us how we can find TEKS that will line up with the activity that we did."

Behavior management was the next most frequently mentioned form of PD, with staff from more than half of the 12 elementary centers and the five middle school centers reporting this type of PD offered to ACE staff (none of the three high school centers reported behavior management PD). Center respondents referred to training such as Crisis Prevention Institute certification related to handling occasions where a "student is out of hand" or displaying "extreme behaviors."

On PD Needs

"The staff training really depends on the staff. For instance, . . . the teachers that teach little ones, often want professional development on classroom management, or dealing with extreme behaviors, or anything like that. Whereas the secondary staff, we're looking at how we do remediate in a particular area, whether it's math, or reading, or if it's a specific population of students how to differentiate inside that learning."

—Project Director

Program quality, lesson planning, and classroom management were important secondary PD topics. Staff at eight of the centers visited discussed participating in PD centered on program quality and creating better Texas ACE programs, such as working on vision and goals. One interviewer described the PD as "the skills that [center leadership] should have to make you excel," whereas others mentioned technical skills such as reporting on topic areas (see Table B3.4 in Appendix B). This type of PD was particularly popular for the middle school centers (four of the five centers). Staff from one third of the centers visited reported attending PD focused on lesson planning, or

[19] General PD offered by the school or district included PD that was considered district requirements, acknowledging that some staff received school-day PD that could be adapted for use in Texas ACE activities, or covering basic school-day standards and expectations.

they were able to use school-day PD and experience to help them "tweak the lessons that we do . . . to make sure that it works for afterschool," as described by one center. Lastly, classroom management was reported by one third of the visited centers, especially among elementary and middle school respondents. Though comprising a small number of center respondents (two elementary centers and two middle school centers), PD was administered on the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), a validated observation and self-assessment tool commonly used to support intentional quality improvement efforts in afterschool programs (Smith et al, 2012).

Partnerships

Partnerships make afterschool possible when resources are limited at the centers themselves and can often bridge gaps in terms of resources that would not otherwise be possible or available. In Texas ACE programs, diverse partners support program delivery in an assortment of ways, offering young people much more varied experiences than they would have from center-staffed activities alone. Federal statutes for 21st CCLC require that states give priority to applicants that propose to enter into a partnership with another eligible entity. Many grantees in Texas earned those partnership priority points on their applications and have continued to maintain these partnership agreements. In addition, for those grantees that are nonprofit organizations, many consider the districts they serve as their partners.[20]

Two main kinds of partnership types with centers emerged in the data: (a) local, nonprofit CBOs (three fourths of the centers) and (b) local government agencies, colleges and universities, and business or corporate partners (one quarter of the centers) (see Table B3.5 in Appendix B).

Partnerships with local nonprofit organizations and CBOs included food banks, local churches, nationally-affiliated organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and Communities in Schools, or partners with a specific programming focus. Partnerships with local nonprofits or CBOs occurred at 16 of the 20 centers visited. Partnerships with local colleges or universities or government agencies were the next most common across centers (six centers), followed by approximately one fourth of the centers partnering with corporate sponsors and business partnerships or community members to donate materials, gift certificates, or provide healthcare screenings and dental screenings for students to meet student needs.

[20] Public Law 114-95, ESEA of 1965, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act, Title IV, Part B (20 U.S.C. 7171-7176), Sec. 4204(i).

Some small differences emerged among the grade levels served. Elementary centers most frequently discussed having local government agencies as partners (five centers) , while middle school centers relied more heavily on local colleges and universities (three of the five centers), and high schools gave no indication of partnering with local government agencies.

On Nonprofit Partners

"Sometimes there are community providers out there and that is their specialty and that's what they do. We would be able to contract with them or we'd be able to partner with them in a way to where they can provide those services. Another way would be also partnering with other community-based organizations and them maybe providing services to, I don't want to say services, but teaching a certain topic to the students. We do utilize community partners, especially when it comes to parent events and parent engagement and involvement and then also students as well. It just kind of depends on the topic, but the community is definitely involved."

—Project Director

Partners overwhelmingly provided academic enrichment activities and programs. Seventeen of the 20 centers partnered with service providers to deliver academic enrichment activities (see Table B3.6 in Appendix B). As mentioned previously, academic enrichment activities consisted of other center activities outside the academic realm, such as cooking, arts and crafts, gardening, and SEL team-building activities (e.g., building and racing cars or another topic area). Staff from all the high school centers and most middle school (four of five) centers and elementary (11 of 12) centers reported that partners offered this type of programming. Partners assisted with and often staffed academic enrichment activities for a variety of reasons. One center explained that the center staff "[lacked] anybody qualified to teach . . . certain activities" and at "some campuses . . . teachers just want to do the hour tutorial." Having an outside partner assist with academic enrichment allowed students to interact with a "fresh face" that brought "a new way of looking at things to kids . . . and to our parents." Academic enrichment activities partners ranged from sports to those focused on health and healthy activities for outdoors, as described by some centers.

On Partner-Provided Academic Enrichment

"Some campuses have teachers [that] just want to do the hour tutorial. They don't want to do the enrichment, so those campuses you will see more vendors that are offering the enrichment activities, which has a flip side to it because here's a fresh person that comes in, this is whatever activity that they're offering is what they're passionate about, or they're certified in, or this is what they do for a living maybe on the outside of what they do for us after school. This is something that they enjoy, so it brings a fresh face, a new way of looking at things to the kids as well and to our parents."

—Project Director

Partners provided donations to nine centers visited, with elementary centers most likely to report receiving this support, followed closely by two middle school centers and one high school center (see Table B3.6 in Appendix B). Partners in some cases, provided both materials and food. Food assistance in particular was crucial. As one center noted "because a lot of these students, unfortunately, will not be eating [if they were not attending Texas ACE]." A very small number of centers also mentioned partners providing career days.

Advisory Boards

An advisory board can be an asset in supporting implementation of the program, by bringing in outside expertise and resources to ensure strong program design and delivery and by building stakeholder engagement that can promote community buy-in and long-term sustainability of the program. Beginning with Cycle 9, grantees were required to engage an advisory board to advise on "community needs for the

program over time and coordinate local resources for the continued success of students and families enrolled in the program" (TEA, 2016, p. 24).[21] Analysis across the center site visit data found that advisory boards and centers functioned together to design and deliver activities and sustainability centered on decision making in the following three key role categorizations: (a) the advisory board assumes a guiding role in decision making related to managing a center, (b) Texas ACE staff have more decision-making responsibility while advisory board input is considered (but is secondary), and (c) there is shared decision-making responsibility between Texas ACE staff and the advisory board (see Table B3.7 in Appendix B).

There was a relatively even split of advisory board versus Texas ACE staff as key decision makers. Interviews with site coordinators from a majority of the centers visited (12 centers) indicated that their advisory board had more decision-making power. As one respondent shared, the advisory board would "reach a decision if there's something that needs to be addressed . . . they'll make that decision if there's something that [the center needs to do]." In some cases, staff opinions were factored in before a final decision. Advisory boards were more likely to be decision makers at elementary (seven centers) and middle school centers (four centers) than high school centers (one center; see Table B3.7 in Appendix B).

On Decision Making

"It really does tend to be kind of a roundtable brainstorming session to look for solutions to anything that might be a challenge. Like I say, the first year, the high school, we had definite challenges, and some of that was around programming. So, certainly, various board members have input on different levels into that, but most of those decisions I would say, are made by the ACE team more directly."

—Advisory Board Member

Other center staff at slightly fewer centers (11 centers) indicated that although advisory board members contributed a perspective that was considered by the Texas ACE program, generally this entity was not the key decision maker. Finally, at about one third of all centers visited, respondents indicated that decision making tended to take the form of a "shared decision-making" committee, with one advisory board member relating the process to one that seems "like it's a team collaboration that all decisions are made. It's not just one person making decisions; it's kind of like a team effort."

Advisory boards served in supporting roles in planning, monitoring, and oversight in Texas ACE programming. Overall, staff from slightly more than half of the centers shared that the advisory boards played a role in Texas ACE planning related to program sustainability (see Table B3.7 in Appendix B). The variety of individuals who made up advisory boards brought new skills and perspectives that helped the program reduce its spending and decide whether the program should continue with grant

On Advisory Board Roles

"The primary purpose of the advisory board has been to review, overview, evaluate, oversee different programs—kind of looking inside of what's been implemented, what's worked in the past, and where we're at now and where we're going in the future."

—Advisory Board Member

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

funding and attempt to sustain using other funding models, such as a fee-based program or pursuing local funding. In addition, some members took on the role of local program advocates in discussions with outside individuals and organizations.

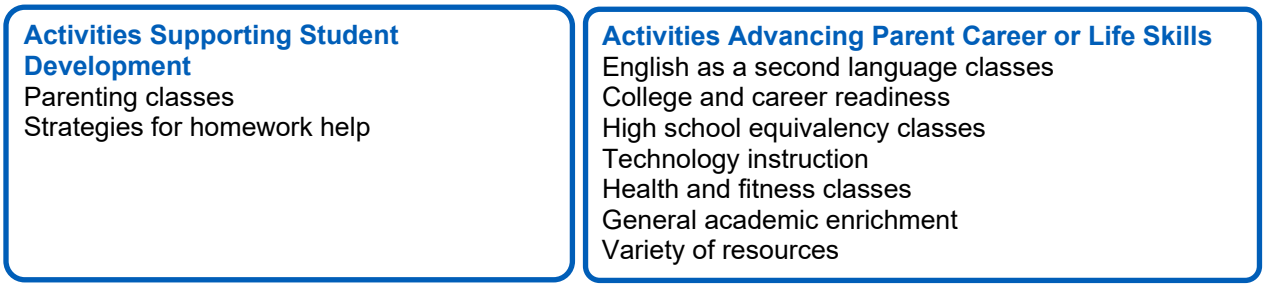
Staff at one third of the centers visited discussed how the advisory board was involved in program monitoring through reviewing expenditures, program data, the program's plan, and progress toward goals. Advisory boards also provided oversight and guidance more generally and offered recommendations, as indicated by staff from one fourth of the 20 centers visited.

Family Engagement

Activities

Federal statute and state program guidelines require that Texas ACE programs engage families in their child's education and provide opportunities for literacy and other life skills (TEA, 2016). TEA requires that grantees hire a full-time family engagement specialist to support the program and families who are part of the program. In general, two broad categories of family activities emerged from the site visit data: (a) activities to help family members support student development and (b) activities to advance parent life and career skills. A more discrete look at the skill-building activities mentioned by centers in interviews fall under the following seven categories under both categories is displayed in Figure 3.5: (a) ESL classes, (b) college and career readiness, (c) high school equivalency (e.g., GED) classes, (d) technology, (e) health and fitness, (f) academic enrichment, and (g) a variety of resources that varied according to parent or community needs (see Figure 3.6 and Table B3.10 in Appendix B).

Figure 3.5: Overview of Family Engagement and Skill-Building Activities Cited by 20 Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programs in Spring 2017



Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Programming that supports student development, such as parenting classes and homework help strategies. Respondents at two elementary centers and one middle school center mentioned offering parenting classes for family members. These sites based their classes on a particular family engagement program model. One staff member said that the classes "seem to be really helping families connect to one another." A similarly small number of centers, all of which were elementary centers, held classes designed to increase parents' ability to assist their students with homework. This included literacy activities, and one staff member said this allowed "parents . . . to help [their students] learn to read."

On Family Engagement

"We have an orientation for families in order to explain to them what our program is and what the purpose is, because I think oftentimes, they hear, 'Oh, it's an afterschool program,' and they think day care. We like to stress that, no, this is an academic [program] with enrichment and opportunities for your child, but they are identified and selected in order to be in this program. With that is also a component of family engagement, and so we need their commitment in order to do the full program."

—Family Engagement Specialist

ESL classes were, by far, the most common family activity to support life skill advancement. Fourteen centers offered ESL classes for adult family members of Texas ACE students. Offered at centers at every school level, ESL courses addressed the highest need for family members. This activity was sometimes tied to others, such as college and career readiness, because conversational English can be vital for applying to college or communicating with coworkers. Every high school center offered ESL courses for families, as did two thirds of the elementary and middle school centers.

College and career preparation classes. Overall, staff at half of the centers offered classes about college and career readiness. These activities were designed to help parents with workforce or education skills and occurred most often in high school or middle school centers. Center staff who were interviewed described activities such as talking with parents about attending college tours through Texas ACE, engaging in general college readiness conversations, or offering a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) information night. Staff at one center described how they bring in parents for a FAFSA night and have a volunteer from a local college answer questions about how to fill out the FAFSA. Other kinds of classes mentioned as provided through Texas ACE were designed to assist with résumés, job and college applications, and general social skills. In addition, staff at eight centers indicated providing high school equivalency (e.g., GED) or continuing education classes, which occurred most often in the elementary school centers.

Other skill-building classes. During the site interviews, respondents were probed about additional kinds of skill-building classes offered in Texas ACE. Technology and health and fitness classes were offered in seven of the 20 centers. These activities and classes included providing programs such as language courses or assisting both students and parents in learning how to use the district Parent Self-Serve portal to access the student information system and view their student's academic progress and attendance record. Fitness and health-related classes for adult family members included events such as health fairs, where parents could receive information on health care, free dental appointments, and consultations. Other activities were nutritional cooking classes or fitness classes such as Zumba or dancing. Elementary centers provided a variety of other resources, including using parent information tables to make parents aware of community and program resources and classes, as well as supporting parents worried about immigration. In addition, one fourth of the centers provided a variety of parent-oriented enrichment activities, such as ceramics, sewing, and other workshops.

Programs like Texas ACE can play a vital role in connecting families to their student's educational experiences. To understand family engagement, center respondents were asked about engagement methods, inclusion in program planning efforts, and family activity offerings.

Methods

Texas ACE programs, particularly the full-time family engagement specialists, worked to connect with families in a variety of ways. Six main kinds of family engagement methods emerged from interviews with the 20 visited centers: (a) parent survey, (b) attendance at school events, (c) communications sent home to parents, (d) building relationships with parents, (e) attendance at citywide events, and (f) home visits (see Figure 3.4 and Table B3.8 in Appendix B).

On Surveys

"A lot of our parental involvement is based [on] feedback of the surveys that we get back from them. [T]he family engagement specialist . . . goes through . . . and says this is what your parents have communicated in the survey. This is what they would like to see. Let's work together on how we can get these types of classes for the parents."

—Project Director

Figure 3.4: Methods of Engaging Families with Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE)

- Parent surveys (16 centers)
- Presence at school events (10 centers)
- Sending parents information (six centers)
- Building relationships with parents (five centers)
- Texas ACE presence at citywide events (three centers)
- Home visits (one center)

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Program Planning Roles

Staff at most centers indicated that family members were involved in Texas ACE program planning efforts (see Table B3.9 in Appendix B).

Parent surveys were used to involve family members in program planning. Surveys were cited by staff at 18 centers as a method to collect parent feedback. Results of surveys were used to inform which partners to use, programs and activities of interest, and other ways in which Texas ACE can best assist and support families and their students. Staff at half of the centers described family members as being involved in a variety of boards, committees, or other large-group meetings. One center described how this type of participation allowed some parents to "take the lead on certain things" and offer thoughts on what to continue or start new in the program. Meetings and orientations to the Texas ACE program allowed family members to ask questions about current and planned offerings at their center.

Staff at nine centers indicated that they used informal feedback from family members to help shape Texas ACE programming, such as communicating with family members via email, text, and pickup times (see Table B3.10 in Appendix B). Another method mentioned by two centers was to involve family members in program planning through focus groups to share what activities they want or think other parents want. In general, centers tend to use this feedback to make improvements. As one center shared, "we've definitely made adjustments to our schedule based on parent input."

Reporting Parent Involvement in the Tx21st Student Tracking System

It is worth noting some differences between the types and frequency of family engagement activities reported in the Tx21st data system and qualitative data gathered during the 20 site visits. Examining the Tx21st data across the entire sample of centers, the two main types of family engagement activities reported were general parent involvement and family literacy activities. On average, of those that reported family activities in the system, centers provided about 7 hours of parent involvement per year, or about once per month during the school year. Family literacy activities were most frequently cited in the Tx21st data. Centers reported engaging in about 38 hours of family literacy activities per year. However, fewer than 11% of the centers had data associated with this activity. Because the level of family engagement activities is an optional item in the Tx21st system, the data are underreported, and the information gathered by the 20 site visits provided an alternative source of data.

Key Implementation and Sustainability Factors

In addition to general service delivery, some key implementation factors are particularly important for ensuring high-quality program implementation and long-term sustainability. These factors include continuous improvement elements related to program quality and performance monitoring, school-day linkages, and community advisory boards.

Study Question

What steps do programs take to ensure that their programs are high quality? How do they use data to monitor performance and support continuous improvement efforts?

Continuous Quality Improvement

For more than 10 years, researchers have explored the ways that high-quality afterschool program implementation and cycles of quality improvement can support youth engagement and outcomes (Yohalem, Devaney, Smith, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2012). Through knowledge of out-of-school time best practices and the use of data for ongoing program development, centers can implement high-quality programs for students.

Features of High-Quality Texas ACE

Many research-backed characteristics define high-quality afterschool programs. To explore the quality levels of Texas ACE, the 20 center participants were first asked to identify what they consider to be features of high-quality Texas ACE programs (see Table B3.11 in Appendix B).

On High-Quality Staff

"I think the most important ingredient is having a well-trained, qualified staff that can execute the program the way it's designed to be executed."

—Site Coordinator

High-quality engaged staff and good communication were cited as the most important components by more than half of the programs visited. High-quality staff who were engaged and communicated effectively were consistently mentioned as the top characteristics. Overall, staff at 12 centers considered high-quality staff to be an essential feature for the overall Texas ACE program to be high quality, especially among high schools. In particular, high-quality staff were described as being capable of tailoring lesson plans to build on and connect to the school day. Communication among center leaders, center staff, and administration also was mentioned as key for 11 centers, including all three high school centers visited. In addition, engaged students were mentioned in interviews as an indicator of high-quality staffing and programming, especially for the high school centers. As one respondent shared, "to me, quality is when you walk into a classroom and the students are engaged . . . I know that they're learning and they're enjoying what they're learning."

Strong relationships between youth and staff and high levels of youth engagement were cited by eight centers. Respondents identified engaged students and good relationships between Texas ACE staff and participating youth as components of high-quality programs. Respondents noted the importance of staff building relationships to understand what factors influenced student performance, as well as supporting them in being more excited about attending both Texas ACE programming and school. One Texas ACE program gave the example that "[the goal is for ACE staff to] understand the [student] . . . you have to build that relationship with that [student] to understand." During the interview, the respondent discussed understanding the factors, including external factors, that may influence a student's performance. Building relationships makes it easier to reinforce the good behavior and contributes to students becoming more excited about coming to both Texas ACE programming and attending the school day. Building relationships also help students feel "comfortable with the Texas ACE [staff] that's working with them" and helps the student better understand that Texas ACE staff are "here to kind of broaden [students'] horizons."

On Relationships With Students

"A lot of times, I think that kids get frustrated because people don't understand what their needs are. They're not really grasping what they want or what they need. If they're struggling, sometimes kids are really hesitant to let people know. I think that keeping an open channel of communication amongst adult parties that are involved in programming and amongst the children themselves."

—Texas ACE Staff

Performance Monitoring

Continuous quality improvement is a feature of high-quality centers that assists centers in understanding areas of their program that are going well and aspects where changes can be made to maximize participant outcome. A quality improvement process can be facilitated by monitoring the performance of both student and program quality data sources. Information from teachers, both formal grades and informal feedback, were important sources of student data to support performance monitoring (see Figure 3.6 and Table B3.12 in Appendix B). The majority of centers reported reviewing school-day course grades or report cards to monitor student performance. School-day staff also provided informal feedback by noting which students need academic remediation (16 centers). Respondents noted that this type of feedback originated from school-day staff or center-staff who reached out after noticing a pattern with students. This type of interaction was an example of a school to Texas ACE connection related to student performance.

Figure 3.6: Student Data Used to Monitor Performance by 20 Texas ACE Centers, Spring 2017

- Course grades or report cards (16 centers)
- Informal feedback from school-day staff (16 centers)
- Texas ACE data (12 centers)
- STAAR/benchmarks/EOC examinations (11 centers)
- Attendance data (10 centers)
- Disciplinary data (seven centers)

Source. Interviews conducted during spring 2017 site visits.
Note. EOC = end of course; STAAR = State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness; Texas ACE = Texas Afterschool Centers on Education.

Standardized test results from STAAR and district benchmarks also were crucial data sources. Staff at more than half of the centers specifically mentioned using standardized test data to assess student performance. By reviewing EOC assessments and benchmarks Texas ACE staff discussed ensuring that

"everything is aligned with TEKS" or determining where the center could adjust to better support student needs. Finally, other student data used for continuous improvement included school-day attendance and disciplinary data.

Using Data to Inform Program Improvement

As mentioned previously, a continuous quality improvement process includes the monitoring of both student and program data. Centers were probed during the site visits about their implementation of a quality assessment (QA) process, formally or informally, as part of their progress monitoring cycle. The results indicated that informal observations were most frequently mentioned to support program quality monitoring (see Table B3.13 in Appendix B). Nearly all centers mentioned using data obtained from observations and walk-throughs. The observations and walk-throughs allowed center leadership to informally visit centers to identify areas of instructional concern and give feedback to make improvements.

On Formal Quality Assessments

"We actually developed a rubric, a quality rubric, and we're still revamping it because we went through all these descriptors and so we make observations, we give feedback, we redirect when need be, and we adjust course."

—Project Director

Formal QA measures were not widespread among the 20 centers visited. Staff at five centers specifically mentioned the use of a formal QA rubric (see Table B3.13 in Appendix B). One center shared that it has "used several observation rubrics, and evaluation rubrics that TEA has given us . . . which have been great. The one that I find the most comprehensive and really deep dives into . . . quality programming is called the PQA." The PQA is a formal observation tool based on best practices in afterschool programs. Four centers specifically mentioned using the PQA. Other formal QA tools also are available, including those that could be designed for the specific Texas ACE grantee.

Summary and Recommendations

Service delivery; key implementation and sustainability factors such as school-day alignment, staffing, partnerships, advisory boards, and family engagement strategies; and indicators of high-quality programming were explored to better understand Texas ACE program implementation. Tx21st data showed that students spent most of their time in academic enrichment, recreation, and homework help. Analysis of the Tx21st data also found that students most frequently spent their time in Texas ACE focused on activities related to reading and mathematics. More in-depth profiles with 20 Texas ACE programs to understand program implementation found that Texas ACE programs primarily focused on academic and enrichment activities; college and career readiness and parental involvement were cited less frequently by the centers visited. Center staff reported that activities aligned with local goals and mentioned activities that frequently fell under the category of academic activities, such as mathematics, reading/English language arts, writing, and science. In this sense, center programming appears to align with the statewide Texas ACE objectives to improve student outcomes. Other program goals and objectives focused on local needs and goals in areas such as enrichment and exposure for students to new activities, as well as college and career activities. Respondents generally asserted that Texas ACE was viewed as an extension of the school day and was well aligned. School day and Texas ACE relationships were critical for creating these strong school linkages, as seen through district and school support and site coordinator presence on campus.

Respondents shared that staff development occurred in a variety of ways. Most Texas ACE programs offered staff orientation, either in traditional form or in ways such as on-the-job training. Logic models were not frequently used in staff orientation. Other PD offerings focused on student academic and behavior needs, as well as classroom management and program quality. Trainings were seen as useful to the staff who received them, but one third of the respondents indicated that they did not receive PD. Partners were important for Texas ACE implementation, and local nonprofit organizations were the most frequently reported partner provider, with many other types also supporting programs. Lastly, the Texas ACE advisory board role varied across centers. There was an even split of centers that have either the advisory board or Texas ACE staff as key decision makers. Advisory boards also generally supported in other ways, including planning, monitoring, and oversight.

Family engagement was an important component of Texas ACE. However, there seemed to be a disconnect between what centers reported in the Tx21st data and what the evaluation team was able to gather through site visits. Reporting on parent involvement through Tx21st data focused generally on parent involvement and family literacy activities, but less than 11% of the centers reported data. However, site visits revealed that parent surveys were the most common family engagement strategy and were a common method for involving families in program planning. In addition, the site visits found that Texas ACE also connects with families at school events and through diverse communication methods, but this varies greatly depending on the ages of the youth served by the program.

In terms of activities for families, programming supporting parent involvement and family literacy were the most common across centers. In addition, family programming focused much more on skills for parents, such as ESL classes, college/career support, or high school equivalency classes. Other kinds of parent enrichment also occurred depending on need.

Key implementation and sustainability factors related to continuous quality improvement and performance monitoring highlighted the ways that centers use data to improve their implementation. First to define quality in Texas ACE, respondents shared that staff were by far the most important feature of a high-quality program. Then followed relationships with youth and youth engagement as other top characteristics. Although they might understand what quality means, formal QA measures were not widely used. More informal observations were more common to support monitoring. Student-level data were commonly mentioned to support performance. Student data from teachers—both formal grades and informal feedback—were the most important; other data (e.g., Texas ACE data or standardized test scores) were secondary.

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Chapter 4. Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Texas ACE Programs

Objectives 3–5

- Based on site visit data, how do centers vary in terms of program quality, student engagement, and across other key program elements associated with Texas ACE implementation?
- Based on site visit data, how do center-level effects vary by key center characteristics?

To further understand the relationship between Texas ACE program quality and resulting youth experiences, the statewide evaluation team collected data from a sample of 20 geographically representative centers. Initially, 40 centers were considered, and 20 centers were selected for site visits based on their geographic region, their program end date, and the grade levels served. Site visits were conducted in spring 2017 by the Gibson Consulting Group, where the team collected data through two primary methods: (a) observations of program activities using the PQA tool and (b) in-person interviews with project directors, site coordinators, family engagement specialists, and campus principals or assistant principals, plus a group interview with afterschool activity leaders.[22] A total of 78 activities were observed. Twelve activities (15%) were observed by two raters, who each scored the PQA independently. This information was used to identify if a given rater was systemically more lenient or more severe in completing PQA ratings compared with their peers using a method called Many Facet Rasch Measurement (see Appendix C for additional information). Ratings were statistically adjusted to account for differences among the four raters involved in the data collection process.

The site coordinators for the 20 centers also were asked to administer an activity leader survey and a youth experience survey on a different day from when the site visits were conducted.[23] The youth activity leader survey was designed to capture the different types of activities that were offered during that day of programming. The youth survey assessed participating youth's perceptions of engagement, affect, relevance, and challenge in the same day's program activities.

Program Quality

For a program to have an impact on participating youth, research indicates that afterschool activity leaders should adopt practices and approaches to service delivery that result in the creation of a developmentally appropriate setting for youth, where participants feel safe and supported and are afforded opportunities to form meaningful relationships, experience belonging, and be active in their own learning and development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson & Dawes, 2015). Generally, adoption of such practices is referred to as program quality. The focus of this chapter is on how well program staff adopted specific practices and approaches that research indicates support the creation of a developmentally appropriate learning environment for participating youth.

[22] The PQA tool was selected because of its sound measurement properties and assessment of key practices associated with creating developmentally appropriate learning environments for participating youth. It also has been among the tools recommended for use by Texas ACE grantees as part of the LESI and has been used in previous Texas ACE evaluations conducted by AIR.

[23] The youth survey was administered only to youth in Grade 4 and up.

Study Question

What do we know about the observed level of quality in Texas ACE programs? How are different center characteristics potentially related to the level of observed program quality?

To measure program quality in Texas ACE programs, each center was evaluated using the PQA tool. The PQA measures quality at the point of service, or the space where youth and staff interact within the program. It focuses on staff practices organized into three domains that (a) create a safe and supportive environment, (b) encourage positive youth interactions with site staff and peers to develop meaningful relationships, and (c) promote engagement in program activities through youth leadership and promoting choice and autonomy. The PQA is designed to assess the extent to which these practices are present and is commonly used as part of broader quality improvement processes to help staff better incorporate these practices into how they design and deliver programming.

The PQA has different versions for different age groups, with the YPQA being appropriate for Grades 4–12 and the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) for Grades K–6.[24] Both tools are designed to assess the quality of youth programs on a 1-3-5 scale, with 1 representing the lowest score and 5 representing the highest score. Of the 20 centers, eight centers serving middle and high school youth were scored using the YPQA, and 12 centers serving elementary youth were scored using the SAPQA.

Each center was visited on two consecutive days, with typically two program activities observed per day and scored using the PQA. A total of 78 offerings were observed.[25] Table 4.1 shows the three domains observed in the YPQA and SAPQA and the related scales that make up each domain. Each scale consists of several items that assess the extent to which that practice was observed using the 1-3-5 scale.

Table 4.1: Youth and School Age Observation Tools: Domains and Dimensions

YPQA and SAPQA domains	Related scales
Supportive Environment	Warm Welcome Active Engagement Session Flow Skill Building Encouragement
Interaction	Belonging Leadership Collaboration Adult Partnership
Engagement	Planning Responsibility Choice Reflection

Note. SAQPA = School-Age Program Quality Assessment; YPQA = Youth Program Quality Assessment. The SAPQA contains the Responsibility dimension; the YPQA does not. All other dimensions listed are present in both tools.

[24] Additional information on the PQA tools can be found at http://www.cypq.org.

[25] Program offerings refer to structured activities led by center staff with the same youth across time, which includes the range of scheduled services at a center.

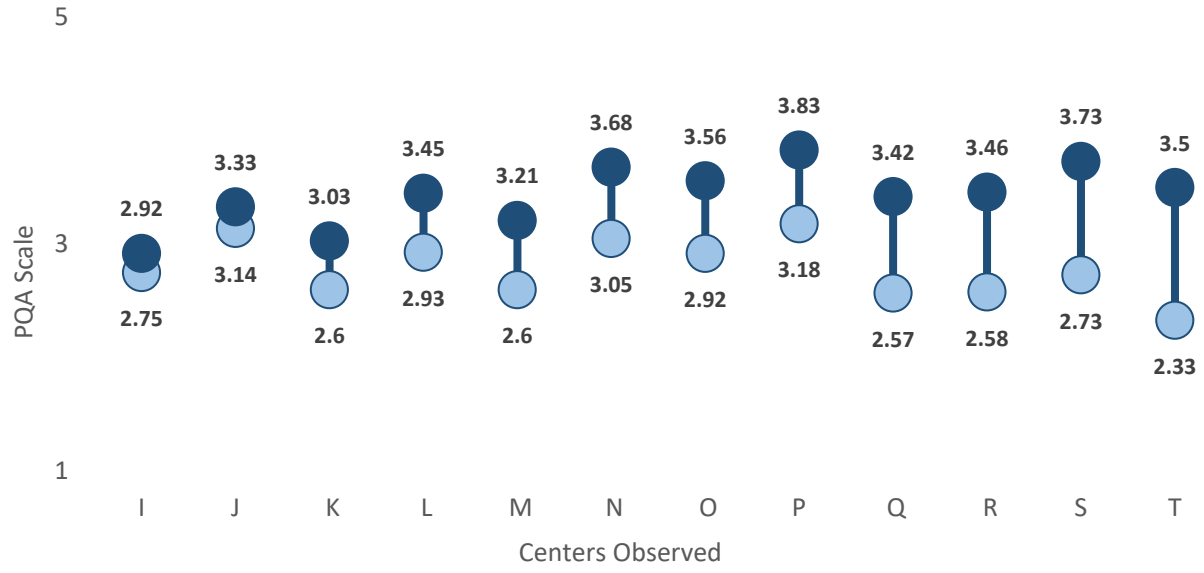
Figures 4.1 and 4.2 reflect the range of YPQA (centers A–H) and SAPQA (centers I–T) scores for each evaluated center, with minimum and maximum scores presented. The overall mean quality score for elementary programs was 3.05; for middle and high school programs, the mean quality score was 2.98.[26] These scores suggest a moderate level of observed program quality. The difference in minimum and maximum PQA scores per center fluctuated more in the middle and high school programs, versus centers serving elementary youth, thus indicating less consistency in the quality of program offerings at observed centers serving youth in Grades 6–12.

Figure 4.1: Minimum and Maximum Youth Program Quality Assessment Scores for a Sample of Eight Middle School and High School Centers

Source. PQA scores obtained during spring 2017 site visit observations.
Note. PQA: program quality assessment.

[26] Here, the mean score is based on a Rasch-adjusted score taking into account estimated rater bias. Mean unadjusted PQA scores were 3.47 for elementary centers and 3.02 for middle and high school centers.

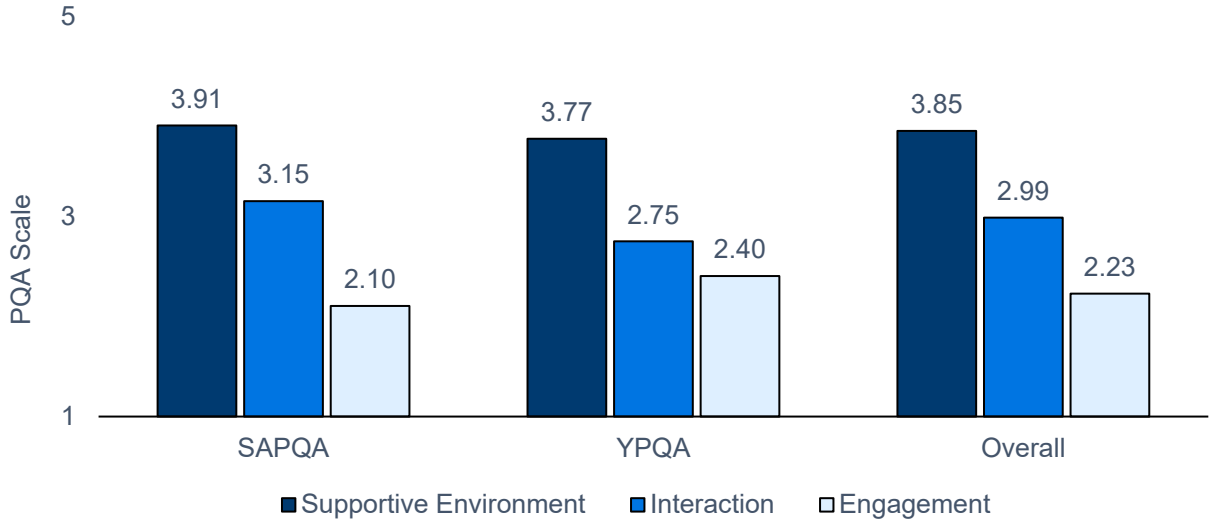
Figure 4.2: Minimum and Maximum School-Age Program Quality Assessment Scores for a Sample of 12 Elementary Centers



Source. PQA scores obtained during spring 2017 site visit observations.
Note. PQA: program quality assessment.

When the YPQA and SAPQA scores are examined by all three domains, they provide valuable insight to how centers are fostering a supportive environment, creating meaningful interactions, and promoting high engagement levels. Figure 4.3 shows a trend in SAPQA and YPQA scores, with centers scoring highest in the adoption of practices that help create a supportive learning environment, followed by opportunities for positive interaction, and lowest in providing supports and opportunities to youth that support engagement. This pattern in scores across domains is common and expected based on the extensive use of the PQA suite of tools nationwide: (a) Some practices outlined in the interaction and engagement domains are expected to be less present in each and every offering observed given the length of a typical activity session and the arc of activities across time that may require the use of different approaches depending on what phase the activity is in and (b) Some practices require a greater degree of skill in terms of facilitation and scaffolding to implement (e.g., youth have multiple opportunities to make plans for projects and activities).

Figure 4.3: Overall SAPQA and YPQA Scores by Program Quality Assessment Domain



Source. PQA scores obtained during spring 2017 site visit.
Note. PQA = program quality assessment; SAPQA = School-Age Program Quality Assessment; YPQA = Youth Program Quality Assessment.

Steps also were taken to explore how program quality and youth experiences were related to center characteristics obtained from Tx21st data, including the following:

- Center location and maturity
- The staffing model employed by the center
- The grade levels of youth served by the center
- The at-risk status of youth served by the center
- The types of activities provided by the center
- The subject areas addressed in center activities
- Center performance on a series of program attendance-related metrics

Table 4.2 displays significant findings when looking at the relationship between center characteristics derived from Tx21st data and the scores for the three PQA domains based on a series of independent sample *t*-tests. These analyses were correlational, so the results should not be interpreted as evidence of a causal relationship. In addition, at this point in the evaluation, these results should be considered exploratory. Steps will be taken in future years of the evaluation to explore if these results remain consistent across time and across different samples. Where consistent results are observed, additional steps will be taken by the evaluation team to explore the practical significance of these differences.

Table 4.2: Significant Findings Related to Domain Scores and Center Characteristics

Significant Findings
• Centers operated by new grantees (n = 8) demonstrated higher supportive environment scores (t = 2.152, p < .05) but lower engagement scores (t = 1.870, p < .10) on observed program activities relative to centers operated by more mature grantees (n = 12). • Centers in rural areas (n = 4) demonstrated higher supportive environment scores on average relative to suburban and urban centers (n = 12; t = 2.005, p < .05). • Centers operated through 21st CCLC grants held by districts (n = 17) demonstrated higher scores on the supportive environment scale than centers operated by nondistrict grantees (n = 3; t = 1.962, p < .10). • Centers that were classified as having a higher level of average attendance in Texas ACE (n = 3) demonstrated higher engagement scores (varied by grade level) than centers classified as having lower Texas ACE attendance (n = 17; t = 2.623, p < .05).

Youth Experiences

To better understand youth experiences in Texas ACE programs, site coordinators for the sample of 20 centers received detailed instructions and paper Scantron surveys for the administration of the youth experience surveys and activity leader surveys. A total of 845 youth attending 19 of the 20 centers involved in site visit data collection in Grade 4 and up completed a survey. A total of 202 surveys were completed by activity leaders. The youth survey was intended to capture experiences based on the activities they participated in that day. More specifically, questions were aimed at measuring participants' perceptions in the following four areas on a 1–4 scale:

- Engagement—how engaged they felt
- Relevance—the extent to which they felt the activity was relevant to their life
- Challenge—whether they felt challenged by the activity
- Affect—whether they felt excited or happy during the program

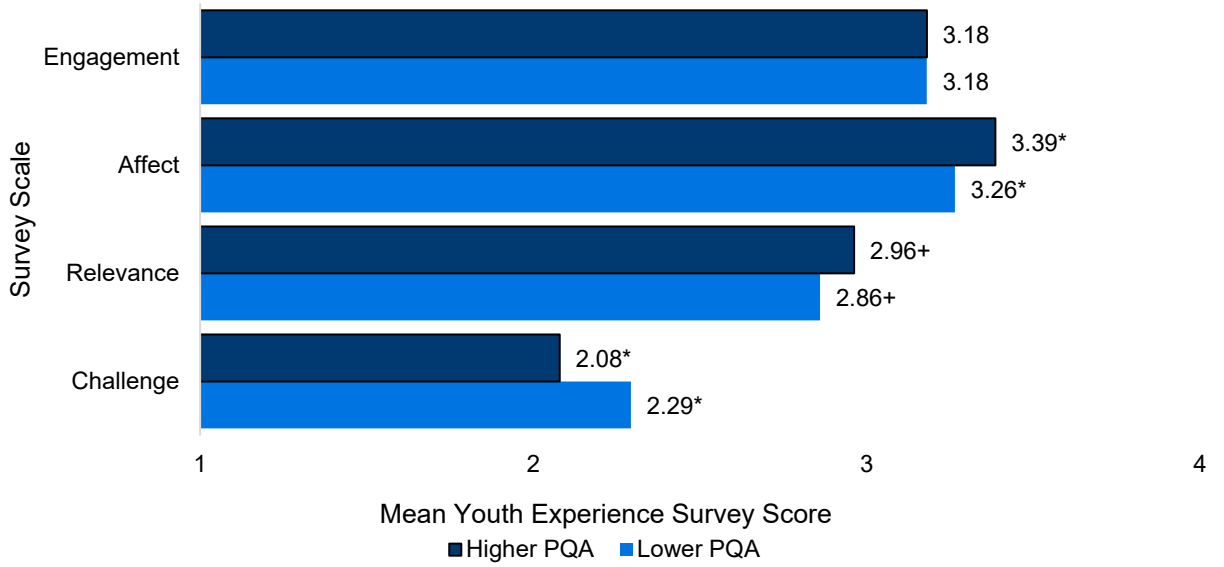
Study Questions
How engaged do youth report being in Texas ACE activities? *To what extent do youth indicate having positive perceptions of program activity leaders and other youth in the program?* *To what extent do youth report participating in activities that afford an opportunity to experience a sense of agency?* *How do youth feel they have benefitted from participation in programming?* *How are different center characteristics potentially related to youth experiences in programming, including the level of observed program quality?*

The survey results, along with the overall PQA scores, were used to explore if program quality was related to youth experiences in programming. Theoretically, youth reports of positive experiences while participating in Texas ACE programming would be more likely in centers demonstrating higher levels of program quality, which is indicated by higher PQA scores. The centers were split into two groups based on their PQA scores: 10 higher scoring centers and nine other centers that scored lower on the PQA.

Given the small number of centers involved in these data collection activities, the sample was split into two groups based on the average total quality score. The 10 centers in the higher scoring group had a mean total PQA score of 3.22, whereas the nine centers in the lower scoring group had a mean total PQA score of 2.84. It is important to note that survey data on youth experiences and program activities were collected on a different day than observations for PQA scoring of the program offerings. In this sense, each measure was used to obtain a center-level estimate on how a center was functioning in a given area that did not rely on an alignment of activities that were observed with the collection of survey data. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to explore whether responses that youth provided on the youth experience survey were different in higher and lower scoring centers.

As Figure 4.4 shows, youth (n = 471) from centers with the 10 highest average PQA scores reported being more excited and happier in the program offerings (t = 2.114, p < .05)—e.g., higher positive affect—and found the content of the activities more relevant to their lives (t = 1.724, p < .10) than youth attending the lower scoring centers (n = 374). Both findings were statistically significant, although the latter was moderately significant. There was no difference in engagement between the higher and lower scoring centers, and when it came to challenge, participating youth in centers with higher PQA scores perceived activities in program offerings as less challenging (t = 2.974, p < .05).

Figure 4.4: Youth Experiences in Activities Across Higher Scoring Versus Lower Scoring Centers

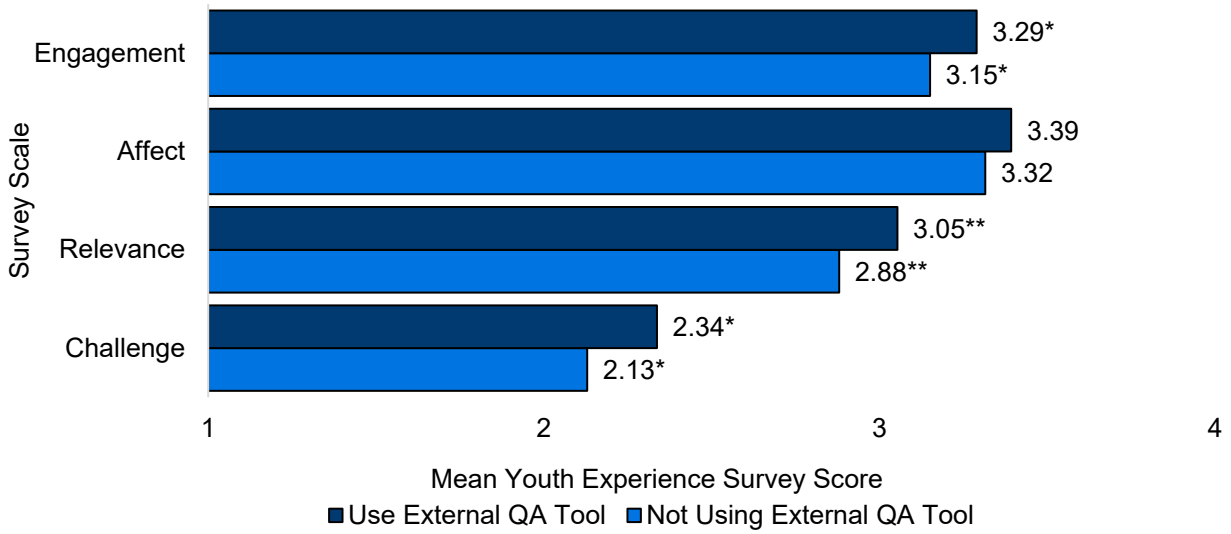


Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth survey responses and PQA scores obtained during spring 2017 site visit observations conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
Note. PQA = program quality assessment.
+p < .10. *p < .05.

The results outlined in Figure 4.4 were largely consistent with the hypothesis. The higher PQA scores indicated that staff in the higher scoring centers more consistently adopted practices that research has associated with developmentally appropriate learning environments for participating youth. Youth-reported experiences in these centers were generally better than youth attending lower scoring centers. Such results support the idea that using tools such as the PQA to inform staff practice may support youth having positive experiences in Texas ACE programming.

In addition to youth and activity leader survey data and PQA scores, steps were taken to gather qualitative data through interviews with project directors, site coordinators, campus principals, family engagement specialists, advisory board members, and youth activity leaders. Centers that explicitly referenced using an externally developed QA tool to assess program quality to both inform and refine program design and delivery were identified from the interview data. The centers were then grouped according to the use of an external QA tool to explore if self-reported use of these tools was associated with youth reporting better experiences in programming. Five centers were found to use an externally developed QA tool, whereas 14 centers did not. Only two of the five centers that used a QA tool were in the higher scoring group referenced in Figure 4.4. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to explore the relationship between the use of a QA tool by centers and youth-reported experiences in programming. Figure 4.5 indicates that youth (n = 178) attending centers that use external QA tools reported being more challenged (t = 2.374, p < .05), experienced a greater sense of relevance (t = 2.630, p < .01), and were more engaged in program activities (t = 2.357, p < .05) than youth attending centers where these tools were not used (n = 667). These findings were statistically significant.

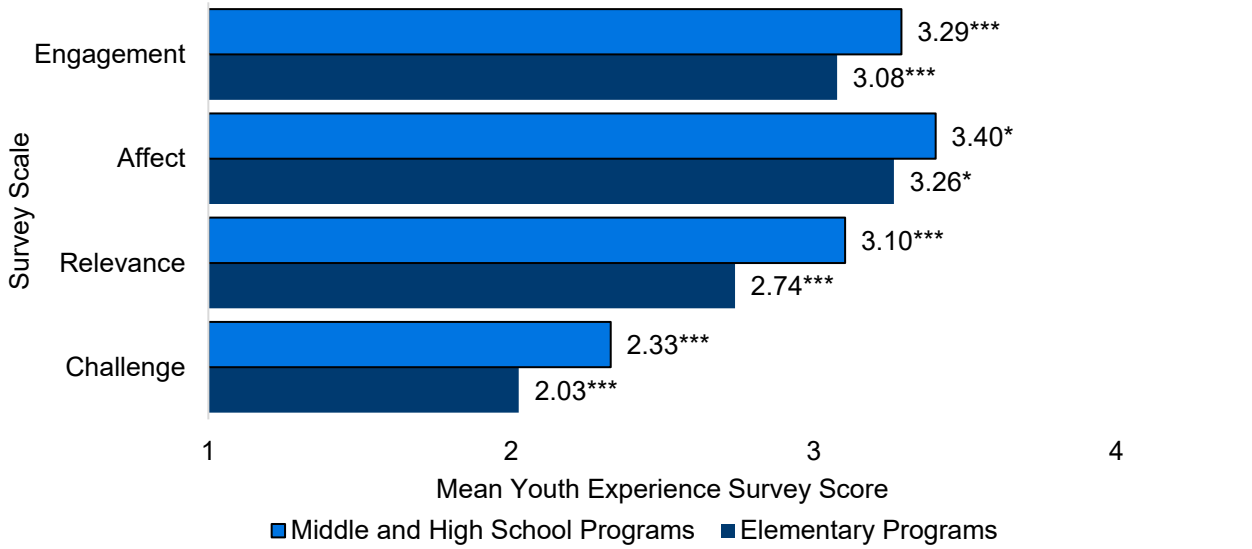
Figure 4.5: Youth Experiences in Centers Using an External Quality Assessment (QA) Versus Nonusing Centers



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys, interview data, and PQA scores obtained in spring 2017.
Note. PQA = program quality assessment; QA = quality assessment.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Steps also were taken to explore how youth experiences in programming reported on the youth survey may have varied between elementary students (435 students from 11 centers) and students attending middle and high school programs (410 students from eight centers; see Figure 4.6). Youth in middle and high school programs reported greater relevance (t = 6.319, p < .001), more positive affect (t = 2.444, p < .05), greater engagement (t = 4.471 p < .001), and being challenged more (t = 4.283, p < .001) than youth in elementary programs. One possible explanation for these results may be that youth in middle and high school programs have more choice in which program offerings they attend compared with students in elementary programs.

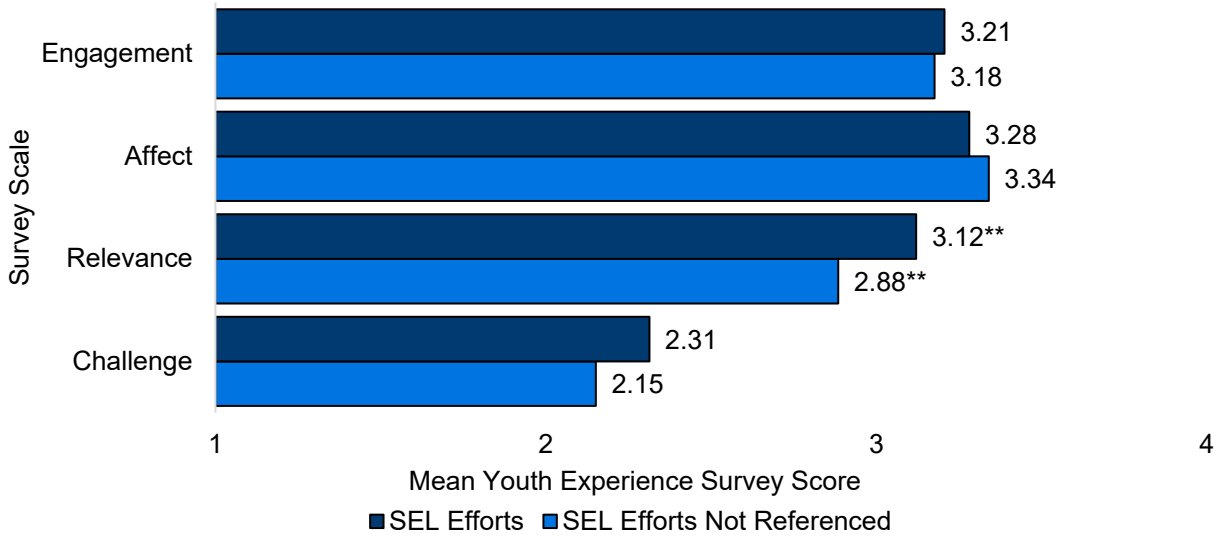
Figure 4.6: Youth Experiences in Activities in Middle and High School Programs Versus Elementary Programs



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
*p < .05. ***p < .001.

Interview data also helped identify centers that explicitly reported implementing program components designed to support the social and emotional development of participating youth. Some examples of what staff reported in supporting SEL included developing life skills and improving behavior through respectful and meaningful relationships between the youth and staff. Four centers referenced being intentional about cultivating social and emotional outcomes among participating youth. As shown in Figure 4.7, youth (n = 115) attending centers that focused on the social and emotional development of participating youth indicated feeling that afterschool content was more relevant to their lives than youth attending centers that did not report intentional efforts to promote SEL (n = 727; t = 2.756, p < .01). Some caution, however, should be exercised when interpreting these results. The results were based on an explicit reference to cultivating SEL as part of the interviews conducted at each center. It is possible that some centers neglected to mention SEL in their responses even though they did, in reality, provide intentional program components designed to support the achievement of these outcomes.

Figure 4.7: Youth Experiences in Centers Referencing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills Efforts



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys, interview data, and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
**$p < .01$.

Program Activities

Understanding how youth experiences vary by program offering can provide direction in developing more meaningful activities. On the same day that the youth experience surveys were administered, activity leaders completed a survey documenting the type of activities for youth in the afterschool program on the day the survey data were collected. The list of possible practices listed on the survey is in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: List of Activities Collected on the Activity Leader Survey

- Youth primarily worked alone on tasks related to the activity.
- Youth primarily worked in small groups on tasks related to the activity.
- Youth received *direct instruction* in a particular academic content area (e.g., mathematics, science, reading).
- Youth worked on a project that required them to make or build things.
- Youth worked on a group project that will take multiple sessions to complete.
- Youth participated in activities that allowed them to explore and discover new things on their own.
- Youth participated in a competition, contest, or game.
- Youth participated in whole-group discussions facilitated by staff.
- Youth delivered a presentation to the whole group or an external audience.
- Youth went on a field trip.
- Youth listened to a presentation from a speaker or a special guest from outside the program.
- Youth planned future activities or projects.
- Youth participated in an activity that was designed to make a contribution or be helpful to others or the community (e.g., a service-learning project).
- Youth learned or practiced a skill that is not related to a specific school-day content area (e.g., learning Tae Kwon Do).

Activity leaders responded to the survey by selecting from the following responses options regarding how much time was spent doing each activity in Table 4.3:

- No programming time was spent doing this.
- Less than half of the programming time today was spent doing this.
- A majority of the programming time today was spent doing this.

It is important to note that the activities outlined in Table 4.3 are not necessarily mutually exclusive, so it would be possible for an activity leader to select the *A majority of the programming time today* option for multiple activities listed in the table.

To understand how youth experiences differed based on the type of activity, the evaluation team grouped centers for analysis and comparison. Activity leaders completed a separate survey for each programming session (e.g., chess club, art class, tutoring) they led with students on the day the survey data were collected. Some activity leaders led just one session on the day in question and completed only one survey, whereas others completed surveys for multiple activity sessions that they led. Collectively, the surveys completed by the activity leaders at a given center indicated how many programming sessions were characterized by the practices outlined in Table 4.3. For example, for each center, it was possible to identify if most sessions offered on the day the survey data were collected were characterized by youth spending most of their time in the session working in small groups. In such cases, the center was classified as offering activity sessions where students spent the majority of time working in small groups. As shown in Table 4.4, 13 centers were classified as falling in this category based on responses to the activity leader survey. Other practices used to classify centers into a group where the majority of activities involved youth spending more than half of their time engaging in a particular practice included the following:

- Working on group projects that will take multiple sessions to complete
- Working on a project that required them to make or build things
- Learning or practicing a skill that is not related to a specific school-day content area
- Exploring and discovering new things on their own
- Working in small groups on tasks related to the activity
- Participating in a competition, contest, or game
- Working alone on tasks related to the activity

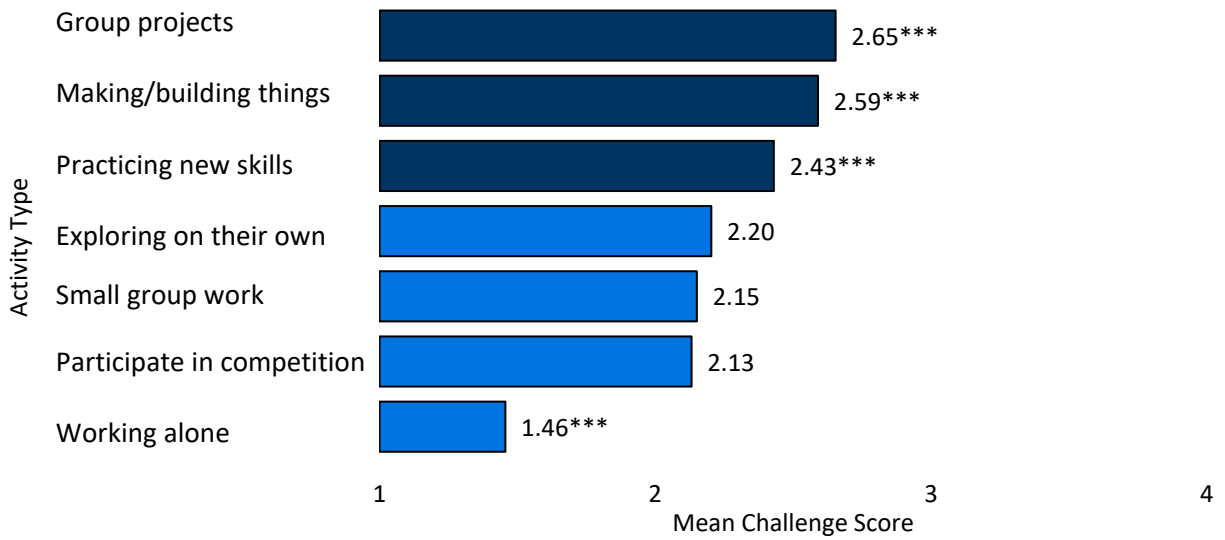
Table 4.4: Number of Centers Identified as Spending the Majority of Time on a Given Activity and the Number of Youth Survey Respondents From Those Centers

Majority of time spent on	Centers (*N*)	Youth (*N*)
Working in small groups	13	587
Exploration and discovery	9	430
Learning or practicing skills	8	333
Working on group projects	4	176
Participating in competition	4	122
Working alone on tasks	3	104
Making/building things	2	134

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth and activity leader surveys obtained from centers involved in site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.

When 50% or more of the sessions in a center were characterized by a given practice, these centers were placed in one group and then compared with the group of centers where the practice in question was less prevalent. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to assess if differences existed between centers in each group in terms of youth feedback on challenge, relevance, affect, and engagement based on youth survey responses. Centers could be classified in multiple categories depending on how frequently activity leaders selected the *A majority of the programming time* option in relation to the domain of activities listed in Table 4.3. The number of centers and youth survey respondents falling in a given category highlighted in Figure 4.8 are outlined in Table 4.4.

Figure 4.8: Youth Perception of Challenge in Centers Identified as Spending the Majority of Time on a Given Activity

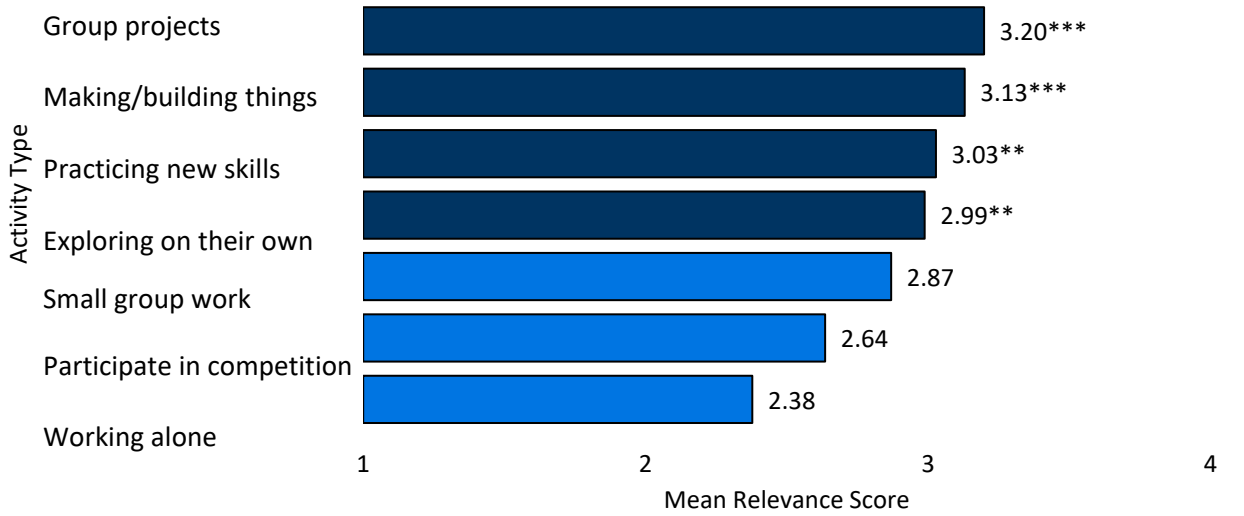


Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
***$p < .001$.

As shown in Figure 4.8, youth felt significantly more challenged in centers where participants were primarily working on group projects (t = 7.395, p < .001), making or building things (t = 5.348, p < .001), and practicing a new skill (t = 6.363, p < .001). They felt less challenged by activities completed alone (t = -9.810, p < .001).

Survey responses reflected that youth perceived group projects (t = 5.163, p < .001), making or building things (t = 3.674, p < .001), practicing a new skill (t = 3.414, p < .01), and exploring on their own (t = 2.935, p < .01) significantly more relevant, as reflected by Figure 4.9. Youth found primarily working in small groups, participating in competition, and completing activities alone as less relevant.

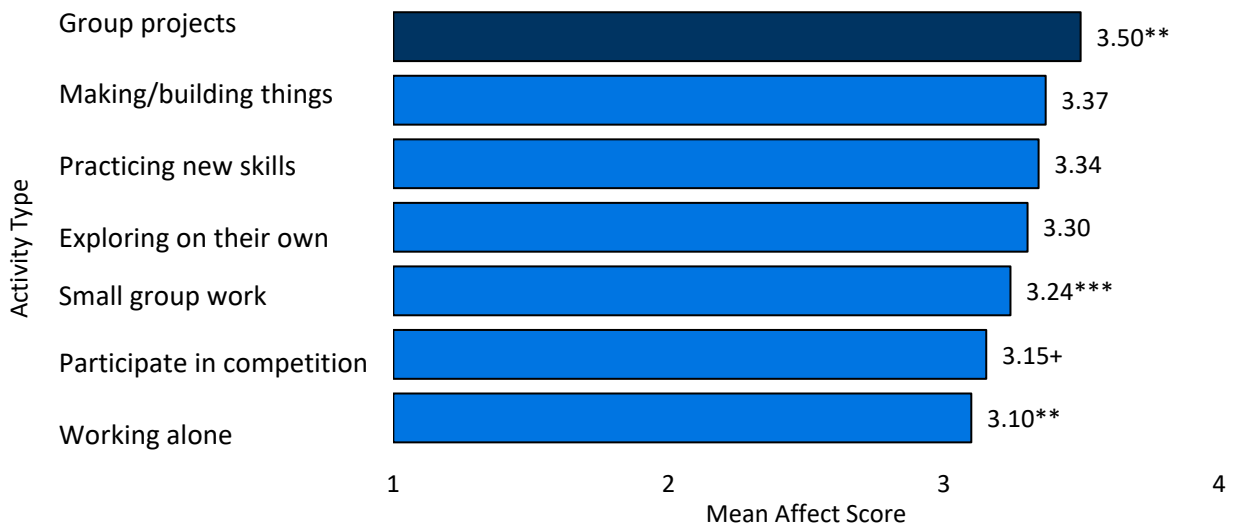
Figure 4.9: Youth Perception of Relevance in Centers Identified as Spending the Majority of Time on a Given Activity



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
**p < .01. ***p < .001.

Feelings of positive affect varied less by activity type (see Figure 4.10). The analysis showed that participating youth felt less positive affect during the majority of activities characterized as working alone (t = -1.952, p < .10) or in small groups (t = -4.727, p < .001) and participating in competitions (t = -2.891, p < .01), as shown in Figure 4.10. Feelings of positive affect were more common during activities where youth were making or building things (t = 3.102, p < .01).

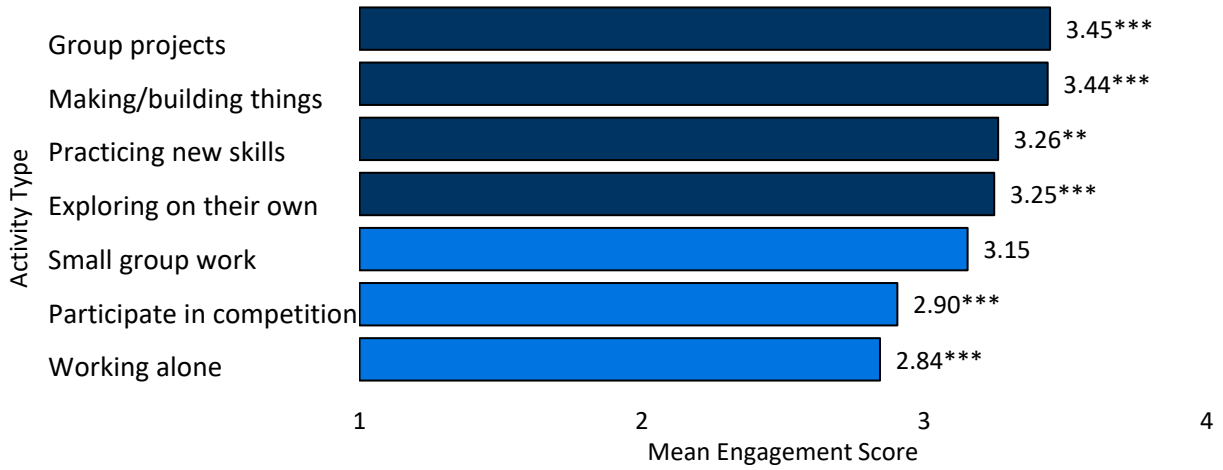
Figure 4.10: Youth Feelings of Positive Affect in Centers Identified as Spending the Majority of Time on a Given Activity



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
+$p < .10$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Very similar to the relevance outcome, youth felt the majority of activities consisting of working on group projects ($t = 6.879$, $p < .001$), making or building things ($t = 5.756$, $p < .001$), practicing a new skill ($t = 3.267$, $p < .01$), and exploring things on their own ($t = 3.569$, $p < .001$) were significantly more engaging. Counter to that, centers where the majority of activities were characterized as competitions ($t = -3.976$, $p < .001$) or working alone ($t = -5.112$, $p < .001$) were rated as significantly less engaging, as shown in Figure 4.11.

Figure 4.11: Youth Perception of Engagement in Centers Identified as Spending the Majority of Time on a Given Activity



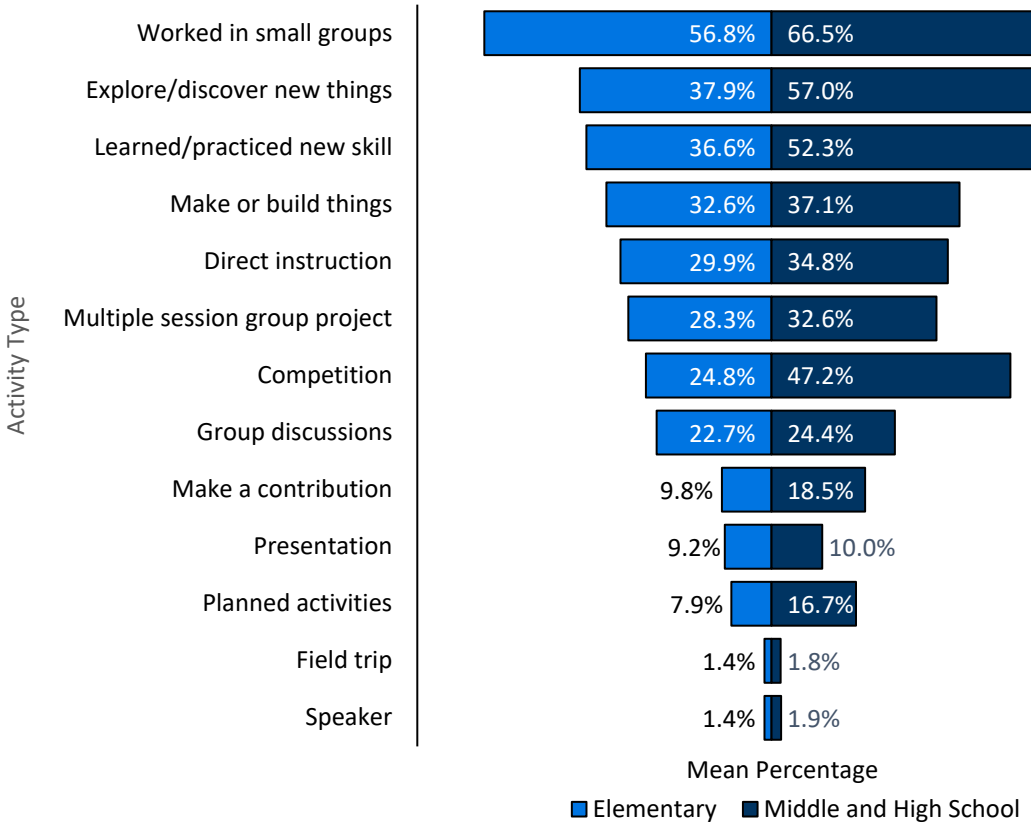
Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth surveys and program quality assessment scores obtained during site visits conducted by Gibson Consulting Group in spring 2017.
**p < .01. ***p < .001.

Elementary Compared With Middle and High School Programs

Time spent on activities also varied by the grade levels served by a center. Using the same data collected from the activity leader survey, steps were taken to calculate the mean percentage of activities offered by each center where youth spent the majority of the session involved in the activity listed. The research team then compared these percentages between elementary (n = 11) and middle and high school programs (n = 8). Several observed differences were noticed. The results in Figure 4.12 indicate that youth in middle and high school centers spent more time doing the following:

- Exploring and discovering new things
- Practicing skills not related to a school-day content area
- Participating in a competition, contest, or game
- Planning future activities or projects
- Partaking in activities designed to contribute to be helpful to others or the community (make a contribution)

Figure 4.12: Majority of Time Spent by Activity Type in Elementary Versus Middle School and High School Programs



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of youth activity leader surveys administered in spring 2017 after a day of programming.

Summary

A review of the findings for program quality in centers run by Texas ACE provides insight into a variety of current center practices and youth experiences in programming. The PQA was used by the evaluation team to assess the observed level of program quality in a subset of activities provided by the 20 centers included in the sample. Overall, the centers included in the sample demonstrated a moderate level of quality based on the total PQA scores. Consistent with national norms, the centers scored highest in the provision of supports and opportunities that created a supportive learning environment for participating youth. Scores were lower for PQA domains related to staff adoption of practices that support positive interactions among program participants and the provision of opportunities for youth to experience engagement by playing a more active role in activities. Generally, opportunities for growth were observed in each area.

The results also demonstrated a relationship between program quality and youth experiences in programming. Youth participating in centers with higher average PQA scores indicated feeling happier and more excited in programming (e.g., positive affect) and a greater sense that what they were doing in the program was relevant compared with lower scoring centers. In addition, youth in centers that referenced using an externally developed QA tool to assess programming and inform quality improvement efforts reported more positive experiences than youth in centers that did not. Youth enrolled

in these centers reported being significantly more challenged, experiencing a greater sense of relevance, and being more engaged.

Center characteristics related to youth experiences differed the most when comparing elementary and middle and high school centers. Youth in middle and high school centers reported greater relevance, more positive affect, feeling more challenged, and greater engagement than youth in elementary centers. This result may be related to youth in middle and high school centers having more choice than youth in elementary centers and spending more time in activities that promote autonomy and leadership, such as exploring things on their own and participating in competitions.

Other activity types that created positive experiences for all youth include working on group projects, making or building things, practicing a new skill, and exploring things on their own. Such activities were perceived by youth as having greater relevance to their lives and as significantly more engaging.

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Chapter 5. The Impact of the Texas ACE Program on Youth Outcomes

Objective 2
• What impact does the program have for youth attending regularly during the school year relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming? • What impact does the program have for youth attending regularly across the span of two school years relative to similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming? • What center-level characteristics derived from Tx21st data are significantly related to center-level effect sizes pertaining to school-related outcomes among participating youth? • For center-level characteristics found to be related to center-level effect sizes, what impact do select center characteristics have on Texas ACE program participants who participate in the program regularly relative to similar youth enrolled in centers lacking that characteristic?

Participation in Texas ACE programming is meant to support student growth and development on a variety of school-related outcomes. Past evaluations of the program demonstrated that participation in Texas ACE was associated with higher academic performance in mathematics, fewer school-day absences and disciplinary incidents, and greater grade promotion (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). These positive effects were more likely to occur when youth participated in programming for 60 days or more. However, participation in Texas ACE also was found to be associated with lower academic performance on STAAR Reading assessments in some cases.

This chapter outlines findings from three types of analyses: (a) annual analyses that focus on the impact of a single year of Texas ACE participation; (b) multiyear analyses that focus on the effect of two consecutive years of Texas ACE participation; and (c) analyses oriented at exploring the relationship between center characteristics and center-level effects on youth outcomes.

Annual Impact Analyses

One goal for this evaluation of outcomes was to assess the effect that participation in Texas ACE programming had on school-related outcomes for the 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 school years. This set of analyses was designed to assess program impact after a single year of participation. Significant program impacts after a single year of Texas ACE participation were observed in previous Texas ACE evaluation reports (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). Program effects related to mathematics achievement have been small but consistent with what would be expected given program dosage. Larger effects after a single year of participation have been observed previously in terms of reductions in school-day absences and disciplinary incidents and in supporting grade promotion. In a subsequent section, the impacts of Texas ACE programming after 2 years of participation are examined, where program effects were hypothesized to be larger.

One departure from the annual analyses completed for prior reports was an exploration of how program impact varied by different levels of attendance in Texas ACE programming. Previous analyses assessed program impacts after 30 and 60 days of participation. For the impact analyses summarized in this chapter, youth attending Texas ACE programming during the three school years of interest were broken down into the following categories based on their annual attendance in Texas ACE programming:

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

While examining the impact of finer gradations of program attendance on school-related outcomes may help TEA better understand where key attendance thresholds associated with greater impact may exist, a potential downside of this approach is weakening the power to detect significant effects given that a smaller number of youth is included in each attendance category. So, the evaluation team conducted a series of impact models using propensity score matching (PSM) and multilevel modeling to examine program impact on the following school-related outcomes (see Appendix C for methodology):

- STAAR Mathematics scores (Grades 4–8)[27]
- STAAR Reading scores (Grades 4–8)
- Algebra I EOC scores (Grade 9)
- English I EOC scores (Grade 9)
- English II EOC scores (Grade 10)
- English III EOC scores (Grade 11)
- School-day attendance (Grades K–12)—limited to youth who were absent 5% or more of school days in the prior academic year
- School-day disciplinary incidents (Grades K–12)
- CTE credits earned (Grades 9–12)
- Grade promotion (K–12)

The evaluation team employed a quasi-experimental design to assess the effect of Texas ACE participating on student outcomes. PSM was used to create separate comparison groups comparing Texas ACE participants and students not participating in the program. This approach allowed the evaluation team to explore more carefully how participation in Texas ACE may impact school-related outcomes by controlling for sources of selection bias that otherwise may conflate the analysis results. Student outcomes were then modeled using two-level hierarchical linear models to assess differences between participants and nonparticipants. Outcome differences observed between the two groups could then be ascribed to participation in the program with a higher degree of confidence.

In conducting these analyses, Texas ACE program participants in a given attendance band (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days) were matched with similar youth attending the same schools who did not participate in programming. In this sense, impact estimates were based on comparing youth attending the program with similar youth not participating in Texas ACE programming. Limitations are associated with using PSM techniques to approximate matched student groups. Although PSM helps ensure that Texas ACE students

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

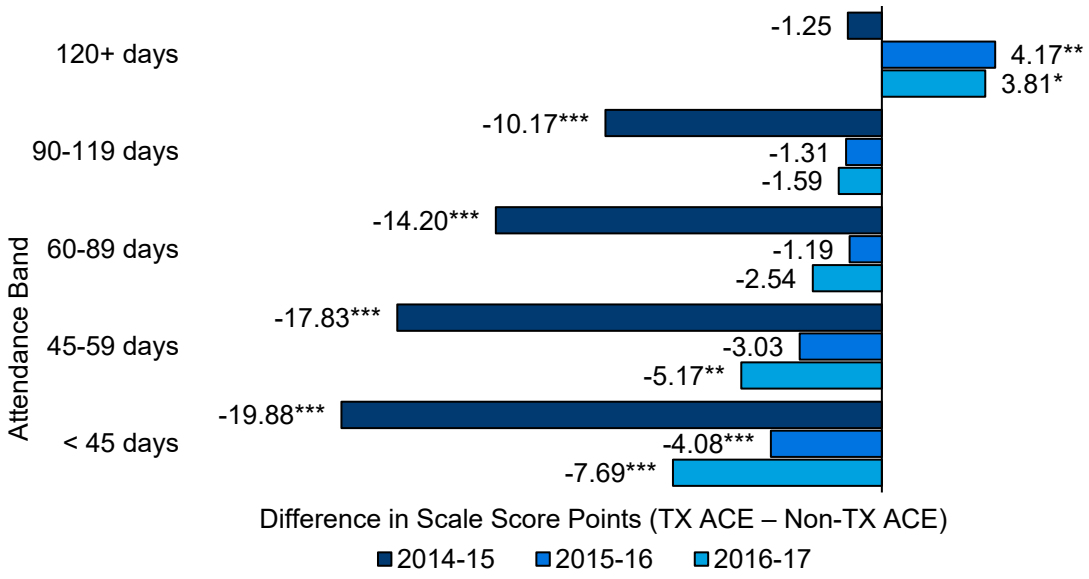
are as similar as possible to students not participating in programming, matching can occur only on the data collected to conduct the match (e.g., race/ethnicity, prior performance on the STAAR assessment). The PSM approach does not guarantee that students are matched for other key differences that may exist between the two groups of students, which could influence the outcomes being assessed (e.g., student motivation, interests). These limitations should be considered when interpreting the final results.

These analyses were further disaggregated by grade level, where applicable (i.e., K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12). Pooled results spanning these four grade-level bands are presented. Figures displaying results by individual grade-level bands are included in Appendix D. Significant findings related to differences in program outcomes across grade-level bands are noted in the sections that follow; however, figures showing these results specifically will be found in Appendix D.

STAAR Mathematics Scores

The results for the impact analyses assessing Texas ACE participation on STAAR Mathematics scores are displayed in Figure 5.1, which summarizes the pooled results for youth in Grades 4–8. The outcome in Figure 5.1 is the average difference in scale score points obtained on the STAAR Mathematics assessment between Texas ACE participants and similar youth not participating in programming. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.

Figure 5.1: STAAR Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades 4–8



Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

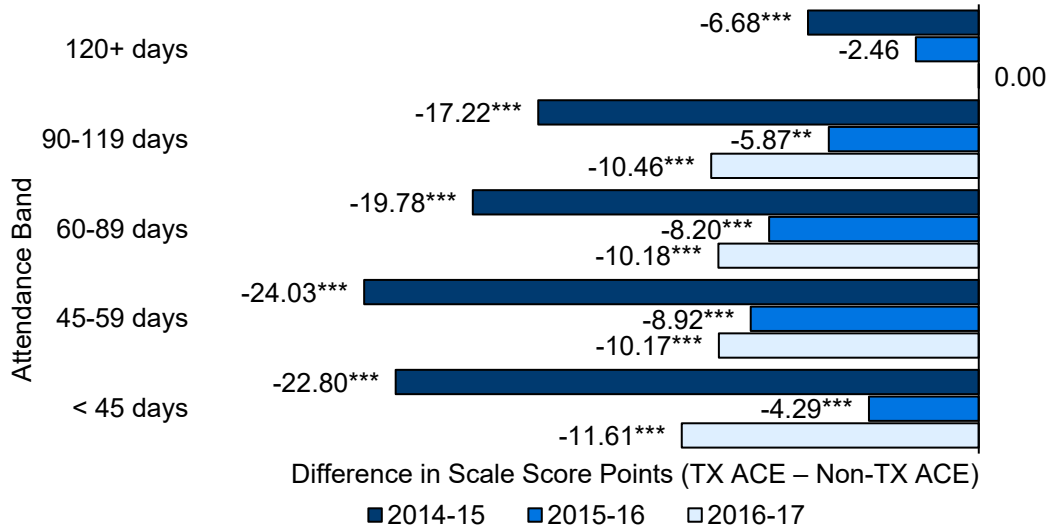
Key findings include the following:

- Across all three school years examined, participation in Texas ACE had a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Mathematics achievement when youth participated in programming for less than 45 days. Youth participating in Texas ACE at this level scored anywhere from 4 to 20 scale score points lower, on average, on the STAAR Mathematics assessment. This translates to a standardized effect of -0.033 to -0.167 standard deviation. Effects below 0.10 standard deviation would be considered very small.
- Statistically significant negative associations with STAAR Mathematics achievement—showing average differences of approximately 10–20 scale score points—were found across all attendance bands examined during the 2014–15 school year, with the exception of youth who participated in Texas ACE programming for 120 days or more.
- Texas ACE had a statistically significant and positive effect on STAAR Mathematics scores in the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years when youth attended for 120 days or more; youth attending at this level scored approximately 4 points higher on the assessment compared with similar youth who did not participate in Texas ACE. This translates to a standardized effect of 0.028 to 0.033 standard deviation.
- These results are substantively different from previous evaluations of the Texas ACE program, which consistently found small, positive effects on mathematics achievement when youth participated for 60 days or more in Texas ACE programming.

STAAR Reading Scores

The results are shown for STAAR Reading scores in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: STAAR Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades 4–8



Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's reading performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

- Across all three school years examined, participation in Texas ACE had a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Reading achievement when youth participated in programming for less than 120 days. Youth participating in Texas ACE at this level scored anywhere from 4 to 24 scale score points lower, on average, on the STAAR Reading assessment compared with similar youth who did not participate in programming. This translates to a standardized effect of -0.035 to -0.189 standard deviation.
- A negative effect on STAAR Reading achievement was especially prominent during the 2014–15 school year, where statistically significant, negative relationships were found across all attendance bands examined. Youth participating in Texas ACE scored anywhere from 6 to 24 scale points lower, on average, on the STAAR Reading assessment taken that year.
- Texas ACE did not have any statistically significant positive associations with STAAR Reading achievement in any school year or across any grade levels.
- Although positive effects on reading achievement were less common in previous evaluations of Texas ACE programming relative to positive effects in mathematics (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013), both the level and consistency of negative statistical associations pertaining to Texas ACE participation and reading outcomes from the current analyses are a deviation from past trends.

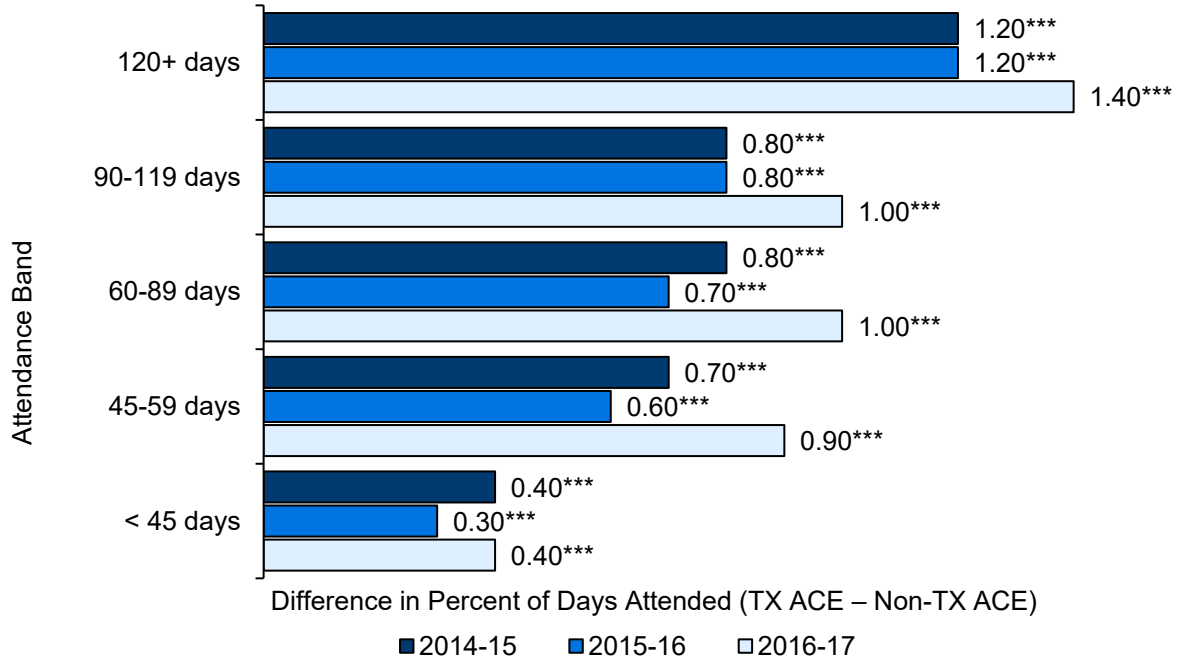
End-of-Course Assessments

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

School-Day Attendance

The results for the analyses assessing the relationship between Texas ACE participation and school-day attendance are displayed in Figure 5.3, which shows the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between youth participating in Texas ACE and similar nonparticipating youth pooled across Grades K–12. These analyses included only those youth who were absent for 5% or more of school days during the preceding school year. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than nonparticipants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared with nonparticipating youth.

Figure 5.3: School-Day Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades K–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than non-participants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared to with non-participating youth.
***$p < .001$.

Key findings include the following:

- Across all years and all grade-level bands, youth who participated in Texas ACE programming for 45 days or more had higher school-day attendance rates compared with similar youth not participating in programming. This result may prompt some to raise the following question: Are youth who tend to go to school more frequently simply more likely to attend afterschool programming because they are present during the school day or is afterschool programming motivating youth to attend school more often than otherwise would have been the case? The second interpretation may be given more weight because the PSM approach is designed to reduce selection bias, including bias related to school attendance/absences in the prior school year.
- The effect of participating in Texas ACE was larger for youth who participated in more days of Texas ACE programming than students who participated less frequently.
- For students attending Texas ACE 45–119 days, the effect of Texas ACE participation on school-day attendance was consistently larger during the 2016–17 school for youth in Grades K–8 compared

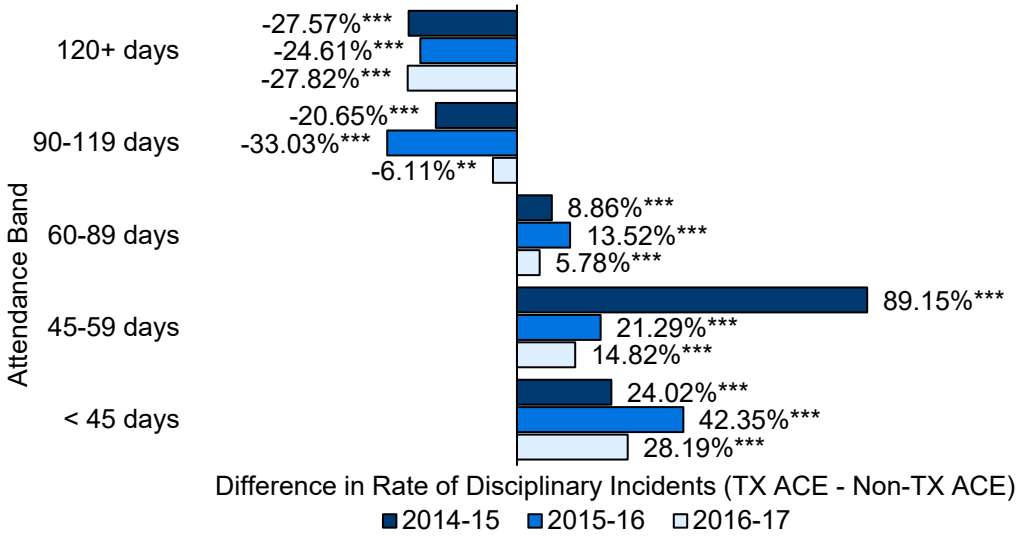
with the prior two school years, although this was not true for youth enrolled in Grades 9–12 (see Figures D5.5–5.8 in Appendix D for more detail).

- Although statistically significant, Texas ACE participation was associated with an improvement in school-day attendance of only .3 to 1.4 percentage points when considering the pooled results, and by .2 to 2.60 percentage points when examining the results by different grade-level bands (see Figures D5.5–5.8 in Appendix D for more detail). The largest differences were seen at the high school level, translating to approximately 4.68 more school days attended compared with similar youth in the comparison group (assuming a 180-day school year).

Disciplinary Incidents

The results for the impact analyses assessing Texas ACE participation on disciplinary incidents are displayed in Figure 5.4, which summarizes the pooled results for youth in Grades K–12. The results in Figure 5.4 represent the rate of disciplinary incidents between Texas ACE participants and nonparticipants as a percentage difference. A percentage of 0 represents no difference between the disciplinary incident rate of Texas ACE participants and nonparticipating youth. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate. For example, youth participating in Texas ACE programming for less than 45 days in 2016–17 had a disciplinary rate that was 28% higher than that for similar nonparticipating youth, which represents a ratio of 1.28 disciplinary incidents for the under 45-day group for every 1 incident among nonparticipating youth.

Figure 5.4: Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades K–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than non-participating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.
$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

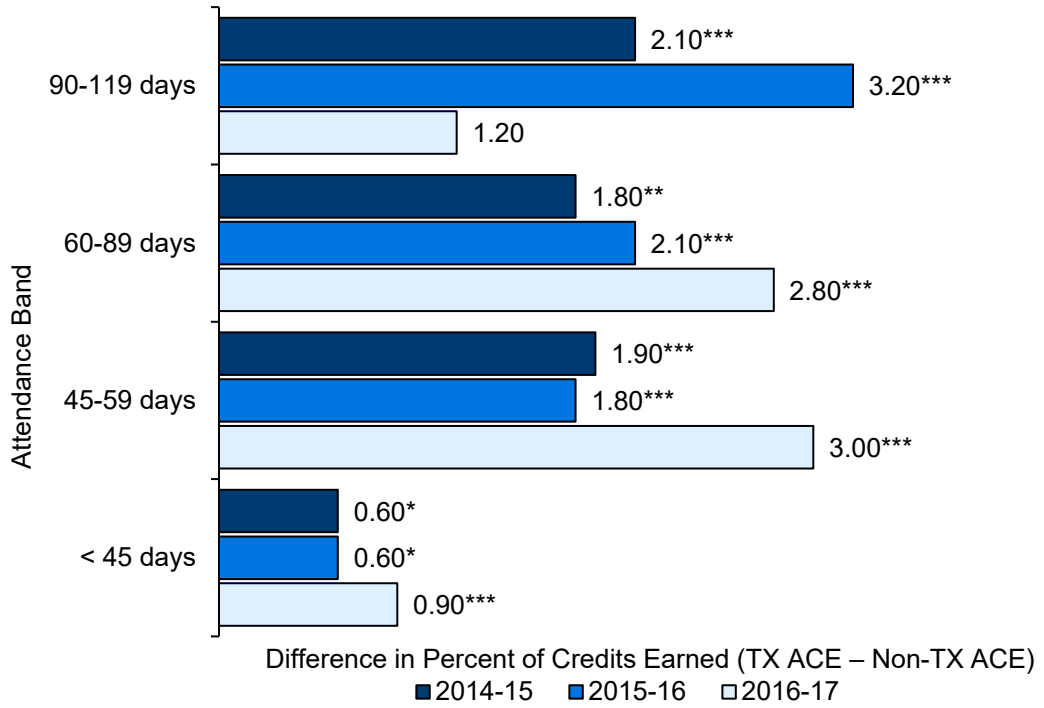
Key findings include the following:

- Almost all impact analyses related to disciplinary incidents were statistically significant. However, participation in Texas ACE at some attendance bands was associated with a higher rate of disciplinary incidents than for similar nonparticipating youth, and others were associated with a lower rate of disciplinary incidents.
- Youth participating in Texas ACE programming for less than 90 days demonstrated a statistically significant higher rate of disciplinary incidents than the comparison group. For example, during the 2014–15 school year, youth participating in Texas ACE for 45–59 days had a disciplinary rate that was 89% higher.
- Conversely, youth participating in Texas ACE for more than 90 days demonstrated a statistically significant lower rate of incidents. For example, in 2015–16, youth participating in Texas ACE programming for 90–119 days had a disciplinary incident rate that was 33% lower than for similar nonparticipating youth.
- High school youth demonstrated a slightly different trend (see Figure D5.12 in Appendix D for more detail). High school Texas ACE participants demonstrated a statistically significant higher rate of disciplinary incidents (22% to 30% higher) at the less than 45-day attendance threshold compared with nonparticipating youth. However, high school Texas ACE participants demonstrated a statistically significant lower rate of disciplinary incidents (21% to 33%) than nonparticipating youth at 90–119 days of attendance.
- Overall, the results indicate that participation in Texas ACE for more than 90 days is associated with fewer disciplinary incidents compared with similar youth who did not participate in programming. This attendance threshold is higher than was demonstrated in previous evaluations, where positive effects were evident in youth attending for 30 days or more.

CTE Credits Earned

The results for the impact analyses assessing Texas ACE participants who earned credit for completing CTE credits in high school are presented in Figure 5.5, which shows the percentage of CTE credits earned based on total CTE credits attempted, pooled across Grades 9–12, for youth who participated in Texas ACE compared with youth who did not participate. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participation was associated with a higher percentage of CTE credits earned compared with similar nonparticipating youth.

Figure 5.5: CTE Credits Earned: Difference in the Percentage of Credits Earned Between Texas ACE and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades 9–12.



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of CTE credits earned between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. CTE credits earned data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participation was associated with a higher percentage of CTE credits earned compared with similar non-participating youth.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

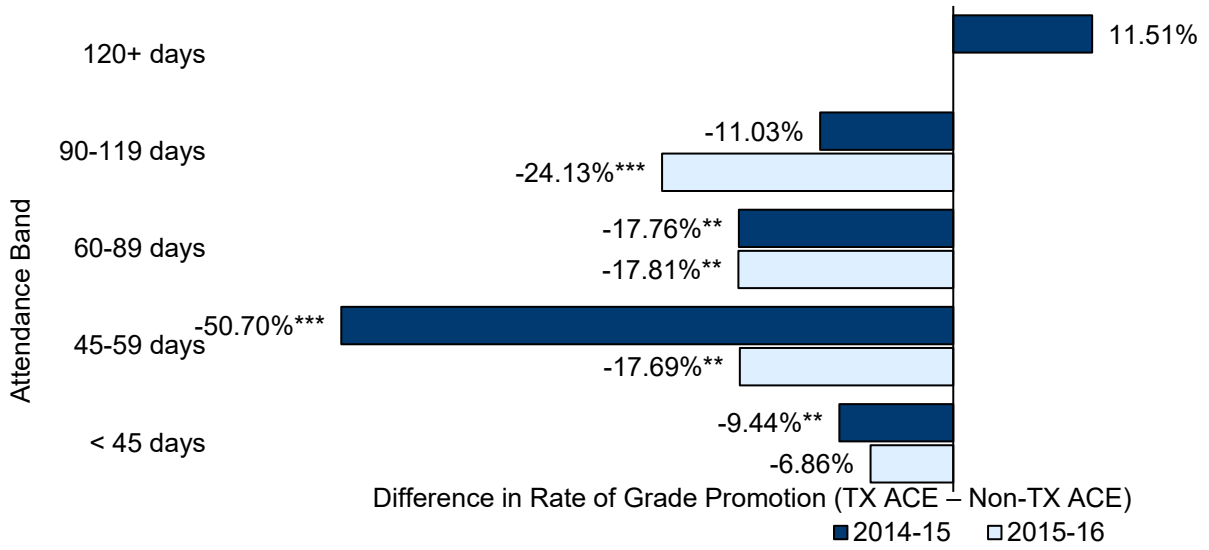
Key findings include the following:

- Across all years and attendance bands, participation in Texas ACE was associated with a higher percentage of CTE credits earned compared with credits earned by nonparticipating youth. This result was particularly evident for Texas ACE participants attending programming in the 2016–17 school year between 45 and 89 days and for 90 days or more in 2015–16, where the difference in the credits earned ranged from 2.80 to 3.20 percentage points in favor of Texas ACE participants.
- Overall, the biggest difference in effects across the Texas ACE attendance bands examined was between those youth attending less than 45 days and those attending more than 45 days.

Grade-Level Promotion

The results of the impact analyses examining differences in grade-level promotion rates between youth who participated in Texas ACE compared with those who did not are presented in Figures 5.6 and 5.7.

Figure 5.6: Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades K–12

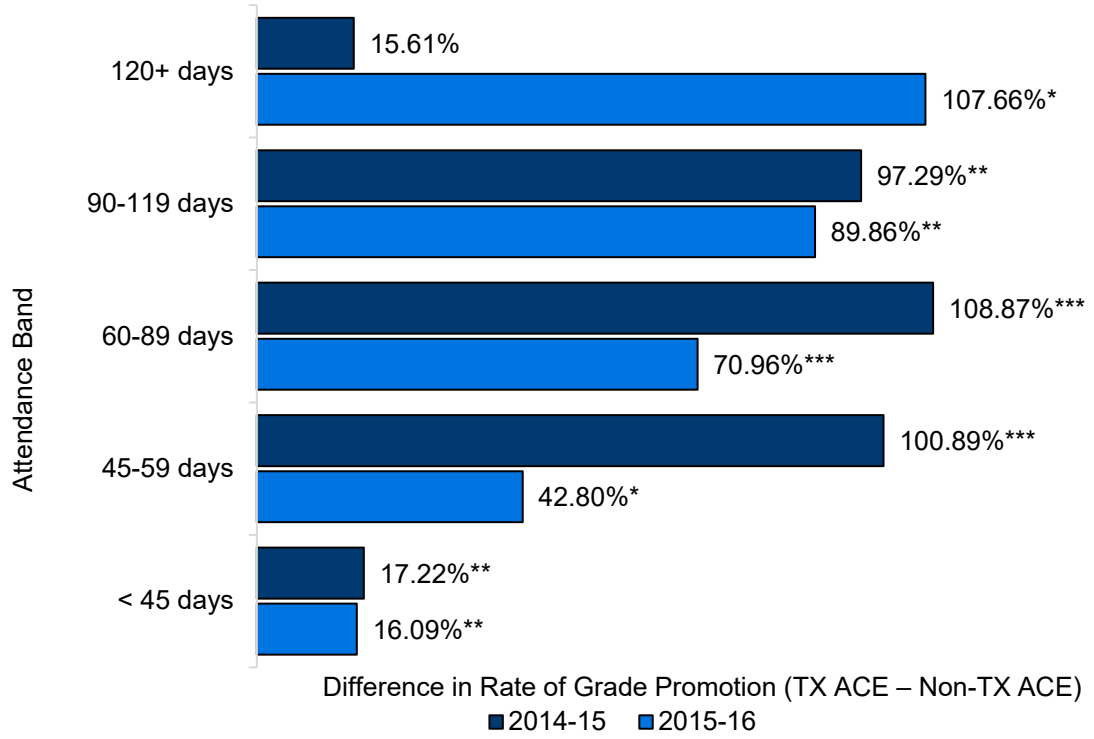


Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2015–16.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. Pooled results were not available for students attending 120 days or more in 2015–16 given a failure for the models to converge. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Results are not presented for the 2016–17 school year because subsequent-year data (i.e., from the 2017–18 school year) were not available at the time the report was created. The results of the grade-level promotion analyses differed considerably for students in elementary and middle schools compared with high schools.

Figure 5.6 presents the overall results across Grades K–12; Figure 5.7 presents results for Grades 9–12. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted to the next grade level at a higher rate than for nonparticipating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.

Figure 5.7: Grade-Level Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants—Grades 9–12



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2015–16.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade promotion and student-level characteristics. The results are based on models run using logistic regression. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Key findings include the following:

- When all the grade-level results were pooled together (Figure 5.6), participation in Texas ACE was related to a lower rate of grade-level promotion compared with similar youth not participating in Texas ACE. This result was particularly the case for youth attending between 45 and 89 days, where results supporting this finding were significant for both the 2014–15 and 2015–16 school years. Overall, youth participating in Texas ACE had anywhere from a 9% to 51% lower chance of being promoted to the next grade level.
- At the high school level (Figure 5.7), participation in Texas ACE programming supported a higher rate of grade-level promotion compared with similar youth not participating in Texas ACE. Differences in grade-level promotion ranged from a 16% to 109% greater likelihood of being promoted to the next grade level. The biggest distinction across Texas ACE attendance bands was seen between youth attending less than 45 days, where the increased likelihood ranged from 16% to 17%, to 45 days or more, where the increased likelihood ranged from 43% to 109%.

- The results for high school youth attending Texas ACE are consistent with findings from previous evaluations of the Texas ACE program (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). However, the pooled Grades K–12 results show a negative association between Texas ACE participation and grade-level promotion that was not found during the previous evaluation cycle.

Two Years of Texas ACE Participation Impact Analyses

Analyses were conducted to explore the effects of Texas ACE on school-related outcomes for youth who participated in Texas ACE programming for 60 days or more per year across two consecutive years (2014–15 and 2015–16; 2015–16 and 2016–17). These analyses were done based on the hypothesis that youth would benefit more from Texas ACE participation the longer they participated in the program.

The results for academic outcomes are shown in Table 5.1. The second column in the table summarizes the range of effects estimated for each outcome based on a single year of participation highlighted in the previous section of the report.

Table 5.1: Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More Compared With the Range of Annual Program Effects: Outcomes Related to Academic Performance

Outcomes	Range of significant annual effects[a]	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
		School years	Effect	Standard error	*P*-value
STAAR Mathematics	-19.88 to 4.17 scale score points	2014–15 & 2015–16	-8.55 points	0.011	< .001
		2015–16 & 2016–17	-0.37 points	0.013	> .10
STAAR Reading	-24.3 to -4.29 scale score points	2014–15 & 2015–16	-16.46 points	0.011	< .001
		2015–16 & 2016–17	-9.27 points	0.013	< .001
Career and technical education credits earned	0.6 to 3.2 percentage points	2014–15 & 2015–16	1.2 percentage points	0.008	< .01
		2015–16 & 2016–17	1.6 percentage points	0.008	< .01
Grade-level promotion	-50.71% to -9.44%	2014–15 & 2015–16	+59.82%	0.001	< .001

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores and Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
[a]Annual effects summarized in this column were presented in more detail in Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.5–5.7.

Key findings detailed in Table 5.1 include the following:

- The results of the impact analyses based on a single year of participation compared with 2 years of participation for STAAR Mathematics, STAAR Reading, and CTE credits earned were similar. Effects pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics were negative, although for mathematics, the effect for youth participating for 60 days or more in 2015–16 and 2016–17 was not statistically significant. The relationship between Texas ACE participation and CTE credits earned was still positive, with the difference in the percentage of credits earned estimated at 1.2 to 1.6 percentage points higher for Texas ACE participants, which is within the overall range of the significant effects on CTE credits earned after a single year of participation in the program.
- Considerable difference was found in the results of the impact analyses examining grade-level promotion based on 1 and 2 years of Texas ACE participation. The impact analyses based on a single year of Texas ACE participation showed a negative effect of Texas ACE participation on grade promotion when all grade levels were considered. However, the impact analyses based on 2 years of consecutive participation in Texas ACE at 60 days or more indicated that youth who participated in Texas ACE for 2 years had an almost 60% greater chance of being promoted to the next grade level than youth who did not participate.

The results of the impact analyses examining the effect of 2 years of participation in Texas ACE on youth behaviors are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Effect of 2 Years of Participation in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) for 60 Days or More Compared with the Range of Annual Program Effects: Outcomes Related to Youth Behaviors

School-related outcomes	Range of significant annual effects[a]	Results for 2 years of consecutive Texas ACE participation			
		School years	Effect	Standard error	*P*-value
School-day attendance	0.03 to 1.40 percentage points	2014–15 & 2015–16	1.20 percentage points	0.002	< .001
		2015–16 & 2016–17	1.10 percentage points	0.002	< .001
Disciplinary incidents	-33% to +89.1%	2014–15 & 2015–16	-35.45%	0.000	< .001
		2015–16 & 2016–17	-8.42%	0.023	< .001

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
[a]Annual effects summarized in this column were presented in more detail in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

Key findings detailed in Table 5.2 include the following:

- The effect of two consecutive years of participating in Texas ACE programming for 60 days or more on school-day attendance was significant but not substantively different from the annual impact of Texas ACE participation on this outcome. Texas ACE participation across two school years impacted the rate of school-day attendance by 1.20 percentage points, which is slightly more than two additional days of attendance in the second school year examined for the 2-year period in question.
- Results of the analyses examining the impact of 2 years of participation in Texas ACE on disciplinary incidents differed from those examining the impact of a single year of participation. Annual effects showed that youth participating for less than 90 days had a higher level of disciplinary incidents compared with nonparticipating youth, whereas those participating more than 90 days demonstrated fewer incidents. However, 2 years of program participation were consistently associated with fewer disciplinary incidents. This result was especially true for youth participating in programming for 60 days or more in 2014–15 and 2015–16, where the disciplinary rate was 35% lower for Texas ACE participants compared with nonparticipating youth. For each incident in the comparison group, Texas ACE participants experienced a rate of 0.65.

Center Characteristics and Center-Level Effects on Youth Outcomes

One hallmark of the Texas ACE program is the diversity in how individual centers design and deliver programming. As described in Chapters 2 and 3, centers vary in terms of how they define their target population, the types of activities they provide, how they approach staffing, and when they offer programming. This section outlines how different types of center characteristics may be related to the types of impacts that programs can have on participating youth. One goal in conducting these analyses was to potentially identify attributes or characteristics of Texas ACE implementation that may be more likely associated with positive youth outcomes. There was particular interest in identifying actionable characteristics because centers could alter operations to adopt approaches to program design and delivery that may better support the achievement of desired youth outcomes.

To support these analyses, the evaluation team took steps to (a) calculate center-level effect estimates using a PSM process and (b) explore how different center-level characteristics were related to these center-level effect estimates.

Two types of data measuring center characteristics were used in these analyses. The first set was center characteristics derived from Tx21st data. These characteristics relate to things such as activities offered, staffing, and other operational characteristics. The second set of center characteristics was derived from site visit data obtained from the 20 centers selected for on-site data collection in spring 2017. These characteristics pertain more to the internal procedures and processes that centers rely on to design and deliver programming. The following subsections describe the results of the analyses examining how center-level characteristics were related to youth outcomes.

Select Center Characteristics

Variables summarizing a set of center characteristics largely reported in the Tx21st data were examined in relation to center-level impact on youth in terms of school-related outcomes. These characteristics fell in the following set of more general categories:

- Center location and status as a first-time grantee[28]
- The staffing model employed by the center
- The grade levels of youth served by the center
- The at-risk status of youth served by the center
- The types activities provided by the center
- The subject areas addressed in center activities
- Center performance on a series of program attendance-related metrics

PSM was used to match Texas ACE program participants with similar nonparticipants at the center-level. That is, for each center, students were matched to nonattending students who were enrolled in the school or schools that were affiliated with the center. Although similar conceptually to the analyses summarized earlier in this chapter, this set of analyses conducted the matching process for each center individually versus statewide. Youth attending programming for 60 days or more were matched with similar youth attending the same schools but did not participate in programming. This resulted in each center having a specific effect estimate of how Texas ACE participation impacted school-related outcomes.

These center-level effect estimates served as the outcome variables in a series of multiple regression models run to explore how the center characteristics were related to the center-level effects examined. Specific outcomes examined were center-level effect sizes for STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores, school-day attendance, disciplinary incidents, and CTE credits earned—the first step in a two-phase process. The goal of the first phase was to identify those characteristics that were significantly related to center-level effect sizes based on whether they were a significant predictor of the center-level effect sizes examined. Characteristics that were significantly related to center-level effects were then tested individually to assess the impact of that characteristic on youth outcomes (Phase 2). Additional information about how these analyses were conducted is in Appendix E.

Phase 1: Regression Analyses Exploring the Relationship Between Center Characteristics and Center-Level Effects Sizes. Based on the regression results (Phase 1), AIR selected five center-level characteristics that showed some significant relationship with student outcomes across more than 1 year, were malleable or policy relevant in the sense that the characteristic could be potentially adopted by all

[28] Data on the status of a grantee as a first-time awardee was predicated on data supplied by the technical assistance contractor for Texas ACE and were not derived from the Tx21st data.

centers (or avoided if a negative relationship was predicted), and demonstrated effects consistent with what might be hypothesized for the characteristic in question. These results by the five center-level characteristics are described in the following bulleted text. For specific results by analysis, see Tables E5.1–5.5 in Appendix E.

- ***Served a Higher Need Population Than Affiliated School(s).*** These centers were characterized by students attending Texas ACE programming who were classified as economically disadvantaged, ELLs, identified for special education services, and/or were identified as being academically at risk at a higher percentage than the overall school population where these youth were enrolled. In this sense, these centers were serving populations that could be seen to be at greater risk academically than the general student population associated with the school(s) in question. In centers where this was the case, center-level impact estimates pertaining to STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics were significantly smaller than in centers where the Texas ACE and school populations were more similar on this set of characteristics.
- ***Staffed With School-Day Teacher(s).*** Centers where 50% or more of the staff were school-day teachers had a greater association with fewer disciplinary incidents during the school day relative to centers employing a different staffing model.
- ***Staffed With College Students/Paraprofessional(s).*** Centers where 50% or more of the staff were mostly college students or paraprofessionals had less of an association with fewer disciplinary incident referrals relative to centers employing a different staffing model.
- ***High Summertime Programming Hours.*** Centers that offered approximately 150 hours or more of programming during the summer had more of an association with positive effects on STAAR Mathematics assessment scores and had a greater association with fewer disciplinary incident referrals than centers offering fewer than 150 hours of summer programming.
- ***High Average Attendance in Texas ACE Programming.*** Centers where average student attendance in Texas ACE programming was at a higher level had more of an association with positive STAAR Reading impact estimates. It is important to note that the definition of high average attendance varied by grade level, and unlike other analyses highlighted in this section, was based on the hours of attendance versus the number of days. High elementary program attendance was defined as 280 hours or more; high middle school attendance was defined as 128 hours or more; and high attendance for high school youth was defined as 75 hours or more.

Phase 2: Exploring the Impact of a Characteristic Being Present Compared With Its Absence. In Phase 2 of the analysis, steps were taken to examine how the presence of these center characteristics impacted participating youth on school-related outcomes. More specifically, the following question needed to be answered: *What impact do these five center characteristics have on Texas ACE program participants relative to similar Texas ACE program participants enrolled in centers lacking that characteristic?* Although the previous set of regression analyses explored how these characteristics were related to center-level effect sizes based on comparing Texas ACE participants with nonparticipants, this set of analyses explored how youth participating in Texas ACE did on the school-related outcomes being examined when youth were enrolled in a center having one of these five characteristics present compared with youth participating in Texas ACE in centers where this was not the case. These analyses resulted in the following set of key findings (for specific results by analysis, see Tables E5.6–5.15 in Appendix E):

- Centers that served a higher need population than the overall student population of the feeder school(s) had more of an association with lower STAAR Reading scores than centers with a Texas ACE population that was more similar to the overall school population(s). This difference was

statistically significant and represented approximately seven scale score points on STAAR Reading, which translates to a standardized effect of -0.047 standard deviation. In this sense, centers had less of a negative relationship with reading assessment results when youth were enrolled in centers where youth attending Texas ACE were more representative of the broader school population versus the center population being overly represented by youth at risk. It is not clear what may be driving this finding. It may be the case that issues of selection bias are influencing this finding; as previously mentioned, other differences not captured by the data could potentially have had an effect in the model. It also could be that programs characterized by more youth at risk are perceived differently or operate differently than Texas ACE programs serving a more diverse array of students, which is leading to the observed result. For example, it may be the case that programs that predominantly serve students who are particularly at risk relative to the overall school population have the potential to result in participating students potentially feeling stigmatized for being targeted for participation in programming, which may serve to work against achieving some of the goals specified for programming. In any case, more study is needed here to explore what may be leading to this result. STAAR Mathematics scores were not found to be different between the two types of centers.

- In addition, STAAR Reading scores were higher for youth attending centers with high average attendance. This difference was statistically significant and represented approximately four scale score points on STAAR Reading, which translates to a standardized effect of 0.028 standard deviation.
- School-day attendance rates were lower for youth attending centers that had high average attendance in Texas ACE programming than for youth not attending these centers. The difference was statistically significant but represented a difference of approximately 0.2% (or approximately one third of 1 day in a 180-day school year). In this sense, although statistically significant, this finding has little practical significance.
- Similarly, school-year attendance rates were lower, on average, for youth attending centers with high summer programming hours than for youth not attending these centers. The difference was statistically significant but represented a difference of approximately 0.3% (or approximately half of 1 day of a 180-day school year). In this sense, although statistically significant, this finding has little practical significance.

Center Characteristics Derived From Site Visit Data

Center characteristics derived from site visit data largely pertain to policies, procedures, and practices related to the design and delivery of programming as well as estimates of program quality based on the site visit observations. The presence or absence of certain center characteristics was explored in relation to the center-level effect estimates created for each center using PSM, as described previously. Center characteristics were selected based on practices hypothesized to be associated with more effective programming, such as providing opportunities for youth input, using tools such as the YPQA to guide program design and delivery, and demonstrating a higher level of observed quality. In addition, some characteristics were chosen based on a connection to the Phase 1 and Phase 2 analyses described in the preceding text, such as reports of targeting students who are at risk specifically for inclusion in Texas ACE. It is important to note that efforts to assess how center-level effect sizes may vary by characteristics formulated from site visit data should be considered very exploratory given the small number of centers involved (20 of the 460 centers active in 2016–17). Key findings included the following (additional details on these findings can be found in Tables E5.16–5.19 in Appendix E):

- Centers that reported specifically targeting youth who are at risk for enrollment in Texas ACE had a lower mean effect for both STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores compared with centers

that indicated serving all youth from targeted schools who wanted to participate in programming. For reading, centers that targeted youth at risk had, on average, lower scores (-18 scale score points; *n* = 13 centers), whereas centers that were more expansive in how they approached recruitment had, on average, higher scores (10 scale score points on average; *n* = 6 centers). For mathematics, the results were again lower for centers that targeted students who were at risk (-7 scale score points) and higher for centers that included a wider range of students (23 scale score points).

- Centers that reported taking steps to obtain youth input on the programming provided at the center (*n* = 16 centers) demonstrated higher mean effects on STAAR Mathematics scores (an average of 6.53 scale score points) than centers that did not (*n* = 3; an average effect of -16.16 scale score points). Providing opportunities for youth voice and choice has been shown to support youth engagement in programming (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).
- Centers that reported using an externally developed tool such as the YPQA (Smith et al, 2012) to guide the design and delivery of programming (*n* = 5 centers) demonstrated more of an association with fewer disciplinary incident referrals (an average effect of -.12) compared with centers (*n* = 15) that did not explicitly reference using such tools (an average effect of -0.03). Tools such as the YPQA are commonly used to help staff understand what types of support and opportunities they can build into how they design and deliver activities to promote a more developmentally appropriate learning environment for participating youth.
- Centers receiving a higher quality score based on observation conducted by the evaluation team (*n* = 9 centers) using the PQA demonstrated higher mean effects on STAAR Mathematics scores (an average of 8.37 assessment points) than centers that did not (*n* = 10; an average effect of -1.93 assessment points).

These results should be considered very exploratory given the number of centers involved in the site visit data collection efforts. Additional steps will be taken in future years of the evaluation to explore how these characteristics may be related to youth outcomes.

Summary

Texas ACE programs are funded to support the academic development of participating youth and promote behaviors that will contribute to school-day success. The programs also hypothesized that the more youth participate in programming as measured by days of attendance, the more likely they will be to benefit from their participation in the programming. This hypothesis was tested in a series of impact analyses conducted to assess how youth participation in Texas ACE programming at different levels was related to youth improvement on a series of school-related outcomes. Results from these analyses were generally mixed.

Results from the impact analyses conducted for Texas ACE programming delivered during the 2014–15 to 2016–17 school years indicated that Texas ACE did not have a positive impact on STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores for youth attending programming in Grades 4–8. This result is a deviation from prior Texas ACE evaluations, which demonstrated the program having a small, positive impact on mathematics assessments when youth attended programming for 60 days or more (Devaney et al., 2016; Naftzger et al., 2013). For the present evaluation, a positive effect on STAAR Mathematics scores was found only when youth in Grades 4–8 participated in 120 days or more of programming during the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years.

Texas ACE programming also had a statistically significant negative association with STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores across several of the attendance bands examined. What is curious

about these results, however, is that as youth attended more programming, these negative effects tended to grow smaller. For STAAR Mathematics, participation in Texas ACE had a small, positive impact at the highest tier of program attendance examined. In addition, STAAR Reading scores were higher, on average, for youth attending centers that had high average program attendance. Together, these findings seem to indicate that participation in Texas ACE programming is associated with a negative relationship with STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics assessment scores at some levels of attendance, but these negative effects are reduced to an immeasurable level, at least for mathematics, as youth have higher program attendance. These results are somewhat contradictory. It may be the case that some important yet unobservable differences exist between Texas ACE participants and nonparticipants that are serving to bias the results from the impact analyses related specifically to achievement that are not being controlled for through the matching process. It may be worthwhile in the future to conduct impact analyses that compare high-attending Texas ACE participants with those who attend the program at a lower level given an assumption that high and low Texas ACE attending youth may be more similar on potentially key unobservable characteristics than students not participating in the program.

In addition, some evidence suggests that centers that targeted youth more at risk academically were more apt to have a negative relationship with assessment scores. Here again, it may be possible that some unobservable characteristics that distinguish program participants from nonparticipants are not being captured in the matching and impact models that are serving to bias results, which particularly is an issue when programs are serving more youth at risk in their program. In addition, it also would be useful to use future site visit work to further explore how recruitment, staffing, and activity provision may look different in programs that are characterized by a higher percentage of youth at risk compared with centers that more closely mirror the student population of the schools they serve.

Promotion to the next grade also was negatively impacted by Texas ACE participation when the results were examined across specific attendance bands. An exception was found for high school youth, where Texas ACE had a significant positive impact on grade-level promotion. These negative effects went away, however, when attendance bands were collapsed, and impacts were considered when youth attended programming for 60 days or more across two consecutive years. This may be a case where movement to conducting impact analyses using more narrowly defined attendance bands served to result in more inconsistent findings that masked the broader manner in which Texas ACE participation impacted this outcome. It would be worthwhile to determine if some attendance bands should be collapsed into more general categories when conducting future impact analyses.

The results for school-day attendance and disciplinary incidents indicated that youth demonstrated higher levels of school-day attendance and fewer disciplinary incidents the more they attended Texas ACE programming. Generally, similar results were found in relation to program attendance and students earning CTE credits, with greater attendance mostly associated with a higher percentage of credits earned.

The methods employed to conduct these impact analyses were chosen to address issues of selection bias between youth participating in Texas ACE programming and nonparticipating youth included in each analysis. There always is the possibility that other factors are influencing the results.

Finally, there were some very exploratory findings that centers that used an external QA tool to inform the design and delivery of programming and scored higher on the PQA when programming was observed during site visits conducted by the evaluation team performed better on some of the youth outcomes under consideration. Although these findings are based on very small sample sizes, AIR advises that the use of these tools and program quality continue to be explored in the future in terms of how these center characteristics may be related to youth outcomes.

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Chapter 6. Local Evaluation Summary

Objective 6

This objective was guided by a set of principles related to local evaluation activities that involved a focus on collaborative processes; intentional program design; the assessment of program implementation; use of outcome measures that are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope; and the development of staff capacity to collect and use local evaluation data.

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

Local Program Evaluation Concept

There are many important reasons for conducting rigorous local program evaluations. As outlined in the 21st CCLC RFAs, all 21st CCLC grantees are required to work with an independent program evaluator to complete a local program evaluation of 21st CCLC implementation at the center level. As part of this process, TEA requires that grantees submit logic models for each center in the fall and an executive summary of program evaluation results in the summer, in addition to posting full evaluation reports online. The goals are to support continuous program improvement and sustainability of local Texas ACE programs beyond the grant period.[29] When done well, program evaluation can offer the ability to collect valuable, actionable data to drive ongoing program development. This evaluation increases the likelihood that centers will achieve the Texas ACE goals, including the desired student-level outcomes. Moreover, program evaluation can be critical for sustainability, giving districts a meaningful way to communicate with local stakeholders and tell their center's story. Sharing program evaluation results can improve opportunities for partners and resources, as well as support outreach and recruitment efforts.

TEA asserted its belief in the importance of local program evaluation when it began development of the Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide with input from grantees and their local program evaluators. The guide was intended to help all 21st CCLC grantees understand the importance of local program evaluation and the role it plays in continuous program improvement.[30] In addition, by promoting common approaches across multiple grantees and centers, TEA is better positioned to work toward developing common program-specific measures that state systems can generate for local programs, In the past, state-level efforts supported local evaluation efforts and were geared solely toward developing local capacity for local evaluation (TEA, 2017). Feedback and field experience informed TEA that resources were underused, and centers were struggling to make improvements in how local evaluation was conducted and applied. For this reason, TEA sought further refinement of local evaluation guidance to increase the tools available to local programs for practical application of evaluation findings across Texas ACEs.

[29] See the Texas ACE Cycle 9 RFA (TEA, 2016) and Texas ACE Cycle 10 RFA (TEA, 2018).
[30] Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, Cycle 9.

In 2017, AIR and the Diehl Consulting Group began work to reimagine the local evaluation support that TEA provides for Texas ACEs, with the goal of producing a new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide. The new Local Evaluation Guide and accompanying Local Evaluation Toolkit, which replaced the original Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, walks centers step-by-step through how to plan and conduct an evaluation, while also providing a toolkit of templates, tools, and measures to support implementation of the new guide. To aid the development process, the statewide evaluation team engaged a Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG) consisting of key Texas ACE stakeholders that served as a focus group and stakeholder input group for the development of the guide and the creation of the toolkit. In addition, the initiative convened 19 grantees represented in the LESI to work directly with AIR in applying the newly developed tools and share feedback that was used for further refinement of the tools and planning for future statewide requirements related to local program evaluation. This chapter provides an overview of the guide and toolkit components, the resulting outcomes, and recommendations for next steps for local evaluation in centers. The guide and toolkit are in Appendix I.

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

Includes a Collaborative Process. Evaluation should be a collaborative process between grant management, center-level staff, program stakeholders, and local independent evaluators. Although independent evaluators bring expertise in evaluation design and implementation, grant- and center-level staff provide the contextual understanding of implementation, which is essential for making meaningful connections between program processes and outcomes. Further, collaborative processes build ownership and can result in a higher quality product.

Seeks Intentional Program Design Guided by a Logic Model. Programs grounded in a sound theory of change and illustrated by a logic model facilitate shared understanding of intentional connections between needs, core program components, outputs, and outcomes.

Assesses Implementation. To guide improvement efforts and help explain positive or negative outcomes, ongoing assessment of implementation practice should be conducted. This includes measuring core aspects of fidelity (e.g., adherence to program design, exposure/dosage, quality of program delivery, and participant engagement).

Uses Locally Informed and Accessible Outcome Measures. Assessing outcomes related to program activities allows centers to understand progress toward selected performance indicators. This ensures that the program is achieving its intended purpose, while identifying promising aspects of the program to sustain and areas to improve or adjust. As such, outcome measures are most effective for this purpose when they are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope. This includes developing local targets based on available measures and using local data to examine other areas of particular importance to centers.

Ensures That Centers Have the Capacity to Develop and Implement Evaluations. This capacity is achieved when centers possess the knowledge and understanding to fully participate in evaluation planning and implementation and have access to resources and tools that support evaluation capacity.

Overall Plan

To produce a new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide based on these key principles and an accompanying evaluation toolkit, the statewide evaluation team underwent a participatory multiyear, three-phase process. The timeline for Years 1 and 2 is shown in Table I1 in Appendix I.

- **Phase 1** was the development of core evaluation approaches that were tested through the LESI during the 2017–18 school year with 19 volunteer centers.
- **Phase 2** was the development of the Local Evaluation Guide with feedback from the LEAG. This includes rollout of the new guide and toolkit for grantees.
- **Phase 3** includes further refinement of the Local Evaluation Guide and finalization of the Local Evaluation Toolkit, with support from the LEAG and repeating of the LESI.

Local Evaluation Advisory Group

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

To organize the Texas ACE LEAG, TEA provided a recommended list of stakeholders, and invitations to participate in the group were sent to potential participants. The statewide evaluation team hosted an informational webinar to discuss the roles, responsibilities, and purposes of the group. Ultimately, 19 people agreed to participate in the LEAG in its first year, composed of diverse stakeholders that support Texas ACE implementation, including project directors, independent evaluators, and internal district evaluators and representing Cycles 8 and 9. A list of stakeholders and their roles in the LEAG is presented in Table I2 in Appendix I.

The LEAG gathered four times in the 2017–18 school year: September 2017, November 2017, March 2018, and May 2018. The meeting agendas are in Appendix I. The average attendance rate was 75% across the four sessions. LEAG members played an active role in participatory working meetings, providing substantive feedback and recommendations. In addition, LEAG participants had the opportunity to submit written input outside meetings through access to the electronic draft materials. Future LEAG meetings will continue to be conducted to support the ongoing refinement of the materials and processes for local evaluation.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative

LESI was conceptualized as an opportunity to test out new local evaluation approaches that could support further development before rollout to grantees statewide. Toward the goal of ultimately creating a new statewide Local Evaluation Guide, this sequenced approach helped alleviate potential confusion if two sets of evaluation guidelines were in place across centers within the same grant. The project was exploratory, with only a small sample of centers (a maximum of 32 centers) having the capacity to volunteer to participate in the process and meet all expectations.

All Cycle 9 centers were invited to participate, and the statewide evaluation team held an informational recruitment webinar to explain the process and commitment. Originally, 12 grantees and 20 centers agreed to participate; ultimately, 11 grantees and 19 centers completed the entire process. The list of the participating centers is in Table I3 in Appendix I.

LESI Process

The LESI process included three core approaches to conducting local evaluation. These approaches are described fully in the LESI manual in Appendix I, including detailed breakdown of the approach, benefits, and how to communicate and use the results. The three approaches include implementing a QA process, using key performance indicators (KPIs), and deriving local evaluation questions.

Implementing a QA Process. Research has shown that a focus on creating a high-quality program increases youth engagement and participation, which then increases the likelihood of youth improving on the desired outcomes, such as academic or social and emotional skills (Naftzger et al., 2013). The use of PQA tools is fairly common in afterschool programs, but the quality criteria and youth development best practices included in the available measures are diverse. What is universal is the importance of focusing on the process of quality improvement, not specific quality scores. By creating a low-stakes environment, staff are encouraged to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses, which makes the assessment a more accurate representation of the center's current state. Such a process makes the data more meaningful and more likely to lead to program improvement through reflection and action planning.

To engage in a PQA process, two types of assessments provide centers with important information about programming for youth and families:

- *Point-of-service* (observation-based) assessment tools allow the quality of afterschool program delivery to be examined.
- *Organizational* assessment tools allow centers to examine structural components of programs (e.g., policies/procedures) that are useful in informing how programs operate.

Centers explored program quality measures to determine the best local fit. This process included choosing a measure already being used by the center or selecting a measure based on recommendations informed by afterschool best practice. Although no specific assessment was endorsed as part of this process, a set of criteria and decision guide were developed to help centers select an assessment that aligns with center-specific needs. Although centers had flexibility in choosing the measure, they were all expected to complete a standardized action plan based on results of the PQA to inform program improvement efforts. The QA decision guide and action plan template are provided in Appendix I.

Using Key Performance Indicators. Each year, Texas ACE grantees report information via the Tx21st regarding implementation of their program. To help centers further leverage these data in monitoring the participation and progress of attendees, the statewide evaluation team worked to develop a set of KPIs in partnership with TEA and the LEAG. The KPIs bring together data from several sources within Texas and were disseminated for participating centers in a customized report that described the characteristics of Texas ACE–funded programs and their participants. The purpose of these reports was to provide centers with information to help in assessing how well the goals of program implementation are being met and the extent to which participants are progressing on the desired outcomes. During the 2017–18 school year, a KPI report was prepared for centers by the statewide evaluation team and provided electronically in July 2018.

Deriving Local Evaluation Questions. Collaboratively reviewing prior evaluation results and deriving evaluation questions for further study allows for a deeper dive into how to solve issues of particular importance to a center. Based on a review of prior year data, centers generated at least two specific evaluation questions (with a plan to collect data to address the questions) to explore center-specific topics and challenges. Through this process, questions most meaningful to all center staff were explored, helping center staff engage more fully in the evaluation process and increase the overall likelihood of the findings being used to drive program improvement and sustainability. The local evaluation plan template is in Appendix I.

To support participating centers in learning these core approaches, a webinar training series on each approach was provided (see Appendix I), as well as regular reminders and check-ins from the statewide evaluation team to assist them throughout the process. In addition, each center was designated one member of the statewide evaluation team for individual coaching and feedback. This included feedback on local evaluation plans, action plans, review of final reports, and any additional support desired by centers.

LESI Expectations

Although participation in LESI was voluntary and no elements were required, the participants had clear expectations. The process kicked off midyear, with trainings beginning in December. The state evaluation team recognized center challenges in doing this initiative, especially given its timing and other evaluation activities already underway. The team, therefore, worked with centers to support their needs and help them adapt the process to make it as useful as possible to them. Centers were encouraged to continue with any prior evaluation activities they deemed valuable, while also integrating or strengthening their evaluation activities by using the new evaluation approaches in the initiative. Additional articulated expectations included the following:

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

Overall, LESI engagement was high for the 11 grantees, with a 95% completion rate of expected assignments.

More information about the LESI process and the three core approaches can be found in the LESI manual in Appendix I or the accompanying LESI tools in Appendix I. The LESI manual was an initial attempt to outline evaluation approaches that drove improvement and heavily informed the new Local Evaluation Guide in Appendix I.

Local Evaluation Guide Development

With the information gathered from the LEAG and the LESI, the statewide evaluation team set about creating a new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide to replace the Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide. Initial feedback from the LEAG on what was useful in the existing guide helped generate an outline and discussion areas for TEA and LEAG input to draft the full guide. Draft versions were reviewed by both TEA and the LEAG, modified to address suggestions, and ultimately finalized in June 2018. The draft guide was presented at the Out-of-School Time Initiatives Conference (OSTI-CON) in June 2018, along with an overview of the LESI process and perspectives shared from participating centers. Early anecdotal feedback from centers was positive, with some noting that this seems to be the right direction for the local evaluation. Full rollout occurred in August 2018 at the launch of the 2018–19 school year.

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

A supplemental Local Evaluation Toolkit with resources and templates to help centers implement the evaluation was released in August 2018. Feedback will be gathered during the next evaluation year on the utility of this toolkit and changes made before the materials are finalized. The toolkit is provided in Appendix I.

Insights and Lessons Learned

The entire process this year was meant to support the development and testing of new materials. Collaboration with participants and gathering their feedback was a critical component throughout the process.

Reflections From LESI Participants

Perspectives and feedback were gathered both formally and informally from LESI participants. In addition to the training webinars, the statewide evaluation team provided two technical support webinars to help troubleshoot and gather information on how the process was going. In addition, a formal reflection survey was sent to LESI participants midway through the process. There were 18 respondents, representing all 11 grantees in the LESI process. When asked about successes in doing QA and local evaluation questions in the first survey, respondents articulated many benefits to the LESI process, a few of which are captured in sample of quotes from survey respondents in the sidebars on the next two pages.

One of the primary successes of LESI was the diverse stakeholder participation and teamwork that it encouraged, providing space for many voices and perspectives to be heard.

In general, respondents liked that the process gave them the time and space to observe, reflect, and think about their vision for their center, allowing them to see both strengths and areas of improvement. The critical analysis that was promoted allowed them to ask tough questions, think creatively, and see Texas ACE with a new lens. Many respondents commented on the specific tools, resources, webinars, and trainings they received as being helpful for understanding quality programs and evaluation, as well as helping them feel valued. They also found the connections to other districts and a local evaluator as key supports. Overall, many respondents noted this initiative helped them understand their impact and areas that they can act to improve that impact.

LESI VALUE

"It has increased our team's understanding of local evaluation and its importance."

"It gave more people associated with the [Texas] ACE program a more thorough understanding of the actual success of the program for students. It gave them facts rather than just opinions."

"It has been valuable in that it has helped me view my own program more objectively as well as [gave] me the opportunity to grow my skills and abilities."

"I think the overall process of working on the local evaluation questions helped my site know that someone does value our thoughts and what we are trying to do for our program as a whole."

LESI PARTICIPANT CHALLENGES

"Additional coaching to make sure all informational tools are being used correctly."

"It was overwhelming at first. I don't have any changes; you just have to jump in and get started."

"Time management and admin constraints. It is difficult to get all the necessary individuals together during a very busy time of the school year."

"Training on how to properly implement the evaluation system."

"The only challenges were narrowing in on what questions should be asked since there were many that I could have looked at."

The LESI was not without its challenges, and the survey respondents were clear in providing feedback on what could benefit from adaptation in the future. The primary challenge centered on timing. Respondents stated that the timeline was too short and off schedule from the rest of the local program evaluation, and many believed a yearlong process starting in the fall or summer would work better. Many said that they needed more training, with some desiring in-person training rather than webinars and others generally wanting more regular check-ins with the state evaluation team. Others wanted more individual coaching and technical support outside trainings, with even more rounds of feedback and revisions. Some believed that instructions for using templates could have been clearer or, for example, offered categories of evaluation questions to local adaptation to help them as they learned this process. A possible takeaway of the feedback is that TEA

should continue to provide technical assistance to Texas ACE centers through training opportunities and access to expertise at the state level for local program evaluation.

Beyond the supports provided in the initiative, respondents commented on the ways that this work was challenging because it was simply difficult, unfamiliar work for them. It was overwhelming learning to self-evaluate and trying to figure out how to narrow to the right areas to create effective change, yet not be too critical and negative of the center. It also was sometimes hard for them to step back and look at the big picture, not just individual students. And as is commonly the case, many noted that it was just tough to add this work to their already busy schedules, especially when they wanted a good representation of activities to be assessed and stakeholders to be included. It was a lot of schedules to navigate and a lot to do at once. By moving toward common measures at the state level and calculating those data, some of the burden might be alleviated for centers and grantees, which would allow them to focus their efforts on exploring local measures and quality.

Finally, when LESI participants were questioned about the overall value of LESI, overwhelmingly, they said that it was a meaningful experience. They commented on the value being in how it helped them understand evaluation and think more deeply about data, as well as building staff capacity more generally by growing personal skills. For some, it gave them some needed emotional support. For others, they noted that adding self-evaluation gave them a more in-depth and objective perspective on their center. This process also influenced Texas ACE's impact, by helping them explore what they really care about for long-term goals as well as by helping them tell their story, aiding their efforts to make the case for Texas ACE with more than just personal beliefs. Many had a good perspective that this is a learning process, which takes time to do well. One respondent perhaps summed it up best, "It has been a stressful but rewarding process."

LESI PARTICIPANT SUCCESSES

"My biggest success has just been having the opportunity to think deeply about my program and how I would like to see it grow."

"This process challenged our team to think outside of the box when doing program quality assessment. We were exposed to new tools and resources and held accountable through the project."

"Everyone brought a different aspect to the table and truly voiced their thoughts. Some great teamwork happened."

"I think we were able to dig down and ask some tough questions that we may not have thought to ask without this process."

Reflections From LEAG Participants

There has not been a formal mechanism to gather feedback on the LEAG process, but LEAG discussions have always been very robust, and participants are open with their thoughts on how useful this work is and what can make it better. They have noted appreciation for the ability to help craft the local evaluation guidelines, and their critical feedback has been incorporated every step of the way. Many members have commented informally about liking the direction the local evaluation was heading in, especially about the inclusion of QA and process evaluation more generally, believing these things better support evaluation utility. They emphasized the need for expectations from TEA to be clear, and they like the optional templates that provide specifics on what is desired. Their careful eye on needs of stakeholders has helped ensure that materials are digestible for all levels of staff, providing invaluable perspective on this project. In a future session, the team also will perform a reflection activity with participants to gather feedback on the LEAG itself and help plan any process improvements than can be made to shape the next year of the LEAG.

Statewide Evaluation Team Insights

Based on experience in other systems, the statewide evaluation team found that Texas ACE participants were a highly engaged group, both in their completion of expected components (95% across all grantees) and their eager feedback. This process seemed to yield benefits in terms of their increased knowledge and understanding in evaluation. Participants seemed to be generally very interested in this process. Considering the LESI was conducted completely from a distance through webinars, there was concern about participant ability to learn these new approaches and get excited about the process. Yet, for the most part, the participants were able to get what they needed to engage with LESI. Because centers had the choice to participate in the components that they thought were most useful for them, the high completion rate across assignments shows that the initiative is on the right track for giving them approaches that are deemed useful and necessary. Where local evaluators were interested and involved, it seemed that center engagement and success in the process was higher. Local evaluators also articulated how this process has been helpful for them to get to know the centers, so it has been mutually beneficial. It also is likely, however, that the first participants in LESI were an enthusiastic set of centers eager to adopt a new process meant to facilitate program improvement, which could have contributed to the initiative's success. From the statewide evaluation perspective, it seems to have been a mostly positive experience for all involved.

There were challenges as well, but many of these were expected. From the onset of the initiative, it was known that the timeline was less than ideal to start midway through the year, especially with all the other evaluation activities that centers already do. Participant struggles with managing all the components while learning how to do the evaluation are typical for a pilot process, and participant suggestions for adjusting the supports are all reasonable for improving the process. It also was difficult for the statewide evaluation team to roll out training content while building the concepts; it was an enormous amount of development, learning, and implementing for everyone to do at once.

There were some other observed challenges. Webinars were not necessarily the most optimal way to deliver content to make it all clear and usable for all participants, as well as make sure they were engaged. At times, there seemed to be some confusion on the different elements of the initiative, such as the two types of plans (e.g., plan for local evaluation questions and action plan) or which approach was for QA and which for local evaluation questions. Some of this is likely because of multiple new processes addressed at the same time. The validated QA measures are ideally learned through a day-long training held by the measure owners, which would help clarify the QA process and ensure correct implementation. Because of time and financial constraints from the grantees, it did not seem as if all centers were fully trained in the quality measures, either opting for online options or none at all. In addition, the delays related to data delivery for the KPIs meant that this core approach was not incorporated into the expected timing sequence for LESI this year. The evaluation team anticipates that the KPIs will be incorporated into the LESI process earlier in the coming evaluation year.

Although completion in the end was high, it was still difficult to reach some of the participating centers or engage them in webinar discussions, which required extra follow-ups. There was generally a lot of observed variance among sites as far as knowledge and support needed, which may have influenced some feeling that they needed more support, which is difficult to provide from a distance. Added to this the fact that one of the centers withdrew early, there is some question of center capacity to deliver on all these evaluation approaches. The participants in LESI were all volunteer and presumably higher capacity centers, so this might be even more difficult for the diversity of centers to do well.

The LEAG process was equally effective in the amount of feedback that participants provided through robust discussion. Although they did not frequently take up the opportunity to comment on electronic

materials outside meetings, the meetings had diverse conversation, where most participants seemed comfortable to chime in readily. Sometimes questions arose about the LEAG role and the desire to expand discussion to topics that were outside the scope of local evaluation, such as feedback on the Tx21st system, and the statewide evaluation team was unclear how to respond to ensure that the group felt heard but also stayed on task. Overall, the strategic timing of the LEAG meetings kept the development process for the new Local Evaluation Guide moving along steadily, and their feedback promoted its practical utility for centers.

Finally, some broader challenges were related to framing and support for the centers. One issue was how the local evaluation effort's timeline plus TEA's overall vision of supports were not always clear due to the developmental nature of the process where decisions had to be made along the way, while the initiative was active. This meant that at times issues were raised by LEAG or LESI participants before they were fully fleshed out and further discussions with TEA were necessary in order to clearly articulate back answers. Additionally, overall evaluation supports to centers were not completely streamlined because of the ways this local evaluation effort is separate from other center supports such as the Texas ACE Blueprint and technical assistance provided by the technical assistance coaches (TACs). Ultimately, it will be helpful for centers if the local evaluation work could be fully aligned with the Texas ACE Blueprint guidelines and other technical assistance that centers receive, to ensure Texas ACE grantees receive the best possible support.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Based on the experience with the LESI and the LEAG to develop the new Local Evaluation Guide and Local Evaluation Toolkit, the statewide evaluation team offers these recommendations for next steps in Texas ACE local evaluation.

Local Evaluation Guide

- Develop a training that supports the rollout of the new Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit to set all centers up for success in using the new materials.
- Create a timeline for additional feedback loops at strategic time points from Texas ACE grantees to collect comments on the Local Evaluation Guide materials and process for further refinement.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative

- Repeat the LESI, with materials adapted to the new Local Evaluation Guide and Toolkit for a fully aligned and streamlined set of resources.
- Expand LESI to a larger group of centers to provide more diverse perspectives on how this local evaluation work looks across the state. Explore ways to adapt approaches to centers with varying capacity or size.
- Plan the entire LESI calendar in advance, adjusting the timing to start in the fall and run on a yearlong calendar to allow for more time to conduct the evaluation and better align with other evaluation timelines.
- Conduct the first LESI training in person to kick off the year, create clarity in all components of the local evaluation, and build buy-in for the process.

- If LESI trainings are delivered through a remote webinar format in the future, or if the trainings are housed on TEA's website, create opportunities for the centers to connect with each other and the state evaluation team to ask questions and learn from each other.
- Provide clearer timelines and expectations to LESI participants in advance of how the process will go and what the commitment is from them.
- Explore implementation fidelity metrics that can be added beyond completion rates, to measure how centers and grantees are implementing the process, if they are doing it as intended, and how this might influence the results. This information could be gathered through a short survey of participants at various points during implementation.
- Tap the expertise and experience from participants in the first year of LESI to serve as champions for the process and provide examples about how it looked in practice.
- Offer some options for regional, in-person training on validated QA measures, such as the PQA and Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool to ensure proper training on the measures and the QA process.

Local Evaluation Advisory Group

- Continue to engage the LEAG, retaining all those who wish to continue and, depending on the returning group's composition, inviting new participants as necessary to maintain a diverse group of stakeholders. Implement any process changes discovered during LEAG feedback conversations.
- Explore additional roles that the LEAG can plan in supporting evaluation activities, beyond local evaluation, to tap this expertise to inform additional evaluation goals as well.

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Chapter 7. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

TEA solicited a comprehensive evaluation of its 21st CCLC grant program, known as Texas ACE, a program funded through Title IV of the ESEA, to examine the implementation and effectiveness of the grant program in light of federal requirements. TEA contracted with AIR in spring 2017 to conduct an evaluation of Texas ACE to assess implementation and outcomes associated with grants in Cycles 7–9. The contents of this report relate to implementation of the 21st CCLC program during the 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 programming periods.

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

Table 7.1: Evaluation Objectives

Objective	Report chapter(s)
Objective 1: Evaluation of the Implementation of the 21st CCLC Program Statewide	• Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics • Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics
Objective 2: Evaluation of the Impact of the 21st CCLC Program Statewide	• Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth
Objectives 3 and 4: Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of the 21st CCLC Program for a Sample of Centers	• Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics • Chapter 4: Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Programming • Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth
Objective 5: Analysis of Best Practices from the Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of the 21st CCLC	• Best Practices Briefs
Objective 6: Annual Local Evaluations	• Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations from each chapter in the 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17 evaluation report that are aligned with the six objectives outlined from TEA.

Chapter 2: Grantee and Center Characteristics

A total of 734 unique centers that provided Texas ACE programming across 108 grants funded as part of Cycles 7–9 that operated during the reporting period.[31] Most 21st CCLC grants during the reporting

[31] 109 grantee records were initially identified from Tx21st data received from TEA by the statewide evaluation team. However, one grantee record did not have any associated center records. Also, operational and attendance data

period evaluated were managed by independent school districts and regional educational entities, followed by nonprofit organizations. A small number of Texas ACE grants were held by colleges and universities. Most Texas ACE grantees, on average, tended to manage between six and 10 centers. Overall, the largest share of centers were located in urban areas, but in 2016–17, one of the three annual periods assessed, a larger proportion of centers were located in suburban areas.

A descriptive analysis of the cohorts assessed revealed that 118,282 students were served in 2014–15, 116,992 were served in 2015–16 and 105,147 students were served in 2016–17. More than half of all students served were in Grades 3–8; approximately 40% of the students were in either Grades PreK–2 or Grades 9–12, and two thirds of the students in the programs were Hispanic in all three programming periods. On average, about half of all students attended the program for less than 45 days, another one third of the students attended between 45 and 90 days, and less than one fifth of the students attended for 120 days or more. It is worth noting that until Cycle 9, program requirements under TEA specified regular Texas ACE attendance as 30 days or more, per federal guidelines. TEA opted to raise this threshold to 45 days or more under Cycle 9 to encourage better retention of students in programming across time.

Students participating in Texas ACE largely resembled the broader student population of schools being served by the programs across the following student characteristics: status as an EL, racial/ethnic composition, at risk for dropping out of high school, rates for receiving special education services, average days of student absences, the average number of disciplinary incidents (for those students who had any), and the likelihood of attaining a STAAR passing standard in reading and mathematics. Texas ACE participants differed from the broader population of students attending schools served by the program in the following ways: (a) Slightly more Texas ACE students were categorized as economically disadvantaged, and (b) although most Texas ACE students who took the Algebra I EOC examination achieved a passing standard, only slightly more than half passed the English I EOC. This result was approximately 5 percentage points lower than the overall passing standard in schools served by centers in 2016–17.

Interviews with staff at 20 centers in spring 2017 found that centers identified most frequently with the following programming goals and objectives: (a) addressing academic needs, (b) providing academic support and enrichment opportunities, and (c) building social and emotional skills. The majority of centers identified students who were academically at risk and students from high-need or highly mobile households as their primary target student population. Nearly half of the centers targeted students for Texas ACE enrollment who were classified as at risk because of disciplinary or behavior issues; fewer centers prioritized other populations, served all students, or did not explicitly target a defined student population.

Chapter 3: Program Implementation Characteristics

To understand Texas ACE program implementation in Year 2, service delivery and key implementation and sustainability factors were explored by examining Tx21st data and interviews with 20 centers in 2017. Analyses found that students spent the most time in Texas ACE in 2016–17 participating in recreation, homework help, or academic enrichment activities. When examining total activity time in 2016–17, time spent on specific subject areas during Texas ACE activities demonstrated that reading and mathematics

only exists for 728 centers as 6 centers from Cycle 7 and 8 grantees were found to not have operation and attendance data. Also, Cycle 7 grantees operated summer programming during the summer of 2016; however, since this period of operation represented only a portion of the total 2016-17 programming period, Cycle 7 grantees and centers have not been included in counts for 2016-17.

were addressed nearly two thirds of the time. Students also spent slightly less than half of their time in STEM-related activities and close to one fourth of their time in activities addressing telecommunications and technology.

An exploration of staffing at Texas ACE found three main types of models: (a) centers staffed mostly by school-day teachers (teachers), (b) centers staffed by paraprofessionals and/or college students (other staff), and (c) centers staffed by a model that included a mixture across the five classifications (mixed model). Across all three programming years studied, an average of 50% of the centers from 2014–15 to 2016–17 used a mixed model to staff their center the majority of time (50% or greater programming time). Employing mostly school-day teachers was the next most used staffing model, with an average of 48% of the centers using this staffing model across the three programming years.

Data from site visits and interviews with center staff revealed that Texas ACE programs focused on academic and enrichment activities the most, whereas college and career readiness and parental involvement were lower priority activities. Also, students spent most of their time in academic enrichment, recreation, and homework help and in the subjects of reading and mathematics. Centers generally felt that their activities aligned with local goals while also trying to support statewide Texas ACE objectives related to quality programming and improving student outcomes. However, logic models were underused to support monitoring of alignment, as well as for orientating new staff to the program goals and objectives. This may change going forward because logic model development became a requirement for the Cycle 9 grantees, and TEA's technical assistance provider and the updated Local Evaluation Guide provide more support and information in this area for centers.

Staff development was reported to occur in a variety of ways. Most Texas ACE programs offered staff orientation, either in traditional form or in other ways such as on-the-job training. Some Texas ACE programs had staff who were school teachers and participated in PD through their school or district rather than Texas ACE. Other PD focused on student academic and behavior needs, as well as classroom management and program quality. Partners were important for Texas ACE implementation; local nonprofit organizations were the most common partner provider, with many other types of organizations also supporting programs by providing enrichment activities, monetary donations, and other opportunities such as career days for participating students.

Centers viewed the program as an extension of the school day and generally sought to align the program with the school day. School day and Texas ACE relationships were critical for creating strong school linkages, as seen through district and school support and site coordinator presence on campus. Lastly, the role of Texas ACE advisory boards varied across centers, with around half of centers reporting that both the advisory board and Texas ACE staff shared decision-making responsibilities. Advisory boards also generally supported the program in other ways as well, including planning, monitoring and oversight.

Family engagement was an important component of Texas ACE as indicated through interviews with Texas ACE program staff. Most center staff indicated that parent involvement was solicited for input on program planning or outreach was conducted to involve families with the program. Site visits revealed that parent surveys were the most common family engagement strategy and were a common method to involve families in program planning. In addition, center staff also reported connecting with families at school events and through diverse communication methods, although this varied greatly depending on the ages served by the program. Programming that supported parent involvement and family literacy were the most common family activities cited by centers. Family programming focused on parent skills in a variety of areas and included activities such as ESL classes, college/career support, or high school equivalency classes.

Key implementation and sustainability factors related to continuous quality improvement and performance monitoring highlighted the ways that centers use data to improve their implementation. Centers felt that staff were by far the most important feature of a high-quality program, followed by relationships with youth and youth engagement. Formal QA measures, however, were not widely used. More informal observations were more common to support monitoring. Student data from teachers—both formal grades and informal feedback—were the most important ways that staff learned about the needs of participating students. Other data (e.g., Texas ACE data or standardized test scores) were secondary.

Chapter 4: Program Quality and Youth Experiences in Programming

The analysis of program quality in centers operated by Texas ACE found moderate levels in the 20 centers visited in spring 2017. These findings suggest there are opportunities for growth across centers in relation to quality program delivery. Overall, many centers are still developing practices and supports that facilitate meaningful interactions among participating youth and promote high levels of engagement. This finding is reflected by the lower scores in the interaction and engagement domains of the PQA. Higher scores in the supportive environment domain give reason to believe that many centers are moderately successful in adopting practices that help create a supportive learning environment for participating youth.

The results also demonstrated that program quality has an influence on youth experiences in programming. Youth participating in centers with higher PQA scores were more likely to have a positive affect and greater sense of relevance compared with lower scoring centers. In addition, youth in centers that referenced using an externally developed QA tool to assess programming and inform quality improvement efforts reported more positive experiences than youth in centers that did not use such a tool. Youth at these centers reported being significantly more challenged, experiencing a greater sense of relevance, and being more engaged.

Center characteristics related to youth experiences differed the most when comparing elementary centers and middle and high school centers. Youth in middle and high school centers reported greater relevance, more positive affect, and greater engagement than youth in elementary centers. This result may be related to youth in middle and high school centers having more choice than youth in elementary centers and spending more time in activities that promote autonomy and leadership, such as exploring things on their own and participating in competitions. The last notable finding was that activity types that created positive experiences for all youth, such as working on group projects, making or building things, practicing a new skill, and exploring things on their own were perceived by youth as having greater relevance to their lives and as significantly more engaging.

Chapter 5: Impact on Texas ACE Program on Youth

Texas ACE programs are funded to support the academic development of participating youth and promote behaviors that will contribute to academic and overall student success. Results from the impact analyses conducted for Texas ACE programming delivered during the 2014–15 to 2016–17 school years indicated that Texas ACE had mixed results regarding impact on state assessments. The program during this time frame did not show a positive impact on STAAR Reading and STAAR Mathematics scores for youth attending programming in Grades 4–8.

Analysis also found that Texas ACE programming participation was significantly related to lower STAAR Reading and Mathematics scores across the attendance bands examined. In addition, some evidence suggests that centers targeting more students who were classified as academically at risk were more apt

to result in lower assessment scores for these students. What is curious about these results, however, is that the more time youth attended programming, the negative effect tended to grow smaller.

For mathematics, an exception to the trend toward no effect (or even slightly negative effects) occurred when participation in Texas ACE had a small, positive impact at the highest tier of program attendance examined. In addition, STAAR Reading scores were higher, on average, for youth attending centers that had high average program attendance. These findings seem to indicate that (a) participation in Texas ACE programming is associated with lower reading and mathematics assessment scores at lower levels of program attendance, and (b) these negative effects go down and eventually disappear, at least for mathematics, the more youth attend programming.

Texas ACE had a significant positive impact on grade promotion for high school youth. The same result did not occur for the other attendance bands. Curiously, the negative effects for non–high school bands found that when analyses were done looking at narrowly defined attendance bands, the negative effects disappeared when the attendance bands were collapsed, and when youth attended programming for 60 days or more across two programming years, a common attendance threshold used in past reports.

The methods employed to conduct these impact analyses were chosen to address issues of selection bias between youth participating in Texas ACE programming and nonparticipating youth included in each analysis. There is always the possibility that one or more characteristics that distinguish between participating and nonparticipating youth but which is not measured for could be influencing our results.

The results for school-day attendance and disciplinary incidents generally indicated that youth demonstrated a higher level of school-day attendance and fewer disciplinary incidents the more they attended Texas ACE programming. These findings are consistent with what has been observed in similar evaluations of the 21st CCLC program in other states (Naftzger, Devaney, & Newman, 2015; Naftzger et al., 2018).

Finally, the study provided preliminary exploratory findings that centers using an external QA tool to inform the design and delivery of programming and scoring higher on the PQA during site visit observations performed better on some youth outcomes under consideration. Although these findings are based on very small sample sizes, AIR advises that these tools continue to be used in the future to explore how the use of a QA tool may be related to positive youth outcomes.

Chapter 6: Local Evaluation Summary

In 2017, AIR and the Diehl Consulting Group began work to reimagine the local evaluation support that TEA provides for Texas ACE, with the goal of producing a new Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide. The new guide, which replaced the Texas ACE Independent Evaluation Guide, along with a supplemental Texas ACE Toolkit, was completed in August 2018. The guide walks centers step-by-step through how to plan and conduct an evaluation and provides a toolkit of templates, tools, and measures to support implementation of the new guide. To aid the development process, the statewide evaluation team engaged an advisory group, the LEAG, composed of key Texas ACE stakeholders and provided more intensive local evaluation support through the LESI with a group of centers to test out new evaluation approaches and gather feedback. The two groups provided feedback on the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide and the supplemental toolkit during the 2017–18 academic year.

AIR and Diehl recruited 19 participants to serve on LEAG in its first year to support the success of the local evaluation work. The LEAG was composed of diverse stakeholders that support Texas ACE implementation, including project directors, independent evaluators, and internal district evaluators,

representing Cycles 8 and 9. The goals in this project were centered on making local evaluation meaningful to drive improvement, so gathering feedback from a key set of stakeholders was instrumental in ensuring that (a) the new local evaluation was headed in the right direction, (b) centers could feasibly implement the approaches, and (c) materials were usable for diverse roles from evaluators to frontline staff. LEAG members played an active role in guiding the development of the Local Evaluation Guide by meeting four times and reviewing drafts of the guide and toolkit throughout the process.

Another part of the work included the opportunity to test new local evaluation approaches that could support further development before rollout to grantees statewide through LESI. Eleven grantees and 19 centers completed the entire LESI process, which included three core approaches for conducting local evaluation:

- Implementing a quality assessment process
- Using key performance indicators
- Deriving local evaluation questions

To support participating centers in learning the three core approaches, a webinar training series was conducted as well as regular reminders and check-ins from the statewide evaluation team to assist them throughout the process. One primary success of LESI was the diverse stakeholder participation and teamwork that it encouraged, providing space for many voices and perspectives to be heard.

Feedback from respondents indicated that the process gave them the time and space to observe, reflect, and think about their vision for the center, allowing them to see both strengths and areas of improvement. Many respondents commented on the specific tools, resources, webinars, and trainings they received as being helpful to understanding quality programs and evaluation, as well as helping them feel valued. They also found the connections to other districts and a local evaluator as key supports. Overall, many respondents noted this initiative helped them understand their impact and areas that they can act to improve that impact.

Feedback on challenges with the initiative centered on timing of the initiative, given that it was relatively short and not aligned with preexisting local evaluation timelines specified by TEA under the old guidance. Other feedback included the need for additional training on the content either through webinars or in person with the state evaluation team; also, the content itself was challenging because the contents were unfamiliar to many of the centers.

Recommendations

Centers seemed to gain a great deal of value learning about the various program quality measures. But given that no uniform tool has been adopted by the state, it was hard for the state evaluation LESI team to go in-depth with centers to discuss fidelity of implementation and use of the tools because the selection of tools varied greatly across the sites. TEA might consider moving toward adopting or encouraging a defined set of state adopted measures. Such a process would ensure that common tools are used across the state and the Texas ACE technical assistance service provider could provide targeted support for centers on getting the most of using these tools for program improvement efforts.

The growth in knowledge and the opportunity to work through a continuous improvement process while supported externally during a center's first year of implementation suggests that TEA should consider continuation of training opportunities for Texas ACE programs and provide access to expertise at the state level about local program evaluation. The updated Local Evaluation Guide is an important first step in this regard; however, obtaining the support of a technical assistance provider in a center's first year of

implementation may be key for long-term implementation of effective local evaluation practices characterized by a capacity to engage in meaningful continuous quality improvement efforts.

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Appendix A. Chapter 2: Additional Data Tables and Figures

Table A2.1: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Goals Reported Across 20 Centers During Spring 2017 Site Visits

Goals	Elementary (*n* = 12)	Middle school (*n* = 5)	High school (*n* = 3)	Total percentage (*N* = 20)
To address academic needs (including tutoring, homework help)	92%	100%	100%	95%
To provide (academic and creative) enrichment opportunities	100%	80%	100%	95%
To build social and emotional learning skills	92%	80%	100%	90%
To prepare for career and college readiness (exposure to colleges and high school graduation rate)	75%	100%	67%	80%
To facilitate parental involvement (family engagement)	75%	40%	67%	65%
To foster school connectedness and belonging (align to school day)	67%	60%	33%	60%
To promote sustained attendance	25%	60%	100%	45%
To provide a safe learning environment	17%	60%	33%	30%
To foster community engagement and culture through program activities	25%	40%	0%	25%
To meet nutritional needs	42%	0%	0%	25%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Table A2.2: Management of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Grants by Programming Period, 2014–15 Through 2016–17

	2014–15		2015–16		2016–17	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	76	100%	76	100%	66	100%
1–5 centers	32	42%	32	42%	22	33%
6–10 centers	43	57%	42	55%	44	67%
11–12 center	1	1%	2	3%	0	0%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17.
Note: In this report the data has been reported using the federal definition for a programming year in the following order: Summer, Fall, and Spring. During the summer of 2016, there were a series of Cycle 7 centers operating summer programming, but Table A2.2 does not include Cycle 7 programming data in the 2016–17 data counts. This was done to report out counts specific to Cycles 8 and 9 in that programming year to be consistent with other sections of the report.

Table A2.3: Number and Percentage of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education by Locale Type and Year

	2014–15[a]		2015–16[a]		2016–17[b]	
Locale type	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Rural local type	164	34%	162	34%	135	29%
Suburban local type	95	20%	96	20%	137	30%
Urban local type	211	44%	209	44%	182	40%
Other/missing local type	9	2%	10	2%	6	1%
Total	479	100%	477	100%	460	100%

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 and the 2014 National Center for Education Statistics locale classification areas.
[a]Cycles 7 and 8
[b]Cycles 8 and 9

Table A2.4: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Grantees by Organization Type Across Cycles

Organization type	Cycle 7		Cycle 8		Cycle 9		All Cycles	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Independent school districts and regional educational entities	33	79%	30	88%	28	88%	91	84%
Nonprofit organizations	8	19%	3	9%	4	13%	15	14%
College or university	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%	2	2%
Total	42	100%	34	100%	32	100%	108	100%

Source. Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Table A2.5: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Student Characteristics, 2014–15 Through 2016–17

Variable	2014–15[a]		2015–16[b]		2016–17[c]	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total students served	**118,282**	**100%**	**116,992**	**100%**	**105,147**	**100%**
Grades PreK–2	24,921	21%	24,674	21%	21,495	20%
Grades 3–5	35,062	30%	35,452	30%	32,110	31%
Grades 6–8	34,204	29%	32,829	28%	33,097	32%
Grades 9–12	24,095	20%	24,037	20%	18,445	18%
English Learner	26,437	22%	24,674	23%	24,488	23%
At risk	71,446	61%	35,452	60%	65,642	61%
Economically disadvantaged	81,707	77%	80,954	77%	74,425	80%
Eligible for Title I funds	107,592	91%	106,834	91%	98,154	93%
Special Education	10,880	9%	10,611	9%	9,286	9%
Hispanic	73,938	63%	73,851	63%	70,091	67%
White	20,995	18%	20,700	18%	14,961	14%
African American	19,615	17%	18,820	16%	17,463	17%
Other	3,751	3%	3,647	3%	2,643	3%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.

[a]This column represents an unduplicated count of students served in Texas ACE in Cycles 7 and 8. [b]This column represents an unduplicated count of students served in Texas ACE in Cycles 7 and 8. [c]This column represents an unduplicated count of students served in Texas ACE in Cycles 7 and 8.

Table A2.6: School-Level Characteristics Across Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), 2014–15 through 2016–17

Variable	2014–15		2015–16		2016–17	
	Total number of schools	Percentage in schools	Total number of schools	Percentage in schools	Total number of schools	Percentage in schools
English learners	573	25%	594	26%	517	25%
At risk	573	61%	594	62%	517	61%
Economically disadvantaged	573	67%	594	67%	517	68%
Eligible for Title I funds	573	91%	594	92%	517	92%
Special Education	573	10%	594	10%	517	10%
Hispanic	573	62%	594	62%	517	66%
White	573	20%	594	20%	517	17%
African American	573	14%	594	14%	517	14%
Other	573	3%	594	3%	517	3%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. The school population demographic file was created by aggregating the student-level variables across Texas ACE feeder schools from PEIMS data. It contains any school that had at least 10 or more Texas ACE participants.

Table A2.7: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Average Number of School Day Absences and Disciplinary Incidents among Program Participants, 2014–15 and 2016–17

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Average number days or incidents	Average number	Average number	Average number
Absences (days)	7	7	7
Disciplinary incidents (number)	.43	.42	.43

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. In 2014–15, the total number of students was *n* = 118,282; in 2015–16, the total number of students was *n* = 116,992; and in 2016–17, the total number of students was *n* = 105,147. Cycle 9 summer data is not included in the data reported in this table for 2016–17.

Table A2.8: School-Level Results Across Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Average Number of School Day Absences and Disciplinary Incidents among Program Participants, 2014–15 and 2016–17

Average number days or incidents	Number of schools	Average # across schools	Number of schools	Average # across schools	Number of schools	Average # across schools
Absences (days)	573	8	594	8	517	7
Disciplinary incidents (number)	573	.45	588	.45	517	.40

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. The number of schools outlined in the table includes all schools who had at least 10 or more Texas ACE participants. Absences and disciplinary incidents were averaged across all students.

Table A2.9: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Percentage of Career and Technical Education Courses where Credits were Earned, 2014–15 and 2016–17

School outcomes	2014–15		2015–16		2016–17	
	Number of Students Taking Courses	Average Percentage of Courses Passed	Number of Students Taking Courses	Average Percentage of Courses Passed	Number of Students Taking Courses	Average Percentage of Courses Passed
Career and technical education (CTE) course credits earned	18,287	90%	20,092	92%	15,134	93%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.

Table A2.10: School-Level Results Across Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Percentage of Career and Technical Education Courses where Credits were Earned, 2014–15 and 2016–17

School outcomes	2014–15		2015–16		2016–17	
	Number of Schools	School-Level Average Percentage of Courses Passed	Number of Schools	School-Level Average Percentage of Courses Passed	Number of Schools	School-Level Average Percentage of Courses Passed
Career and technical education course credits earned	223	88%	243	89%	189	90%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. The number of schools outlined in the table includes all schools who had students take at least 1 CTE course and who had at least 10 or more Texas ACE participants. The percentage represents the average across all students who took CTE credits and passed the course from these schools.

Table A2.11: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Student Outcomes on the Early Reading Indicator, 2014–15 through 2016–17

Early reading indicator	Eligible for accelerated reading services		Not eligible for accelerated reading services		Not assessed (K–2)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2014–15	10,387	45%	11,753	50%	1,184	5%
2015–16	9,478	41%	11,599	50%	2,030	9%
2016–17	8,340	41%	10,483	51%	1,626	8%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Public Education Information Management System data from 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. Student eligibility for accelerated reading indicates that a student is reading below his or her expected reading level and needs additional attention (though accelerated instruction).

Table A2.12: Texas ACE Students and School Averages Achieving STAAR Passing Standard in Reading, Mathematics, and EOC Examinations in 2014–15 through 2016–17

STAAR		Achieved STAAR passing standard			
		Number of students	Percentage of Texas ACE students	Number of schools	Percentage at Schools Served by Texas ACE
2014–15	Reading	42,048	67%	476	67%
	Mathematics	40,213	66%	476	69%
	EOC: Algebra I	5,997	75%	237	83%
	EOC: English I	3,975	54%	143	56%
2015–16	Reading	41,155	66%	550	66%
	Mathematics	40,412	67%	551	68%
	EOC: Algebra I	5,579	76%	241	83%
	EOC: English I	4,083	56%	143	56%
2016–17	Reading	37,750	60%	443	62%
	Mathematics	40,243	67%	443	68%
	EOC: Algebra I	5,676	83%	213	88%
	EOC: English I	3,446	53%	111	58%

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of STAAR data from 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17.
Note. EOC = end of course; STAAR: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness; Texas ACE: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education; In 2016–17, the STAAR minimum passing standard changed from Level II Phase-In to Approaches Grade Level. The school file for percentage achieving STAAR passing standard was created by aggregating the student-level outcomes across schools. It contains any school that had at least 10 or more Texas ACE participants.
Note. In 2014–15, the total number of students served in Texas ACE was *n* = 118,282; in 2015–16, the total number of students was *n* = 116,992; and in 2016–17, the total number of students was *n* = 105,147. Centers associated with Cycle 9 did not operate programming during the summer of 2016 given when they received their Texas ACE grant.

Table A2.13: Average Number of Summer Program Days and Hours Attended in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) 2014–15 through 2016–17

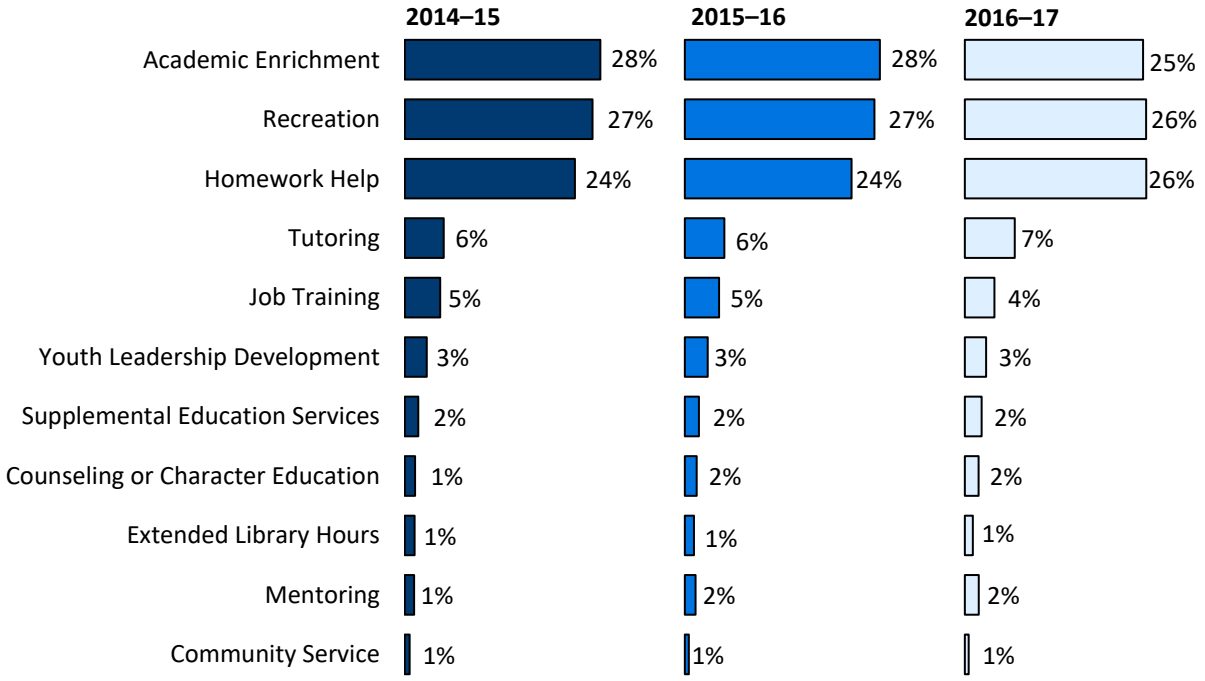
	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Average number program days	13	13	13
Average number of program hours	51	61	63

Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17.
Note. Calculations based on N = 28,968 for 2014–15, N = 33, 030 for 2015–16, and N = 29,638 for 2016–17.

Appendix B. Chapter 3: Additional Data Tables and Figures

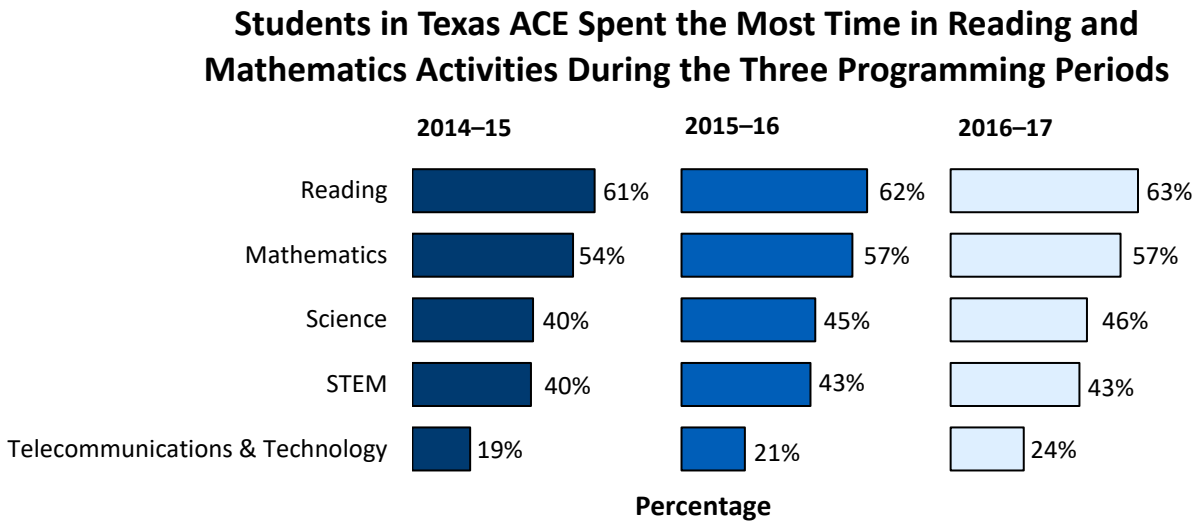
Figure B3.1: Student Time by Activity Type and Reporting Period

Three Fourths of Texas ACE Student Time Was Spent in Academic Enrichment, Recreation, or Homework Help



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17.
Note. These data are based on the percentage of time (in hours) averaged across Texas ACE centers spent on programming activities based on the following: *n* = 460 (hours) in 2014–15, *n* = 472 (hours) in 2015–16, and *n* = 473 (hours) in 2016–17.

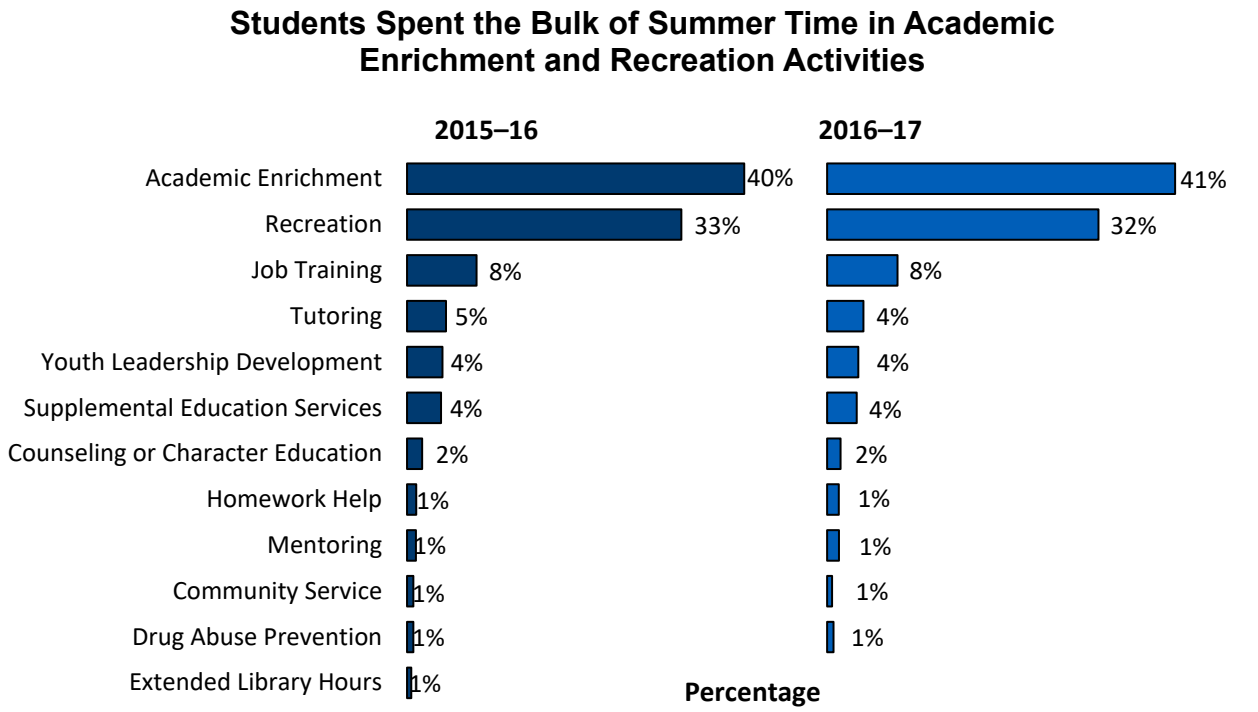
Figure B3.2: Texas ACE Activity by Programming Period



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17.

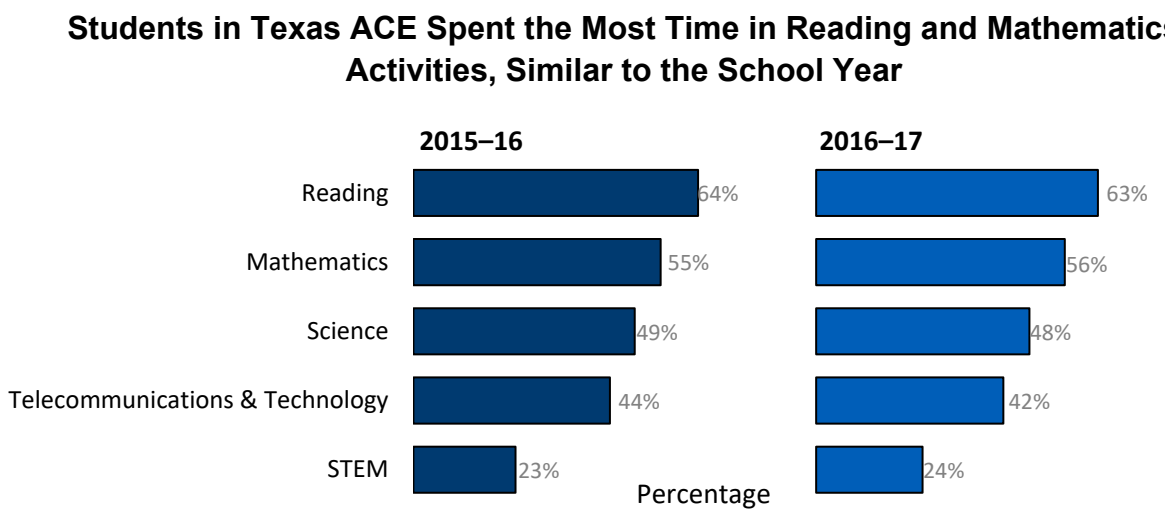
Note. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the numbers will not total 100%. These data are based on the percentage of time (in hours) spent on programming activities based on the following: n = 454 (hours) in 2014–15, n = 459 (hours) in 2015–16, and n = 463 (hours) in 2016–17 averaged across all Texas ACE programs.

Figure B3.3: Student Time by Activity Type During Summer Programming



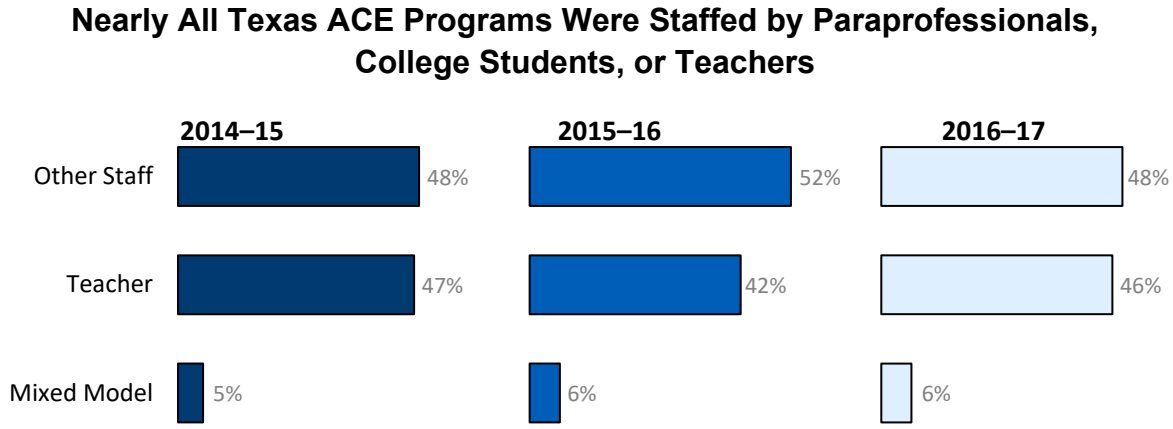
Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2015–16 and 2016–17.
Note. Centers did not indicate time spent on the categories of parent involvement, violence and prevention, and family literacy during the two programming periods, so they are excluded from the figure. These data are based on *n* = 473 average hours in 2015–16 and *n* = 472 average hours in 2016–17 across each category for all centers statewide.

Figure B3.4: Texas ACE Activity by Programming Period During Summer Programming



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2015–16 and 2016–17.
Note. Centers could select more than one subject for activities, so the numbers will not total 100%. These data are based on *n* = 452 hours in 2015–16 and *n* = 448 hours in 2016–17 averaged across all centers.

Figure B3.5: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) School Year Staffing Model in 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17



Source. American Institutes for Research analysis of Tx21st Student Tracking System data for 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17.
Note. Other staff signifies paraprofessionals and/or college students. The data were as follows: in 2014–15, the total *N* of school staff was *N* = 479 (*n* = 230 other staff, *n* = 223 teachers, and *n* = 26 mixed model); in 2015–16, *N* = 477 school staff (*n* = 247 other staff, *n* = 201 teachers, and *n* = 29 mixed model); and in 2016–17, *N* = 460 school staff (*n* = 220 other staff, *n* = 212 teachers, and *n* = 28 mixed model). The data were calculated for whether a center employed a staffing model 50% of the time or more.

Table B3.1: Texas ACE Alignment With Program Goals and Objectives

Program activities	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Academic activities	83%	100%	33%	80%
Academic enrichment activities	50%	60%	100%	60%
College and career activities	33%	20%	0%	25%
Parent involvement activities	25%	0%	0%	15%
Engaging activities that produce results	8%	0%	0%	5%
Activities designed to increase attendance	8%	0%	0%	5%
Holistic enhancement	8%	0%	0%	5%
Use logic model to gauge alignment	8%	40%	0%	15%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple aspects of new staff orientation. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%

Table B3.2: Establishing Links to the School Day

School-day connections	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) considered an extension of the school day	75%	100%	100%	85%
Texas ACE aligned with district education strategy and school day	67%	80%	100%	75%
District and school support for Texas ACE	83%	40%	67%	70%
Site coordinator is on campus during the school day	58%	60%	100%	65%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple aspects of new staff orientation. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.3: New Staff Orientation at Texas Afterschool Centers on Education

	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Measuring staff orientation				
Yes, orientation provided	58%	80%	100%	70%
No orientation	0%	20%	0%	5%
Type of staff orientation				
Centers provide job training/mentoring for orientation	16%	0%	0%	10%
Centers provide first week check-ins for orientation	0%	0%	33%	5%
Post orientation extended PD centers[a]	25%	60%	33%	35%
Use of logic models				
In orientation, logic model not reviewed	33%	20%	0%	25%
In orientation, logic model is reviewed	16%	20%	33%	20%
Data not reported	51%	60%	66%	55%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Respondents could cite multiple aspects of new staff orientation. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.
[a] Responses in this category could include site coordinator orientation training and additional training that continued beyond the initial orientation such as online/interactive training to get a certificate followed by group/new hire trainings that are more individualized, or orientation is the first part of five training modules for new hires, or was rolled into the same timeframe as district trainings.

Table B3.4: Focus of Professional Development (PD) Attended by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Staff and Perceptions of Helpfulness of PD

	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Origination of PD delivery				
General Texas ACE–related PD	75%	100%	100%	85%
General school/district PD	66%	60%	33%	60%
Type of PD				
Supporting academic success	58%	80%	33%	60%
Behavior management	58%	60%	0%	50%
Program quality	25%	80%	33%	40%
Creating lesson plans	33%	40%	33%	35%
Classroom management	42%	40%	0%	35%
Student safety	33%	40%	0%	30%
Handling special needs and social issues	25%	20%	33%	25%
Connecting with other afterschool programs	17%	40%	33%	25%
Implementing enrichment activities	33%	20%	0%	25%
Recognizing and reporting child abuse	17%	40%	0%	20%
Positive youth development and character building	17%	40%	0%	20%
Parent communication	17%	20%	0%	15%
Training through workshops	25%	0%	0 %	15%
Youth Program Quality Assessment training	17%	20%	0%	15%
Bullying	0%	20%	33%	10%
Digital citizenship and social media	8%	0%	0%	3%
Sustainability	0%	20%	0%	5%
Availability of PD				
PD not offered or staff did not attend	33%	40%	33%	35%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Note. Three sites were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple aspects of PD, did not always receive all questions, and questions varied in each interview, so columns do not to sum to 100%. General Texas ACE–related PD refers to staff meetings, unspecified offerings, or those more generally related to Texas ACE standards; general school/district PD included district-required PD, staff receiving school-day PD adaptable for use in Texas ACE activities, or covering basic school-day standards and expectations. In most cases, it was unclear from responses whether specific topics were provided by the school/district or Texas ACE, so only the general, nonspecific categories are differentiated between two categories.

Table Continues

Table B3.4 (Continued): Focus of Professional Development (PD) Attended by Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Staff and Perceptions of Helpfulness of PD

	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Utility and frequency of PD				
PD was helpful	50%	60%	67%	5%
Staff attend ongoing staff meetings	67%	60%	100%	70%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.

Note. Three sites were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple aspects of PD, did not always receive all questions, and questions varied in each interview, so columns do not to sum to 100%. General Texas ACE–related PD refers to staff meetings, unspecified offerings, or those more generally related to Texas ACE standards; general school/district PD included district-required PD, staff receiving school-day PD adaptable for use in Texas ACE activities, or covering basic school-day standards and expectations. In most cases, it was unclear from responses whether specific topics were provided by the school/district or Texas ACE, so only the general, nonspecific categories are differentiated between two categories.

Table B3.5: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Reliance on Partnerships for Programming

	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Type of partners or challenges				
Local nonprofits, community-based organizations, and community partners	75%	80%	67%	75%
Local colleges and universities	17%	60%	33%	30%
Local government agencies (e.g., chamber of commerce, parks department)	42%	20%	0%	30%
Corporate sponsors and businesses	25%	20%	33%	25%
Community members	17%	20%	33%	20%
Other afterschool programs	0%	20%	0%	5%
No partners mentioned	0%	0%	33%	5%
Challenges of partnerships or reasons for building partnerships				
Developing partnerships is challenging	0%	40%	0%	10%
Building new relationships for future grant support	0%	20%	0%	5%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.6: Services Provided to Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programs by Partners

Partner services	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Enrichment activities and programs	88%	80%	100%	85%
Partners donate materials, food	42%	40%	33%	40%
Career days	8%	20%	0%	10%

Source. Analysis and interviews conducted by Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.7: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Advisory Board Involvement in the Design and Delivery of Activities, Supporting Sustainability Efforts

	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Decision-making roles				
Advisory board has more decision-making responsibility	58%	80%	33%	60%
Texas ACE staff have more decision-making responsibility; advisory board input considered	50%	60%	67%	55%
Shared decision-making responsibility between staff and advisory board	42%	20%	0%	30%
Other advisory board roles				
Plan for the future of the program	50%	80%	33%	55%
Program monitoring	33%	40%	0%	30%
Oversee program; offer guidance and recommendations	17%	40%	33%	25%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.8: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Program Planning Efforts

Family program planning roles	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Overall family involvement in program planning	83%	100%	100%	90%
Feedback via survey	75%	100%	67%	90%
Involvement in boards, committees, and other meetings	50%	60%	33%	50%
Informal feedback	42%	40%	33%	40%
Focus groups	0%	20%	33%	10%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.9: Methods to Engage Family Members in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programming

Family engagement methods	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Parent surveys	75%	100%	67%	80%
Texas ACE presence at school events	50%	40%	67%	50%
Sending parents information regularly	25%	40%	67%	35%
Building relationships with parents	42%	0%	0%	25%
Texas ACE presence at citywide events	17%	20%	0%	15%
Home visits	0%	0%	33%	5%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Parent surveys were the most common family engagement strategy, with presence at school events secondary. Parent surveys were used in the majority of centers (80%) as a popular method for generally getting family members involved in the process of designing and assessing the programming provided through Texas ACE (see Table B3.9). Parent surveys were administered to better understand parent needs and desired activities. The goal of these surveys was to improve parent involvement in family programming. All middle school centers used parent surveys, followed closely by elementary centers (75%) and high school centers (67%).

Many other less common strategies were used to engage families, depending on the ages served by the program. Staff from 35% of the visited centers, especially the high school centers, shared that they send parent information home regularly as a method of engaging families, using email, flyers, and newsletters to keep parents informed on offerings (see Table B3.9). In contrast, staff from elementary centers referred to building informal relationships with parents, such as by engaging "one-on-one with parents, and as they're walking out the door . . . we just have conversations" and consistently "following up with parents." In addition, staff from 15% of the centers, specifically middle school and elementary centers, mentioned having a Texas ACE presence at citywide events to host information tables. Lastly, a very small percentage of high school centers mentioned home visits as an engagement strategy.

Table B3.10: Family Engagement Activities at Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programs

Student development activities	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Parenting classes	8%	20%	0%	10%
Strategies for homework help	17%	0 %	0%	10%
Family skill-building activities				
English as a second language classes	67%	60%	100%	70%
College and career readiness	42%	60%	67%	50%
High school equivalency (e.g., general equivalency diploma) classes	50%	40%	0%	40%
Technology	33%	40%	33%	35%
Health and fitness	17%	60%	67%	35%
Academic enrichment	25%	20%	33%	25%
Variety of resources	25%	0%	0%	15%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.11: Features of High-Quality Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programs

High-quality features	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
High-quality staff	50%	60%	100%	60%
Engaged staff	67%	20%	67%	55%
Good communication	58%	20%	100%	55%
Engaged students	42%	20%	67%	40%
Good relationship between Texas ACE staff and students	33%	60%	33%	40%
Safe environment for students	50%	20%	33%	40%
Academic alignment with school day	42%	40%	0%	35%
Engaging activities and curriculum	33%	60%	0%	35%
Clear goals and objectives	33%	20%	0%	25%
Student voice	25%	20%	0%	20%
Meeting students where they are	8%	0%	67%	15%
High attendance	25%	0%	0%	15%
Family engagement	0%	40%	33%	15%
Data driven	8%	20%	0 %	10%
Having sufficient supplies and materials	8%	0 %	0%	5%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.12: Student Data Used to Monitor Performance at Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Programs

Student data	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Course grades or report cards	83%	100%	33%	80%
Informal feedback from school-day staff	83%	60%	100%	80%
Data collected in Texas ACE	42%	100%	67%	60%
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness/ district benchmarks/end-of-course examinations	67%	20%	67%	55%
Attendance data	33%	80%	67%	50%
Disciplinary data	25%	80%	0%	35%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Table B3.13: Program Quality Data Used to Monitor Performance at Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Programs

Program quality data	Elementary schools (*n* = 12)	Middle schools (*n* = 5)	High schools (*n* = 3)	Total (*N* = 20)
Observational/walk-through data	100%	60%	100%	90%
Program quality assessment and other observational rubrics	33%	0%	33%	25%

Source. Analysis conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Gibson Consulting Group based on spring 2017 site visits.
Note. Three of the sites visited were charter schools. Respondents could cite multiple answers. In addition, the questions varied in each interview and respondents did not always receive all questions. Therefore, columns are not expected to sum to 100%.

Appendix C. Description of Propensity Score Matching and Rasch Analysis

Propensity score matching (PSM) and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) approaches were used in the advanced statistical analyses described in this report. PSM is a statistical technique designed to mitigate any selection bias that may occur because the programs and activities in question were not randomly assigned. HLM is a process used to account for the nested structure of data. Both methods are described in this appendix.

In any evaluation of a program where participants are not randomly assigned to participate, the problem of selection is paramount. It is likely that students who participate in Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) programming are different from those who do not attend. These differences can bias estimates of program effectiveness because they make it difficult to disentangle preexisting differences between students who attended Texas ACE programming and those who did not from the effect of attending the program. In general, students who attended Texas ACE programming tended to be students who were lower achievers than those who did not, prior to the start of the current academic year. The quasi-experimental approach outlined here is a method for mitigating that existing bias in program effect (i.e., if one were to simply compare the students who attended and those who did not).

PSM is a two-stage process that is designed to address this problem. In the first stage, the probability that each student participates was modeled on available observable characteristics. By modeling selection into the program, this approach allowed us to compare participating and nonparticipating students who would have had a similar propensity to select into the program based on observable characteristics that were available in the data received from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). In the second stage, the predicted probability of participation was used to model student outcomes while accounting for selection bias using an HLM approach. Steps were taken to balance pretreatment group differences in observed covariates using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009).

Stage 1: Creation of the Comparison Group. The outcome of interest in modeling propensity scores is treatment status (1 for students in the treatment group, 0 for the comparison group). To account for this binary outcome, logistic regression was used to model the logit (or log-odds) of student group assignment status. Examples of student-level variables used to fit the propensity score models are as follows:

- Prior achievement in reading and mathematics
- Prior measures for other outcomes (grade-level promotion, behavior, and attendance)
- Student demographic information:
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity
  - Socioeconomic status
  - At-risk status
  - English language proficiency
  - Special education status

In addition to the student-level variables, the propensity score model also included school-level variables, such as the following:[32]

- School type
- Total enrollment
- Student race/ethnicity composition
- School locale
- Campus rating
- Number of students identified as economically disadvantaged
- Number of English language learners
- Number of students receiving special education services

A total of 39 variables were considered for the propensity score model. Data were not available for each covariate for all students. To account for this, indicator variables were used to model the relationship between the pattern of missing data and the propensity to participate in the program (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). The propensity score model was fit separately for each grade (Grades K–12) and separately for each definition of treatment (e.g., less than 45 days, 45–59 days). The final propensity score models for each grade were checked to ensure that the analysis sample was balanced across relevant covariates. The propensity score models all produced comparison samples that were balanced with the treatment across all the covariates examined for balance.

Stage 2: Statistical Modeling of Student Outcomes. Outcomes for students in the treatment group were then compared with the outcomes for comparison group students. Steps were taken to balance the pretreatment group differences in observed covariates by using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009). Various strata were used, based on the spread and the overlap of the data. The propensity score logit, along with the pretreatment measure of the outcome, were included in the outcome model to control for within-strata differences and residual bias (Schafer & Kang, 2008). Student outcomes were then modeled using two-level hierarchical linear models to account for the nested nature of the data (students within schools) as follows:

Level 1—Students

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\, Participation_{ij} + \sum_{S=2}^{15} \beta_s L_{sij} + \beta_{16j} LP_{ij} + \beta_{17j} Pretest_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

where y_{ij} is a student-level outcome (e.g., student mathematics achievement), $Participation_{ij}$ is an indicator of whether the student participated in the Texas ACE program, L_{ijs} is an indicator variable for

[32] For school-level variables, the evaluation team used the school that the majority of Texas ACE participants at a given program attended. In most cases, a center that was based at a specific school drew the majority of its participants from that school, and the evaluation team used the demographics and other characteristics of that school in the PSM model.

each logit propensity score strata, LP_{ij} is the logit propensity score, and $Pretest_{ij}$ is the pretreatment measure of the outcome. The subscripts *i*, *j*, and *s* correspond to student, school, and strata, respectively.

Level 2—Center

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$$

The Level 2 equation includes only β_{0j} because the chosen hierarchical linear model is a random intercept model; all other coefficients (i.e., participation indicator, logit propensity score stratum, logit propensity score, and pretreatment indicator) at Level 1 are fixed and, therefore, not listed at Level 2. Because the treatment and comparison groups were matched using all the covariates described earlier, it is not necessary to include these variables in the final outcome model.

The two-level model of correlation between program participation and student performance (written in mixed-model format) is as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Participation_{ij} + \beta_2 Pretest_{ij} + \beta_3 LP_{ij} + \boldsymbol{L}_{ijs} + \boldsymbol{X}_{ij} + u_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

where

- Y_{ij} is the performance of student *i* in school *j*.
- β_0 is a constant term showing the average student performance in the comparison group.
- $Participation_{ij}$ is an indicator of whether the student participated in the Texas ACE program, where β_1 shows the average difference in performance between the treatment and comparison groups.
- $Pretest_{ij}$ is the pretreatment measure of the outcome, where β_2 is the average difference in performance from the prior school year to the current school year.
- LP_{ij} is the logit propensity score, where β_3 is the contribution of the propensity score.
- $\boldsymbol{L}_{ijs}$ is a vector of variables specifying the matching strata.
- $S\boldsymbol{X}_{\boldsymbol{ij}}$ is a vector of student-level covariates for which the standardized mean difference between the treatment and comparison groups was above 0.1 after matching.
- u_j is a school-level random error term, with an assumed normal distribution, with mean zero and variance τ.
- r_{ij} is a student-level error term, also assumed to have a normal distribution, with mean zero and variance σ^2.

Table C1 provides additional detail on the models run for each outcome and the operationalization of each outcome.

Table C1: Outcomes and Operationalizations

Outcome	Outcome type	Model run	Metric transformation *after* running the model	Interpretation
State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness scores	Test score	Regression assuming a normal distribution (ran using raw scores)	Transformed into the standardized mean difference effect size metric	Raw metric estimate represents the increase/decrease in points on the examination for the treatment group
School-day attendance	Proportion	Data transformed into the arcsine metric and then run using regression assuming a normal distribution	Back transformed from the arcsine metric to the original proportion metric [sin(asin(sqrt(.95)) + estimate)^2 – .95]	Estimate transformed back into the original metric represents the proportion of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Grade promotion	Binary	Logistic regression	Transformed into the odds ratio [exp(estimate)] and then odds ratio percent metrics [100*(exp(estimate-1)]	Odds ratio percent metric represents the percentage of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Disciplinary incidents	Count	Poisson distribution regress ion	Transformed into the odds ratio [exp(estimate)] and then odds ratio percent metrics [100*(exp(estimate-1)]	Odds ratio percent metric represents the percentage of increase/decrease for the treatment group
Career and technical education credits	Proportion	Data transformed into the arcsine metric and then run using regression assuming a normal distribution	Back transformed from the arcsine metric to the original proportion metric [sin(asin(sqrt(.9)) + estimate)^2 – .9]	Estimate transformed back into the original metric represents the proportion of increase/decrease for the treatment group

Rasch Analysis of Observation Data

At its most basic level, Rasch modeling techniques yield estimates of an individual respondent's ability and the relative difficulty of a given item on the instrument in question (Bond & Fox, 2007). Working from the proposition that persons with greater ability will have a greater likelihood of successfully completing a given bank of test items (or find it easier to endorse survey items that demonstrate greater ability) than will less skilled persons, Rasch modeling techniques take person and item difficulty estimates yielded from an instrument, transform them by using a log function, and display them on a logit scale that allows person and item difficulties to be compared directly.[33]

One benefit of using Rasch approaches is that they result in true interval-level scores that can be used when conducting analyses. To create true interval measures that could be employed effectively in

[33] Item difficulty reflects how positively an item is endorsed. Items with low item difficulty will be frequently and positively endorsed (e.g., a high frequency of strongly agree).

supporting the domain of analyses needed for the report, the research team employed Rasch analysis techniques, specifically Many-Facet Rasch Measurement (Linacre & Wright, 2004), to create scale scores for scales associated with program quality assessment observation data that also corrected for empirically derived estimates of rater bias.

The many-facet Rasch measurement model employed in calibrating measures on the aforementioned instruments took the following form:

$$\text{Log}(P_{nijk}/P_{nij(k-1)}) = B_n - D_i - C_j - F_k$$

where

- P_{nijk} is the probability of activity n being given a rating of k on item i by rater j.
- $P_{nij(k-1)}$ is the probability of activity n being given a rating of $k - 1$ on item i by rater j.
- B_n is the ability of activity n.
- D_i is the difficulty of item i.
- C_j is the severity of rater j.
- F_k is the difficulty of category k relative to category $k - 1$.

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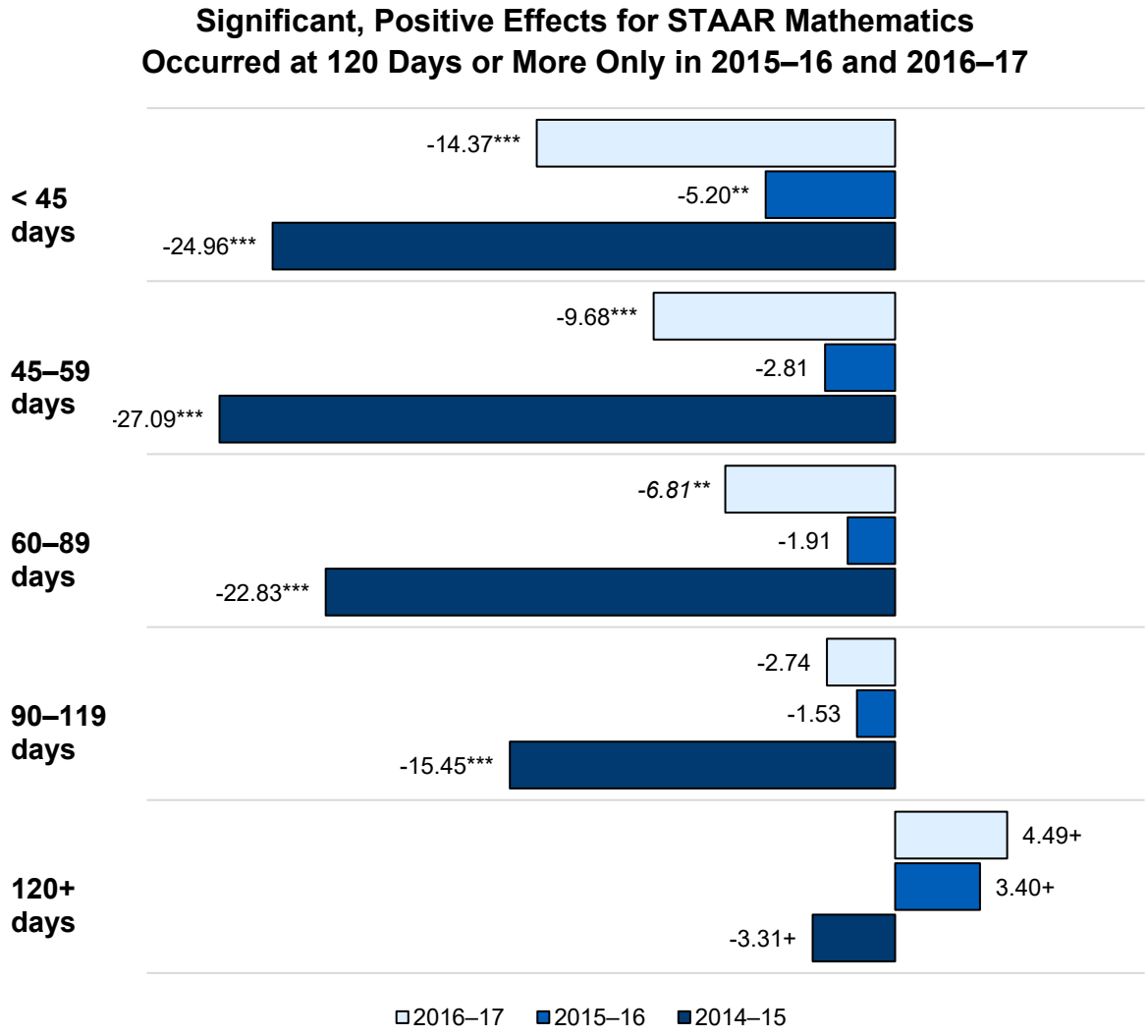
Appendix D. Chapter 5 Additional Figures, Part A: Annual Program Impact Estimates by Grade Level

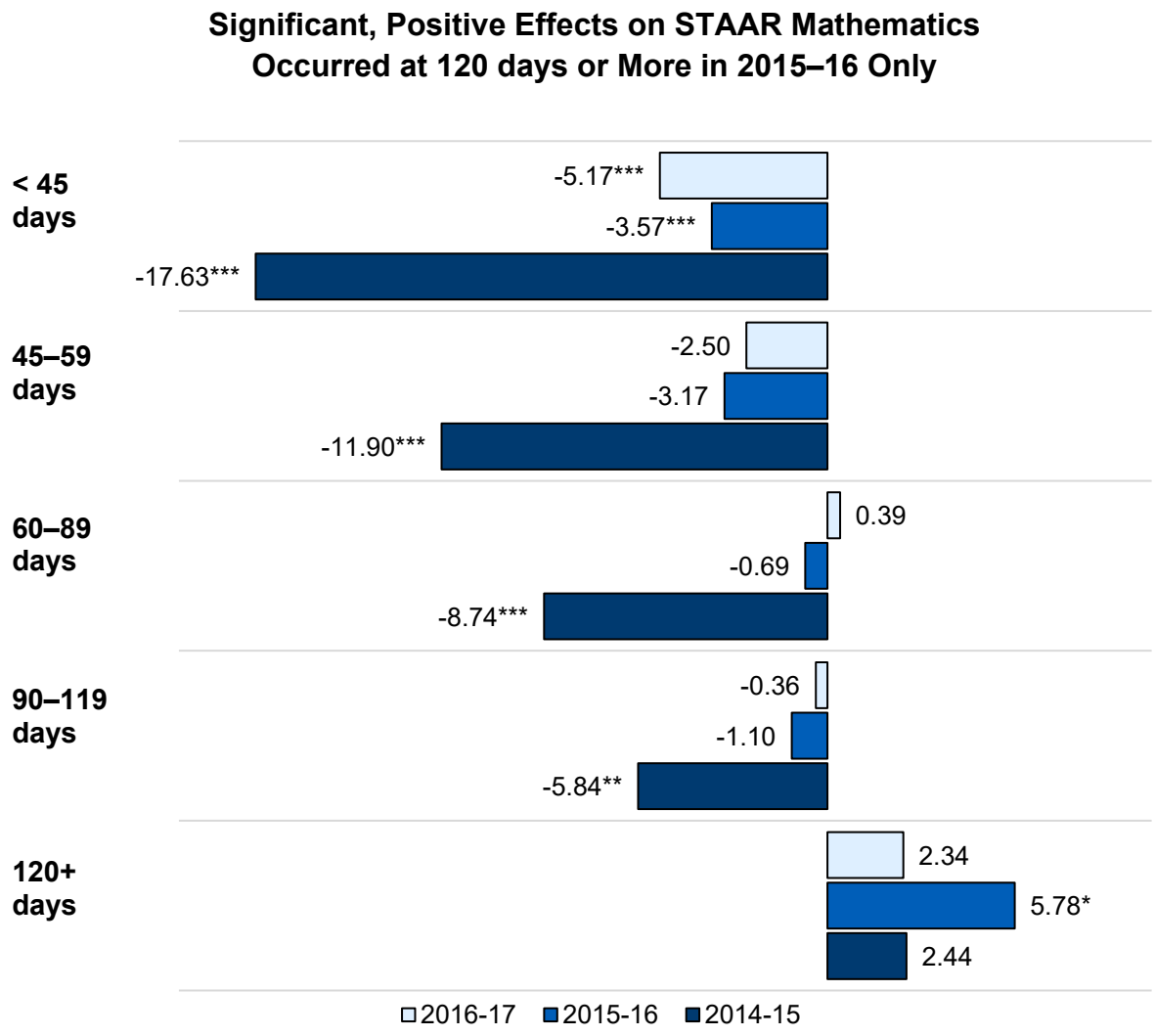
Appendix D contains the results of analyses undertaken to assess the impact of a single year of participation in Texas Afterschool Centers of Education (Texas ACE) during the 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 school years, broken down by grade level.

Figure D5.1: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5



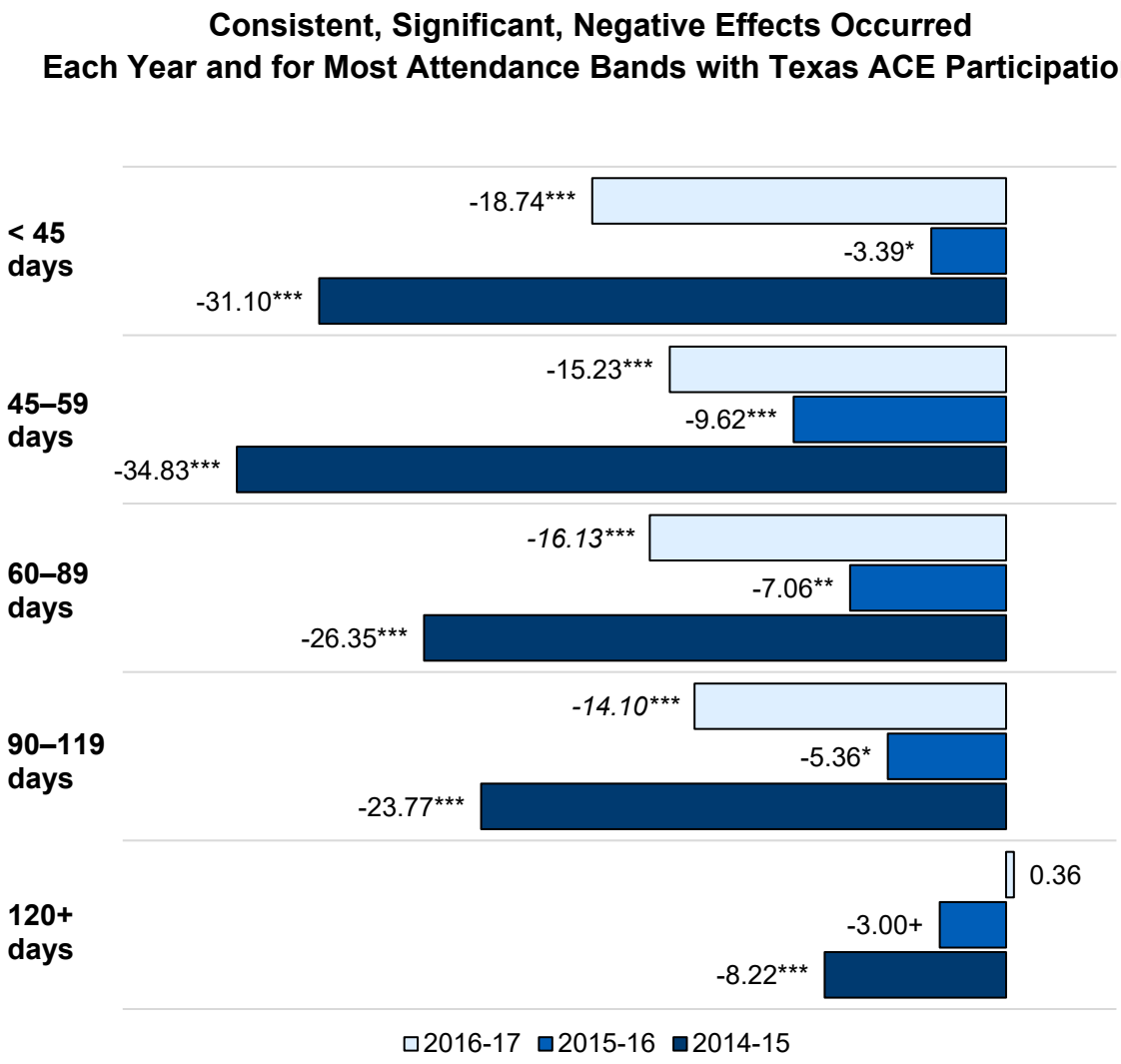
Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
+$p < .10$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure D5.2: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



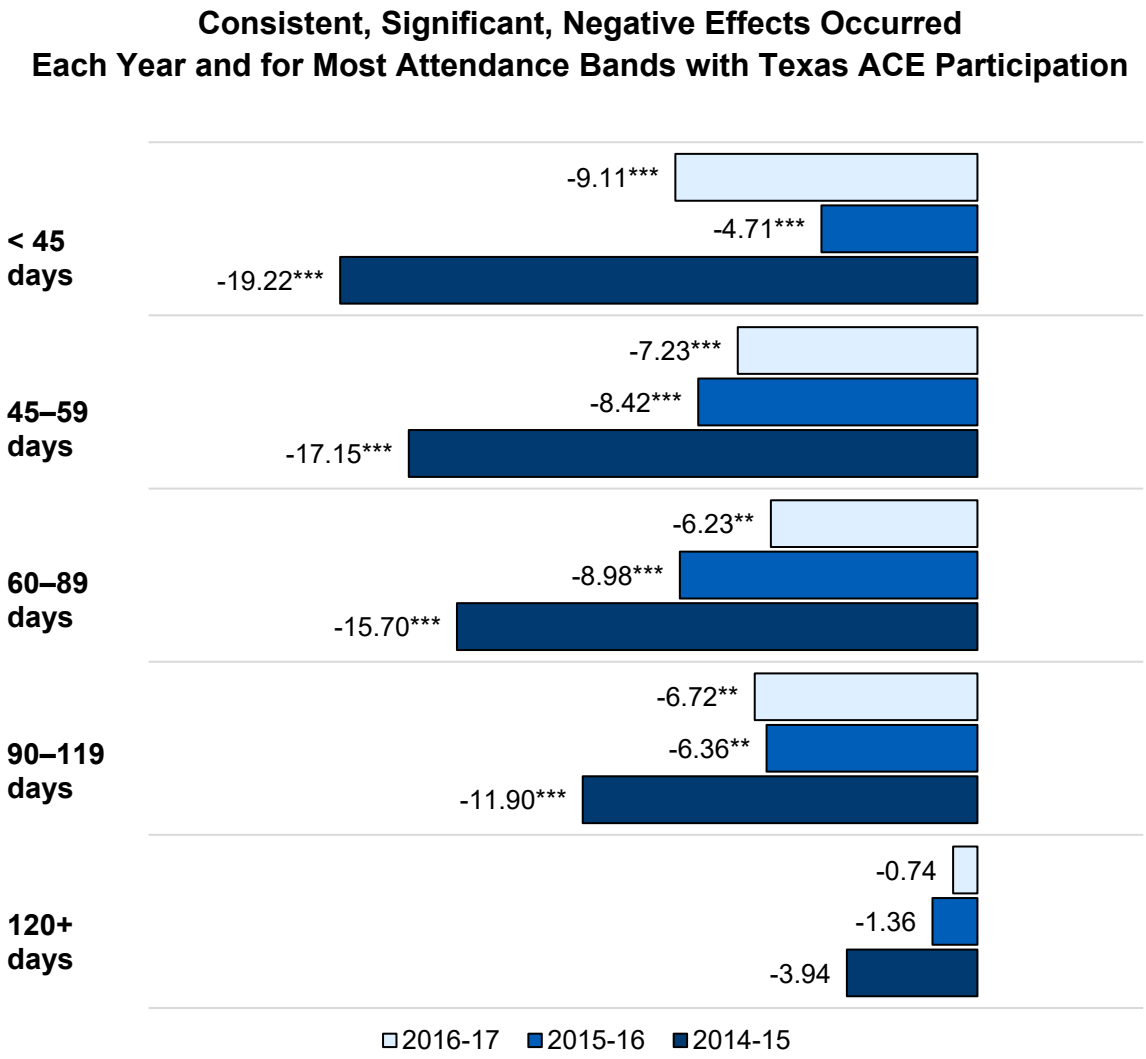
Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in mathematics scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's mathematics performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure D5.3: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5



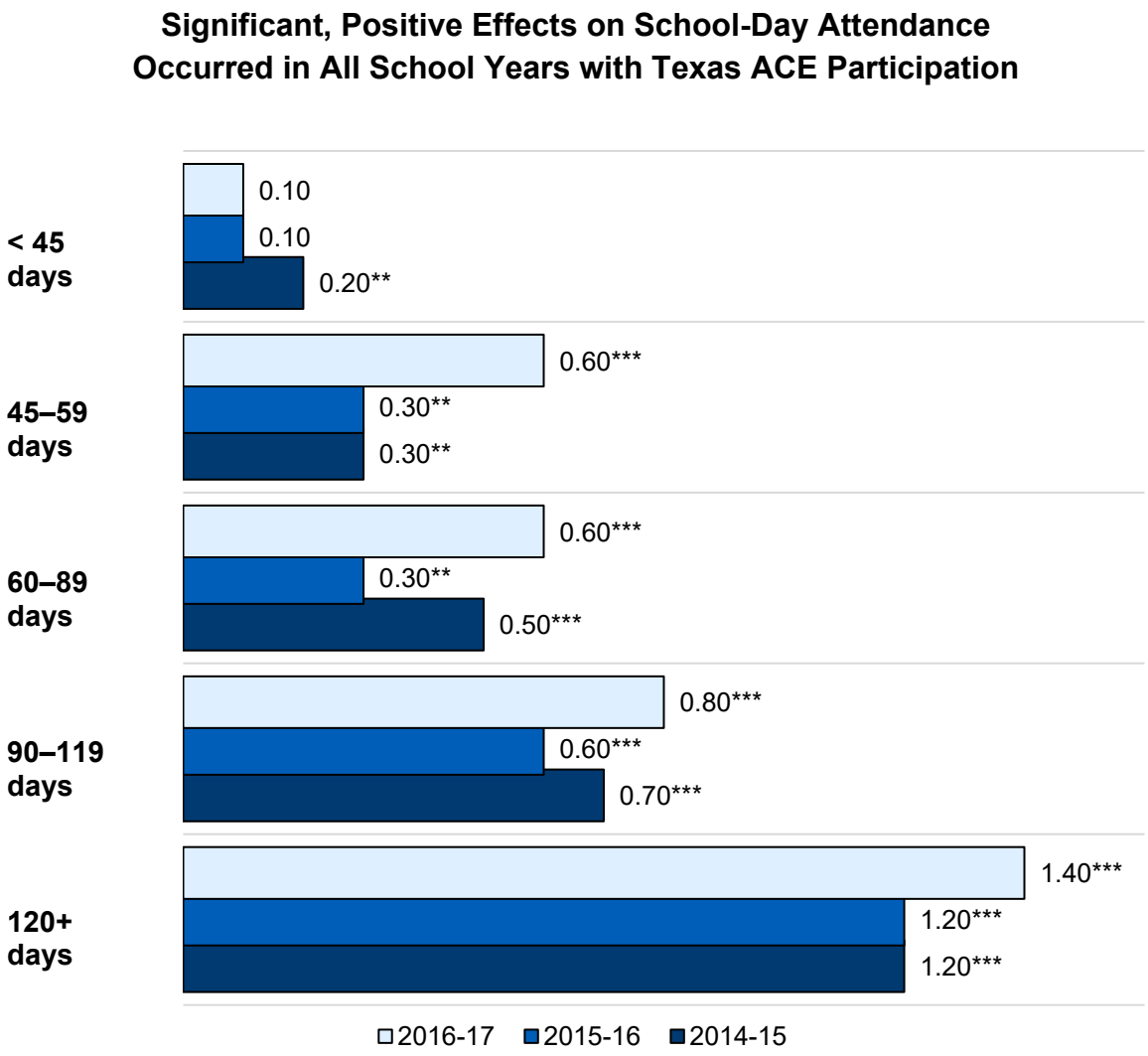
Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's reading performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
$+p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Figure D5.4: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading: Average Scale Score Point Difference Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



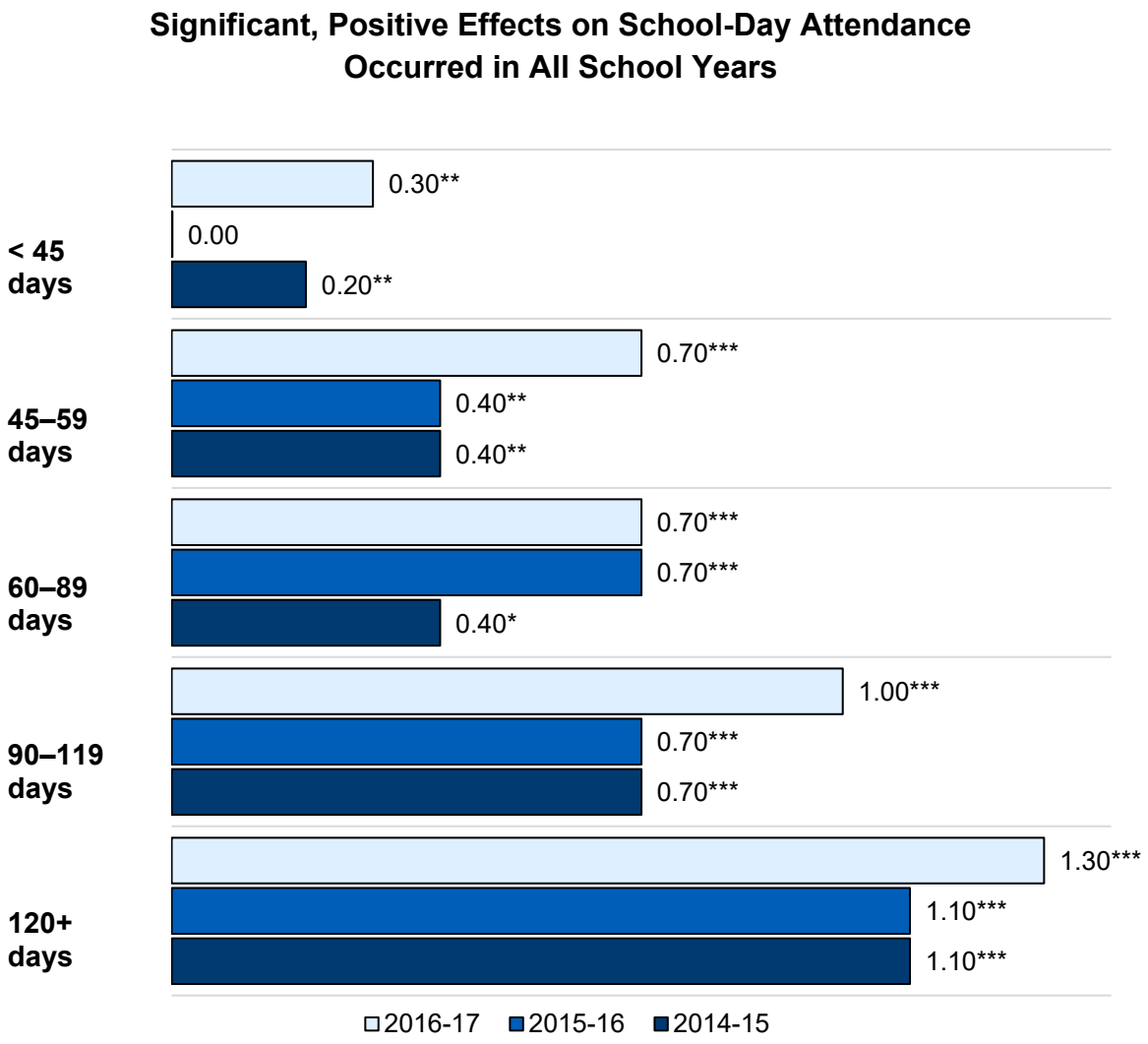
Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in reading scale scores between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's reading performance and student-level characteristics. The results are based on a regression model assuming a normal distribution. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had lower scores, on average. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had higher scores.
$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Figure D5.5: School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3



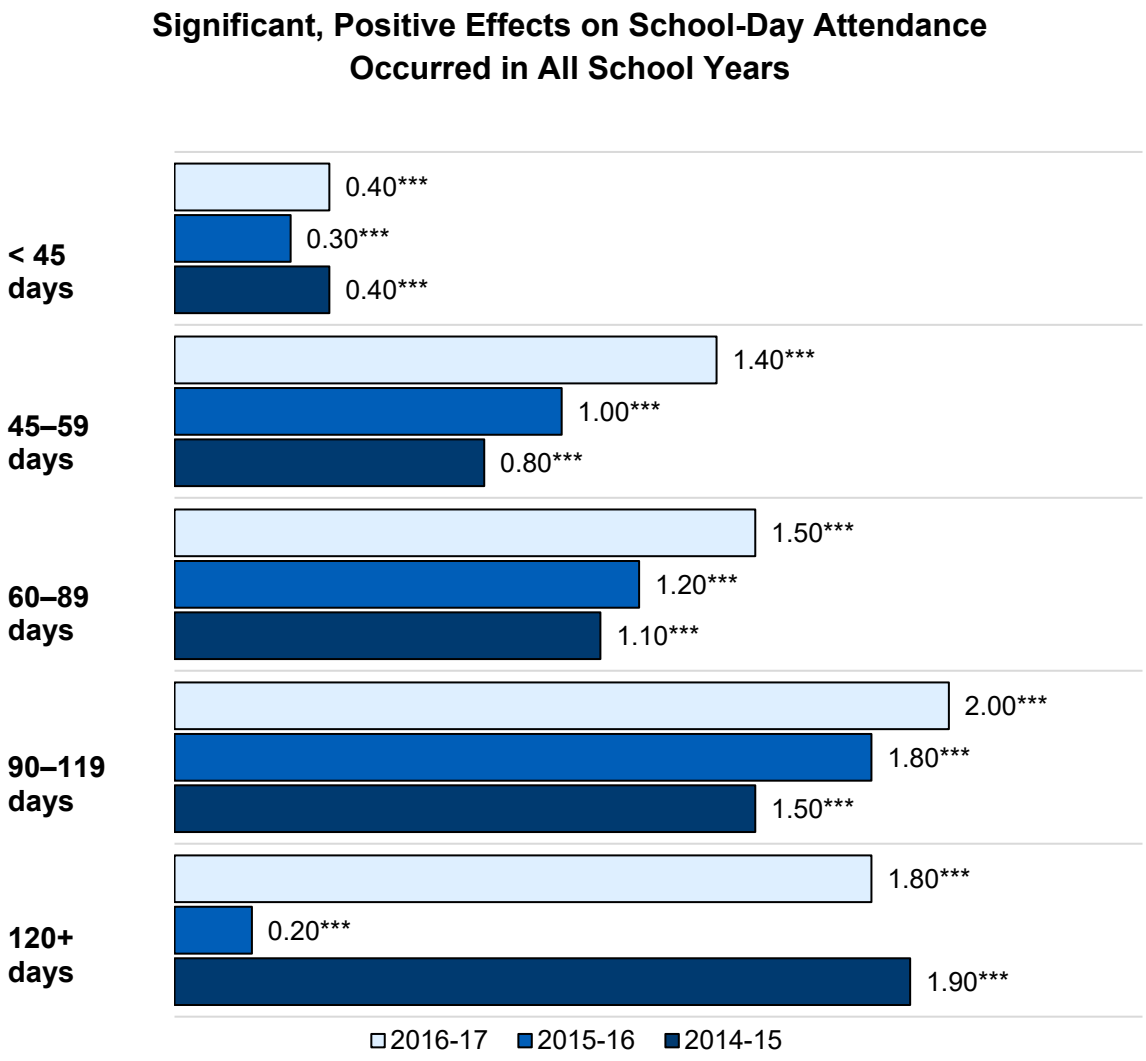
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than non-participants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared to with non-participating youth.
$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Figure D5.6: School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5



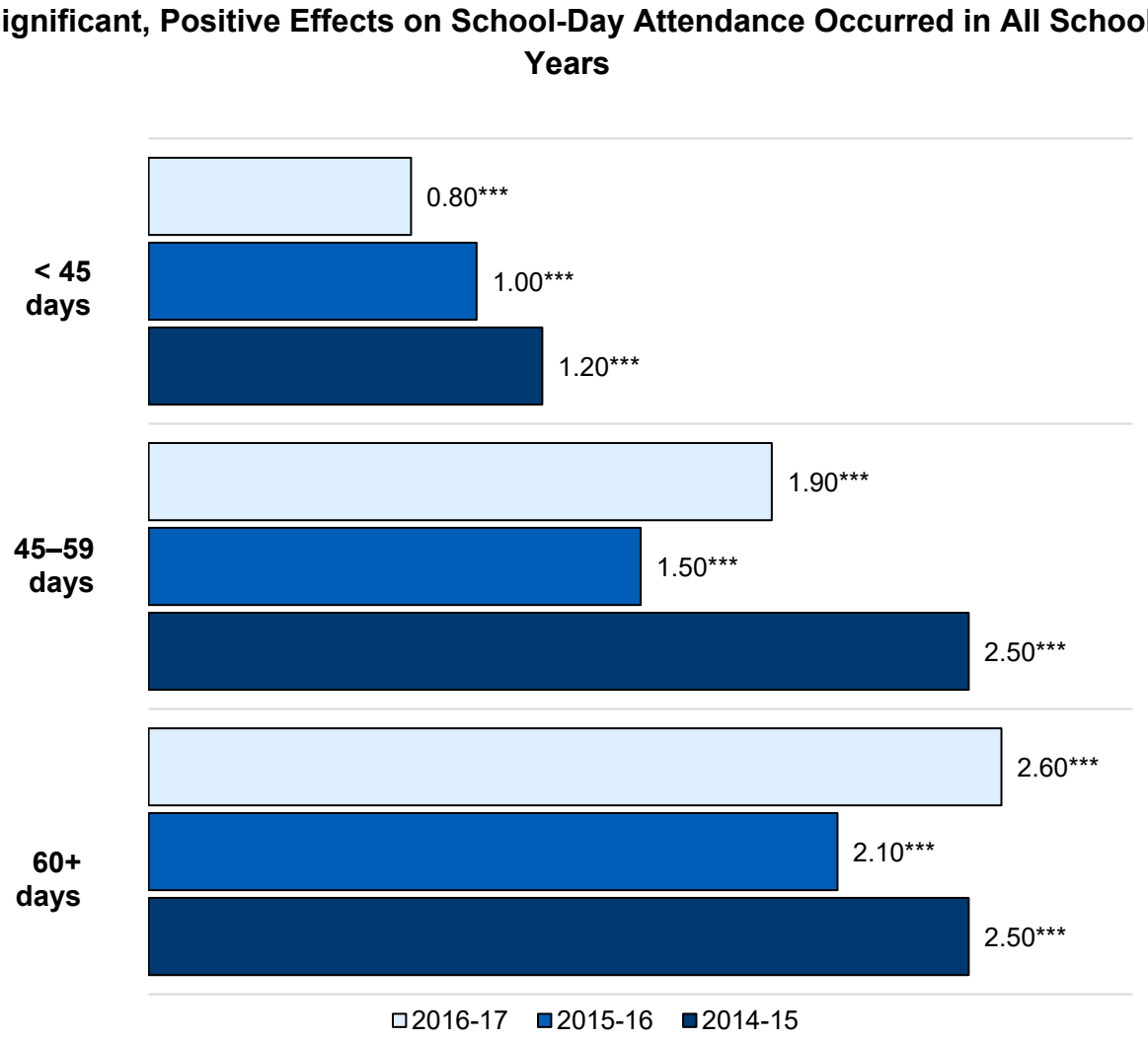
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than non-participants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared to with non-participating youth.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure D5.7: School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



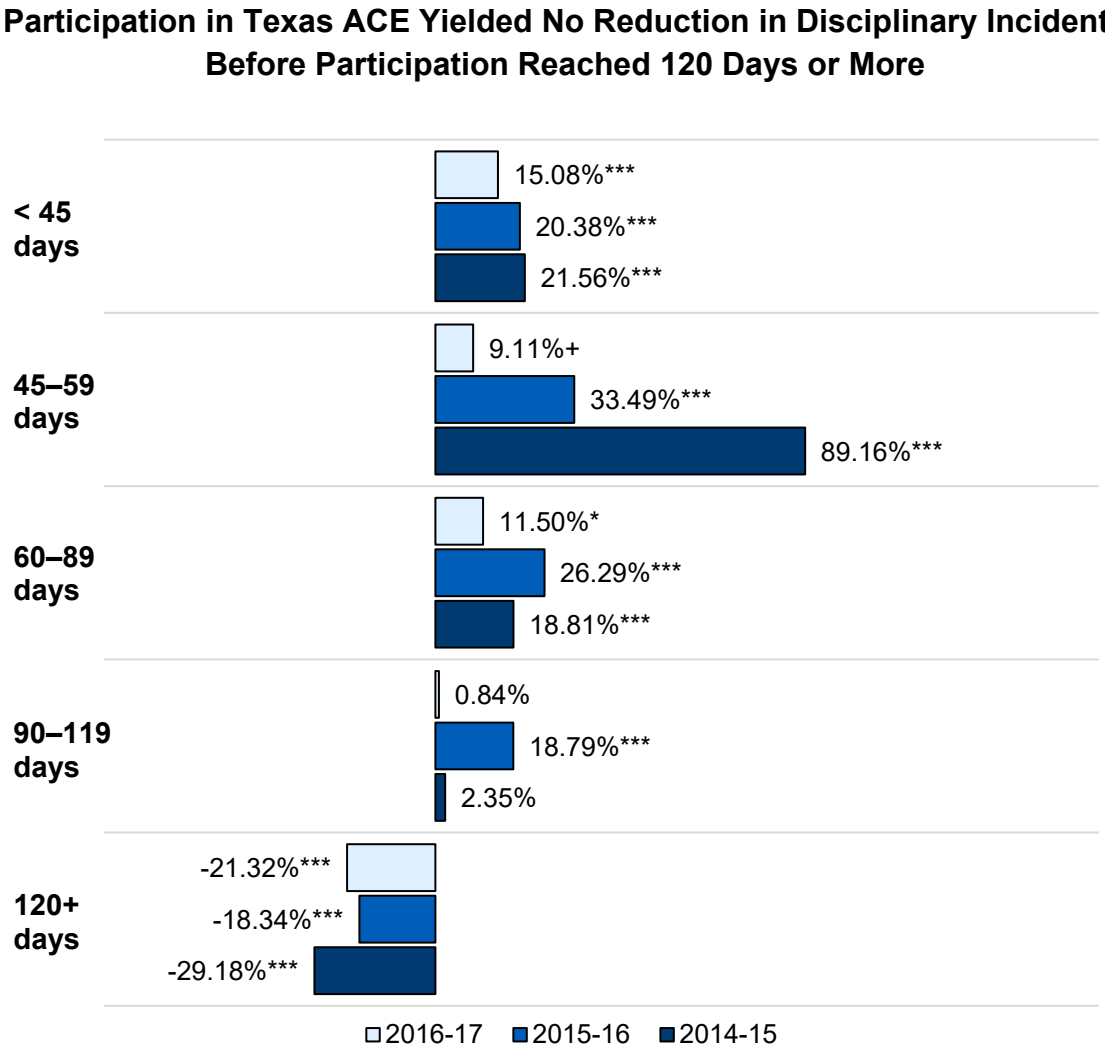
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than non-participants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared to with non-participating youth.
***$p < .001$.

Figure D5.8: School Attendance: Difference in the Percentage of Days Attended Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12



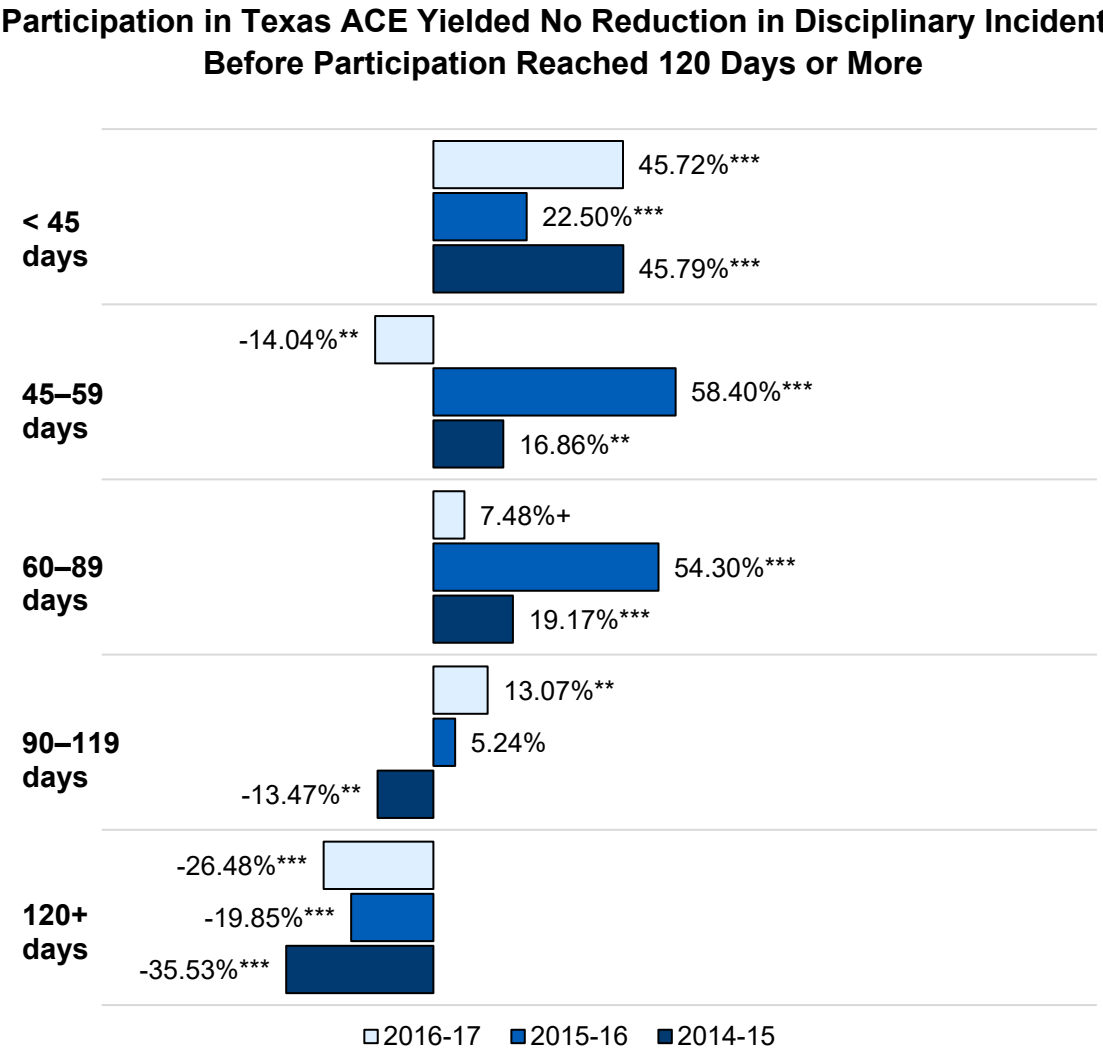
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average difference in the percentage of school days attended between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for the prior year's level of school attendance and student-level characteristics. Attendance data were transformed into the arcsine metric, and then models were run using regression assuming a normal distribution. The results were transformed back into the original metric to represent the percentage point increase/decrease for the treatment group. Positive results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance than non-participants. Negative results indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower rate of attendance compared to with non-participating youth.
***$p < .001$.

Figure D5.9: Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3



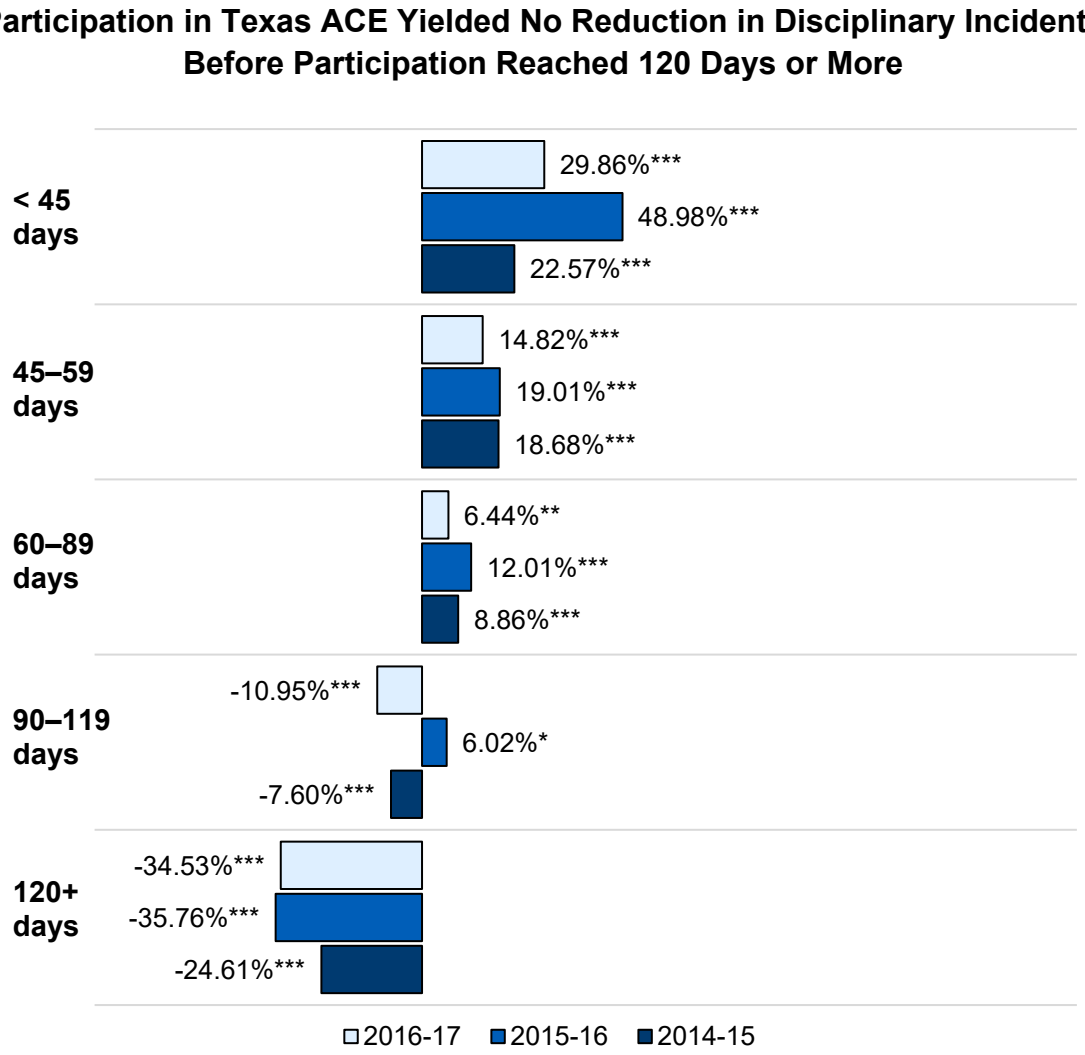
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 To 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than non-participating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.
$+p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $***p < .001$.

Figure D5.10: Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5



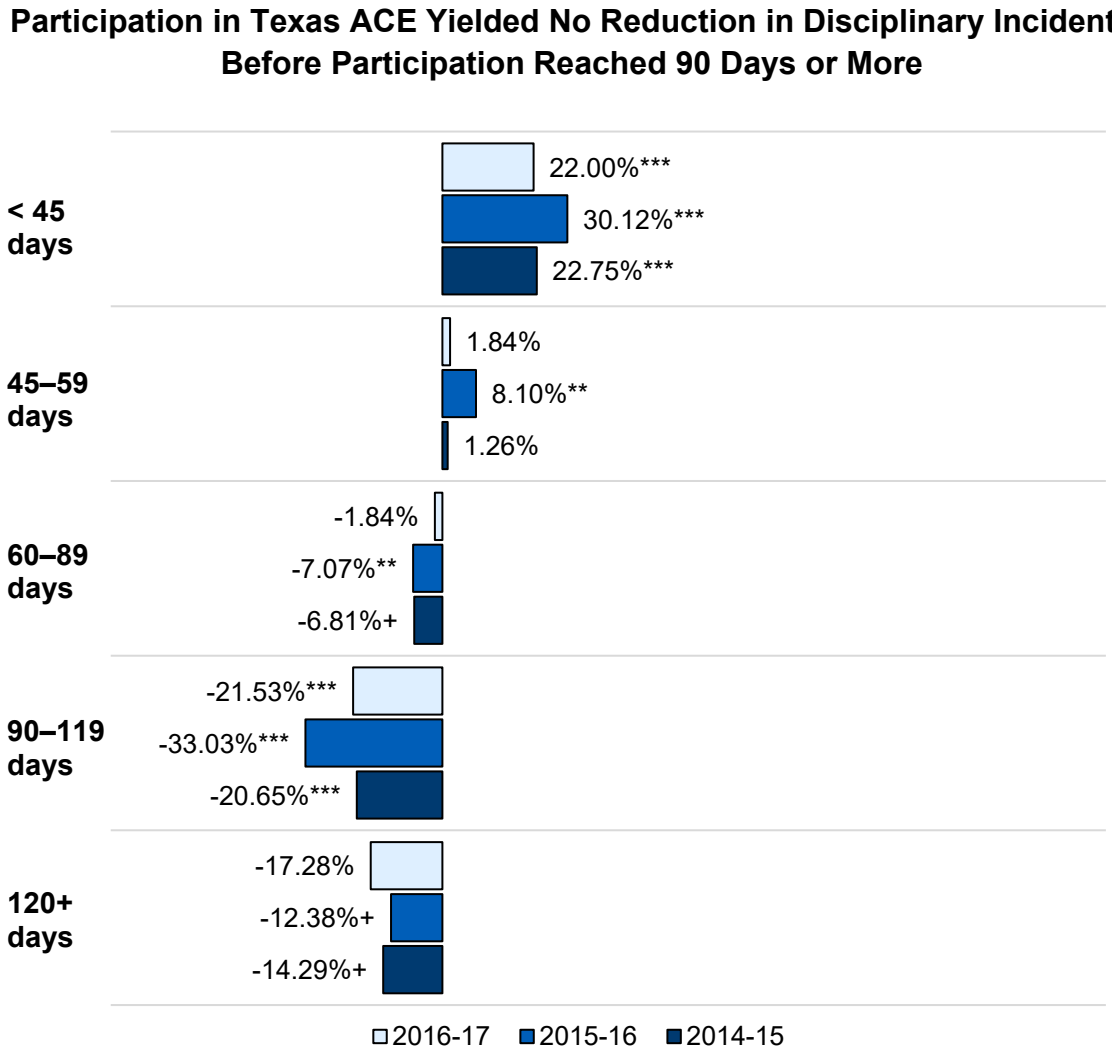
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than non-participating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.
$+p < .10$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Figure D5.11: Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



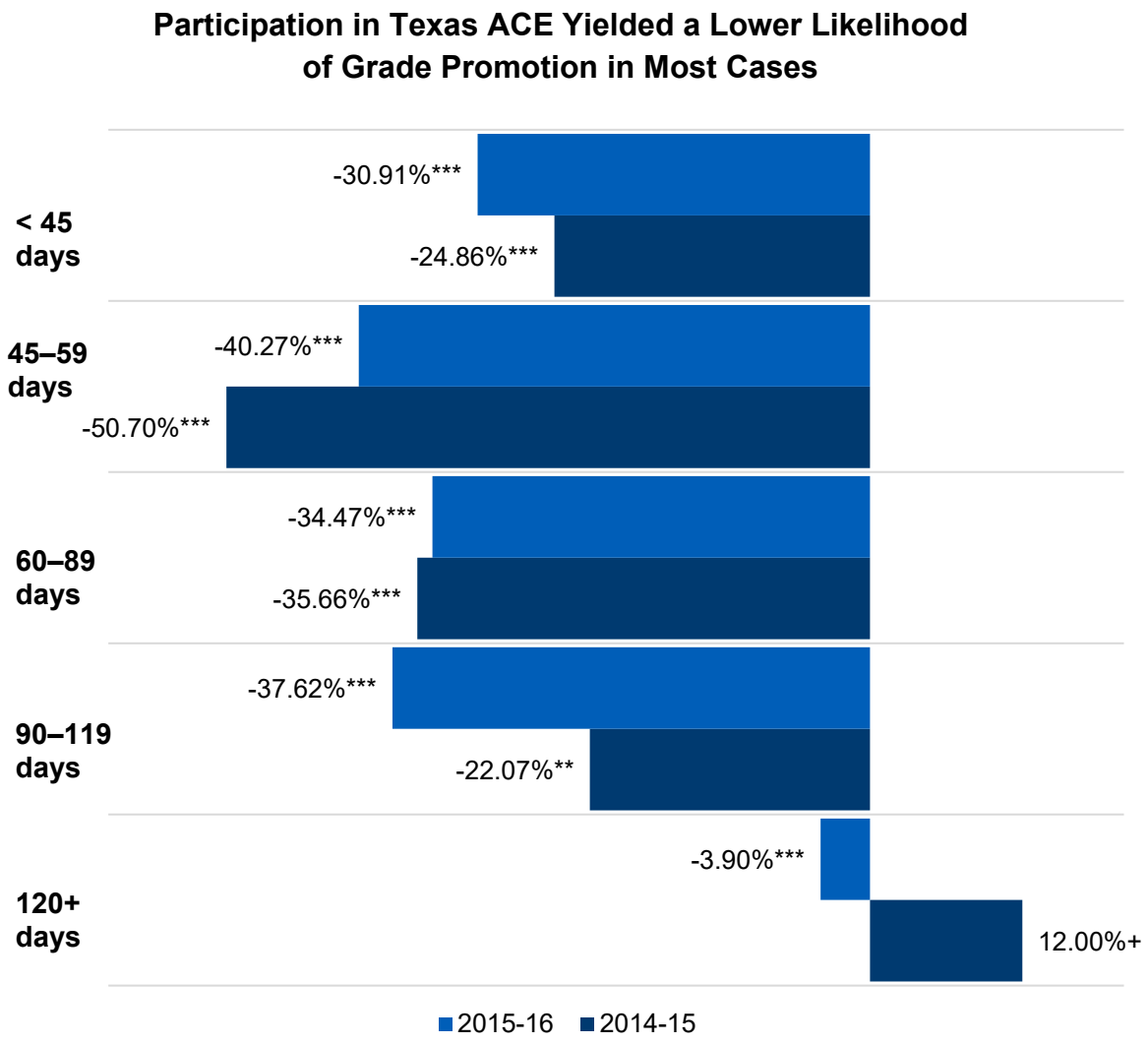
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. Results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than non-participating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure D5.12: Disciplinary Incidents: Difference in the Rate of Disciplinary Incidents Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 9–12



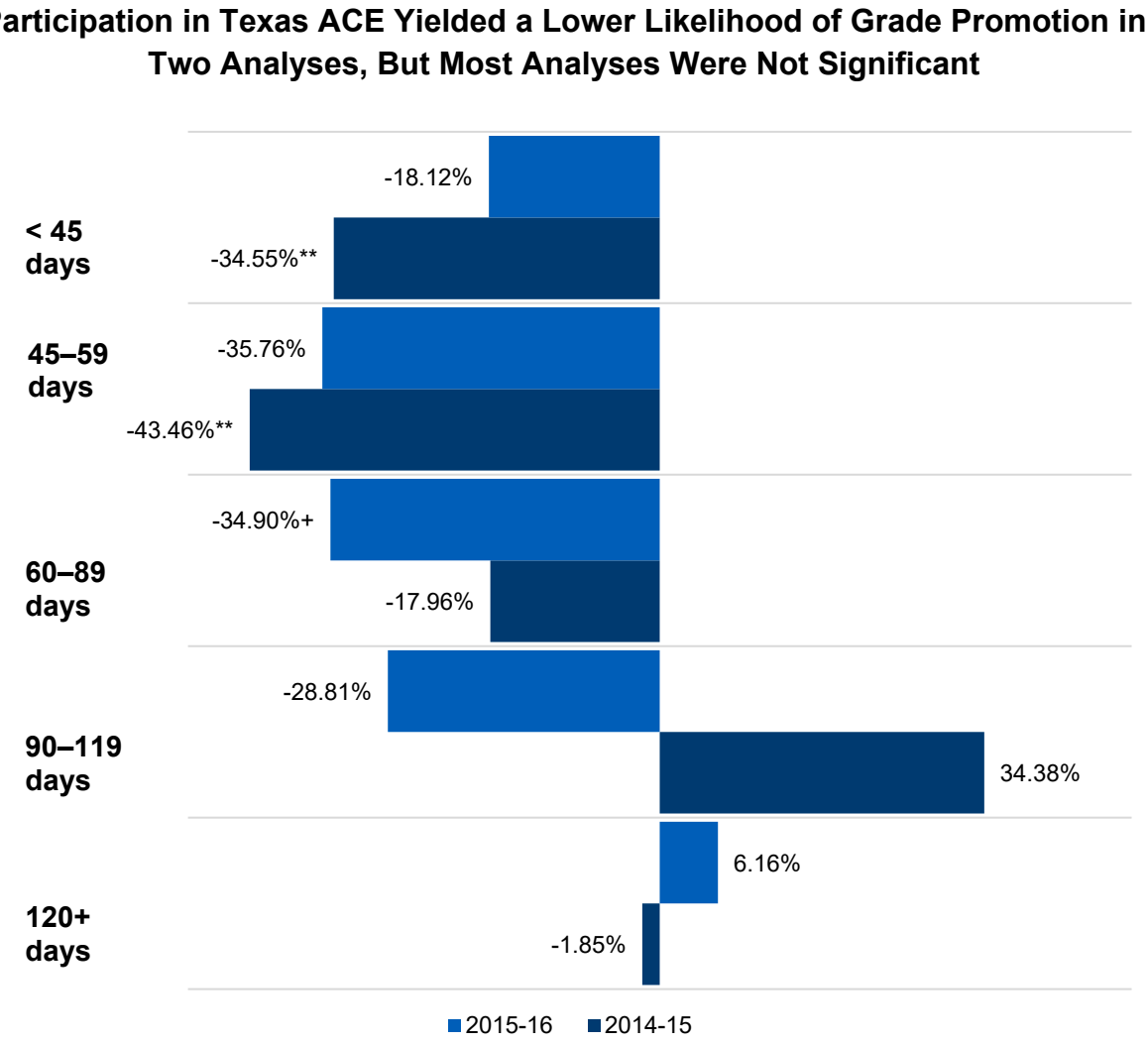
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of a disciplinary incident occurring between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year disciplinary incidents and student-level characteristics. The results are based on regression models run using a Poisson distribution. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants had a higher disciplinary incident rate than non-participating youth. A percentage less than 0 indicate that Texas ACE participants had a lower disciplinary rate.
+$p < .10$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure D5.13: Grade Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades K–3



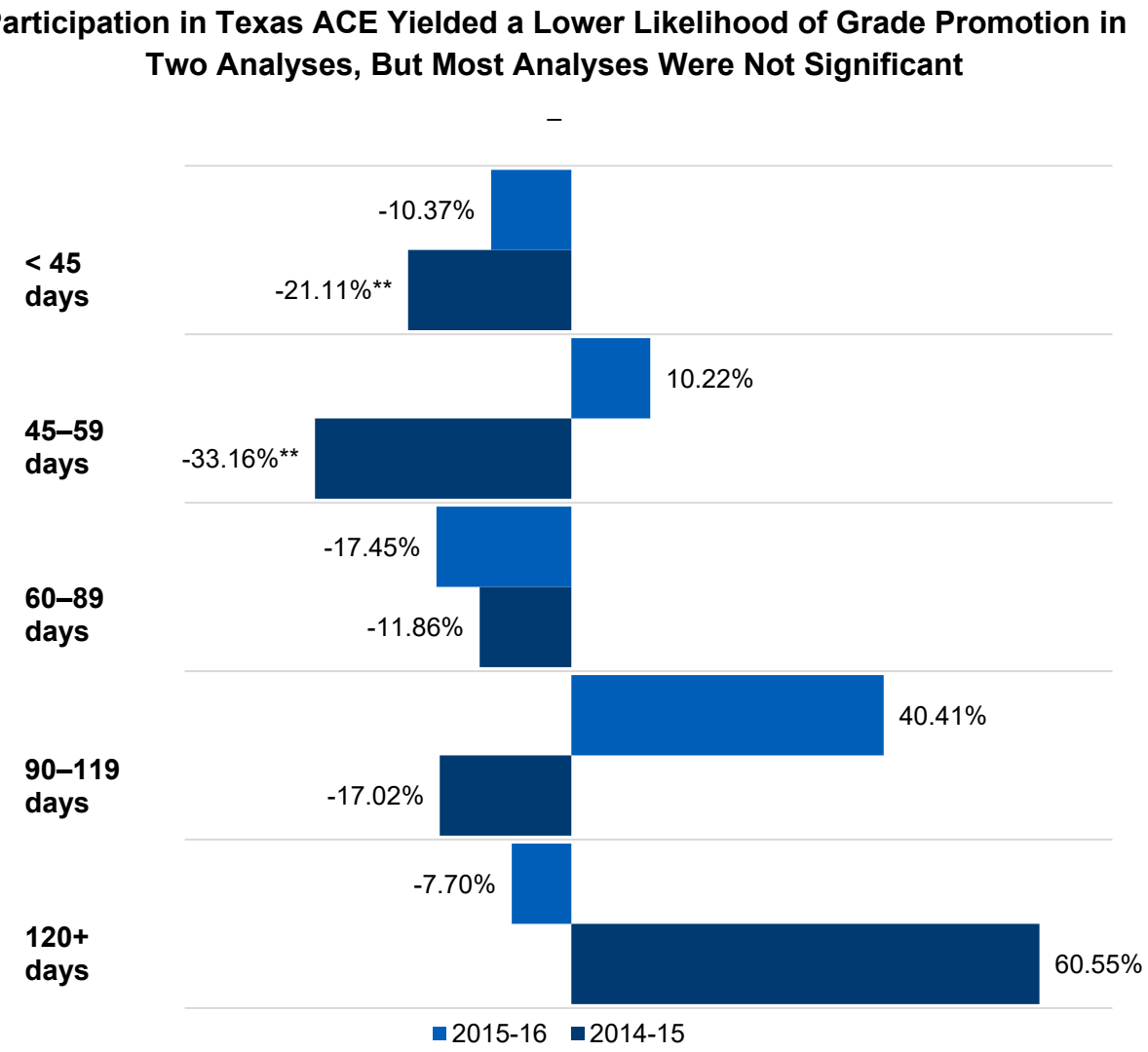
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade promotion and student-level characteristics. A percentage of 0 represents no difference in the rate of promotion between Texas ACE participants and nonparticipants. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate. $+p < .10$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Figure D5.14: Grade Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 4–5



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade promotion and student-level characteristics. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.
+$p < .10$. **$p < .01$.

Figure D5.15: Grade Promotion: Difference in the Rate of Grade-Level Promotion Between Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) and Non-Texas ACE Participants: Grades 6–8



Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. Estimates represent the average percentage increase/decrease in the odds of being promoted to the next grade level between students who participated in Texas ACE programming and similar (or matched) students who did not participate in Texas ACE, controlling for prior year grade promotion and student-level characteristics. A percentage less than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a lower rate. A percentage greater than 0 indicates that Texas ACE participants were promoted at a higher rate.
$^{**}p < .01$.

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Appendix E. Chapter 5 Additional Tables, Part B: Effect of Center-Level Characteristics on Student Outcomes

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) examined the relationship between 31 center-level characteristics and student outcomes. This analysis was conducted in two phases. In Phase 1, student-level matching was conducted at the center level; that is, for each center, students were matched to nonattending students who were enrolled in the school or schools that were affiliated with the center. Propensity score matching (PSM) was used to support this matching process. This process differed from the PSM analyses undertaken to calculate statewide impact estimates. For the statewide analyses, nonparticipating students across all feeder schools were placed into one large pool. Matching then happened against this pool based on school- and student-level covariates to identify the comparison groups used in the analyses.

When calculating center-level effects, nonparticipants were selected only from the same feeder schools as those who attended by the treatment population from a given center. In this sense, the purpose of these analyses was to calculate an estimated effect size using regression for each center to summarize how that center impacted Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) participants on the school-related outcomes examined. Four separate matching analyses were conducted for each outcome, with treatment determined as follows:

- At least 60 days attended in 2015–16
- At least 60 days attended in 2016–17
- At least 60 days attended in both 2014–15 and 2015–16
- At least 60 days attended in both 2015–16 and 2016–17

This approach allowed for an examination of how different center characteristics may relate to center-level effects after 1 and 2 years of participation in Texas ACE programming at the 60-day threshold.

After calculating an effect for each outcome for each center across the four treatment groups, the relationship between each of the 31 outcomes and the center effects for a given outcome were assessed via linear regression. Based on the results from these analyses, AIR selected five center-level characteristics that showed some significant relationship with student outcomes across more than 1 year, were malleable or policy relevant in the sense that the characteristic was one that could be potentially adopted by all centers (or avoided if a negative relationship was predicted), and demonstrated effects consistent with what might be hypothesized for the characteristic in question.

- ***Served a Higher Need Population Than Affiliated School(s).*** Although 21st Century Community Learning Center programs are charged with serving students in low-performing schools, it is hypothesized that programs that predominantly serve students who are particularly at risk relative to the overall school population have the potential to result in participating students potentially feeling stigmatized for being targeted for participation in programming, which may serve to work against achieving some of the goals specified for programming.
- ***Staffed With School-Day Teacher(s).*** Because school-day teachers may already have a relationship with students served in the program and understand their educational needs, it is hypothesized that programs predominantly staffed by teachers may be a facilitating factor relative to achieving the desired student outcomes.

- ***Staffed With College Students/Paraprofessional(s).*** Because college students and paraprofessionals have less training in terms of addressing the educational needs of participating students, it is hypothesized that programs that predominantly rely on college students and paraprofessionals to staff programs will have less of an impact on the desired student outcomes.
- ***High Summertime Programming Hours.*** Greater student participation in summer programming is hypothesized to enhance the desired student outcomes by helping limit summer knowledge loss.
- ***High Average Attendance in Texas ACE Programming.*** Greater attendance in programming was expected to be positively associated with student outcomes.

The goal in making these selections was to enhance the potential relevance and interpretability of the Phase 2 analyses. These relationships were analyzed during Phase 2.

Phase 1: Center-Level Effects Correlated With Center Characteristics

Tables E5.1–E5.5 summarize the relationships that were statistically significant, including the direction of those relationships. Phase 2 analyses were based on these results and are described in detail following Table E5.5. For example, in Table E5.1, centers associated with grantees in rural areas or small towns had significantly lower effect sizes in relation to State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness Mathematics scores for two of the treatment groups examined: (a) students attending at least 60 days of Texas ACE programming in 2016–17 and (b) students attending at least 60 days of Texas ACE programming in both 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Table E5.1: Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics

Center characteristic	2016–17	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
Rural town			–	
Grantee is a school				
First-time grantee				
Center's first year				
Mostly staffed by teachers		+		
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals				
Serves only elementary youth		–		
Serves only middle school youth		+		
Serves only high school youth	+			
Serves elementary and middle school youth				
Serves middle and high school youth		+		
High number of hours per week		+		
High cross-year retention				
High number of summer hours		+	+	
Higher proportion of English learners than school		–		
Higher proportion of students classified as economically disadvantaged than school	–	–	–	
Higher number of students identified for special education services than in school			–	
Higher proportion of students classified as economically disadvantaged than school	–	–	–	
Mixed activity model				
Mostly academic enrichment				
Mostly recreation		+		
Mostly homework and tutoring				
Mixed subject areas				
Mostly reading				
Mostly mathematics				
Mostly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics				
High average attendance			+	
High percentage attending both semesters		+		

Table Continues

Table E5.1 (Continued): Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Mathematics

Center characteristic	2016–17	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
High hours of parent programming				
High number of different activities				

Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17 and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. + indicates a significant and positive relationship between the center characteristic and outcome, and – indicates a significant, negative relationship.

Table E5.2: Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
Rural town	–			
Grantee is a school				
First-time grantee				
Center's first year				
Mostly staffed by teachers				
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals				
Serves only elementary youth		–		
Serves only middle school youth		+		
Serves only high school youth	+			
Serves elementary and middle school youth				
Serves middle and high school youth				
High number of hours per week		+		
High cross-year retention				
High number of summer hours		+		
Higher proportion of English learners than school	–	–		
Higher proportion of students who are at risk than school	–	–	–	
Higher proportion of students identified for special education services than school	–	–	–	
Higher proportion of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged than school		–	–	
Mixed activity model				
Mostly academic enrichment				
Mostly recreation				
Mostly homework and tutoring		+		
Mixed subject areas				
Mostly reading			+	
Mostly mathematics				
Mostly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics				
High average attendance		+	+	+
High percentage attending both semesters		+		

Table Continues

Table E5.2 (Continued): Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
High hours of parent programming				
High number of different activities				

Source. STAAR scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17 and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. + indicates a significant and positive relationship between the center characteristic and outcome, and – indicates a significant, negative relationship.

Table E5.3: Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Attendance

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
Rural town	+			
Grantee is a school	+	+	+	
First-time grantee	+		+	
Center's first year				
Mostly staffed by teachers			+	
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals			–	
Serves only elementary youth	-	-	-	-
Serves only middle school youth	+			+
Serves only high school youth				
Serves elementary and middle school youth		–		
Serves middle and high school youth	+	+	+	
High number of hours per week				
High cross-year retention		+		
High number of summer hours				+
Higher proportion of English learners than school				
Higher proportion of students who are at risk than school				
Higher proportion of students identified for special education services than school				
Higher proportion of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged than school			–	
Mixed activity model	-			
Mostly academic enrichment				
Mostly recreation				
Mostly homework and tutoring	+			
Mixed subject areas				
Mostly reading			+	
Mostly mathematics				
Mostly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics				–
High average attendance		-		
High percentage attending both semesters				

Table continues

Table E5.3 (Continued): Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Attendance

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
High hours of parent programming				
High number of different activities		–	–	

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17 and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. + indicates a significant and positive relationship between the center characteristic and outcome, and – indicates a significant, negative relationship.

Table E5.4: Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Discipline

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
Rural town				
Grantee is a school	–		–	
First-time grantee				
Center's first year		–		
Mostly staffed by teachers		–	–	
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals		+	+	
Serves only elementary youth		+		
Serves only middle school youth		–		
Serves only high school youth				
Serves elementary and middle school youth				
Serves middle and high school youth				
High number of hours per week	–		–	
High cross-year retention		–		
High number of summer hours	–			–
Higher proportion of English learners than school				
Higher proportion of students who are at risk than school				
Higher proportion of students receiving special education services than school				
Higher proportion of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged than school		+		+
Mixed activity model		+		
Mostly academic enrichment				
Mostly recreation				
Mostly homework and tutoring				
Mixed subject areas				
Mostly reading			–	
Mostly mathematics				
Mostly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics				
High average attendance			+	
High percentage attending both semesters			+	

Table Continues

Table E5.4 (Continued): Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Discipline

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
High percentage of youth with parent attending			+	
High hours of parent programming			–	
High number of different activities			+	

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17 and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. + indicates a significant and positive relationship between the center characteristic and outcome, and – indicates a significant, negative relationship.

Table E5.5: Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Career and Technical Education Credits

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
Rural town				
Grantee is a school	+		+	
First-time grantee				
Center's first year				
Mostly staffed by teachers				
Mostly staffed by college students or paraprofessionals				
Serves only elementary youth				
Serves only middle school youth				
Serves only high school youth				
Serves elementary and middle school youth				
Serves middle and high school youth				
High number of hours per week	+			
High cross-year retention		+		
High number of summer hours	+		–	
Higher proportion of English learners than school	–			
Higher proportion of students who are at risk than school	–			
Higher proportion of students identified for special education services than school				
Higher proportion of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged than school	–			
Mixed activity model	–			
Mostly academic enrichment		+		
Mostly recreation	+			
Mostly homework and tutoring			–	
Mixed subject areas				
Mostly reading				
Mostly mathematics				
Mostly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics				
High average attendance				
High percentage attending both semesters		+	–	

Table Continues

Table E5.5 (Continued): Phase 1 Center-Level Relationships: Career and Technical Education Credits

Center characteristic	2015–16	2016–17	2014–15 and 2015–16	2015–16 and 2016–17
High percentage of youth with parent attending	–	+	–	
High hours of parent programming	+	+		
High number of different activities	–			

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17 and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
Note. + indicates a significant and positive relationship between the center characteristic and outcome, and – indicates a significant, negative relationship.

Phase 2: Impact of Center Characteristics on Student Outcomes

Phase 2 of the center characteristics analysis focused on a more rigorous examination of the relationships between center characteristics and student outcomes. To facilitate this examination, AIR matched students attending centers with the characteristic to students attending centers without the characteristic. Unlike the Phase 1 analyses, these analyses focused only on students attending Texas ACE programming. The purpose of these analysis was to assess the impact on student outcomes when a given characteristic was present. This process allowed for the following question to be answered: Does the characteristic lead to more positive student outcomes?

Based on the Phase 1 center effect analyses, AIR selected five center-level characteristics that showed some relationship with student outcomes and were malleable or policy relevant. These characteristics were as follows:

- The center had high average attendance.
- The center was staffed with a college student or a paraprofessional.
- The center provided a high number of summertime hours of programming.
- The center had staff who were school-day teachers.
- The center served a more high-need population of youth than the affiliated school(s).

Pooled Center Effects

For each of these center-level characteristics, the relationship between the characteristic and student outcomes calculated during the Phase 2 analyses is presented in Tables E5.6–E5.10. These results were obtained by matching students attending centers with the characteristic to students attending centers without the characteristic. The effects shown represent the pooled effects across four separate year-based analyses:

- At least 60 days attended in 2016–17
- At least 60 days attended in 2015–16
- At least 60 days attended in both 2015–16 and 2016–17
- At least 60 days attended in both 2014–15 and 2015–16

High Average Attendance

Table E5.6: Pooled Effect of High Average Attendance on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	-0.003	0.001	0.015*	-0.037	-0.002
STAAR Mathematics	-0.238	2.113	0.910	-0.001	NA
STAAR Reading	4.207	1.786	0.018*	0.028	NA
Career and technical education course credits earned	-0.025	0.016	0.106	-0.092	-0.016
Discipline	-0.035	0.025	0.153	-0.035	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
*$p < .05$.

Staffed With College Student(s) or Paraprofessional(s)

Table E5.7: Pooled Effect of College Student(s) or Paraprofessional(s) Staffing on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	-0.002	0.001	0.119	-0.020	-0.001
STAAR Mathematics	-1.816	1.887	0.336	-0.012	NA
STAAR Reading	0.835	1.620	0.606	0.005	NA
Career and technical education course credits earned	-0.014	0.015	0.372	-0.040	-0.008
Discipline	-0.034	0.023	0.136	-0.038	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.

High Summertime Programming Hours

Table E5.8: Pooled Effect of High Summertime Programming Hours on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	-0.007	0.002	0.000***	-0.071	-0.003
STAAR Mathematics	-2.812	2.527	0.266	-0.018	NA
STAAR Reading	0.340	2.098	0.871	0.002	NA
Career and technical education course credits earned	-0.016	0.022	0.446	-0.048	-0.010
Discipline	-0.030	0.026	0.250	-0.034	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
****p* < .001.

Staffed With School-Day Teacher(s)

Table E5.9: Pooled Effect of School-Day Teacher Staffing on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	0.001	0.001	0.417	0.011	0.000
STAAR Mathematics	1.643	1.908	0.389	0.011	NA
STAAR Reading	-0.377	1.614	0.815	-0.002	NA
Career and technical education course credits earned	0.029	0.015	0.054	0.101	0.017
Discipline	0.001	0.022	0.952	0.002	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17, and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.

Served a Higher Need Population Than Affiliated School(s)

The higher need composite was determined based on four center-level characteristics. Each center was classified as either serving or not serving a higher proportion of English learners, students who are at risk, students who were identified for special education services, and students who are classified as economically disadvantaged than the affiliated school(s). Any center classified with at least two of these indicators was included in the higher need group of centers. These centers were then compared to centers with one or none of these four high-need markers.

Table E5.10: Pooled Effect of Serving a Higher Need Population on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	0.001	0.001	0.320	0.015	0.001
STAAR Mathematics	-1.020	2.117	0.630	-0.007	NA
STAAR Reading	-7.059	1.785	0.000***	-0.047	NA
Career and technical education course credits earned	-0.014	0.019	0.464	-0.059	-0.009
Discipline	0.000	0.025	0.994	-0.003	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
***$p < .001$.

Annual Effects of Center Characteristics

Tables E5.11 to E5.16 contain model results for each outcome examined across all four treatment groups for the five center characteristics examined during the Phase 2 analyses.

Table E5.11: Annual Effect of High Average Attendance on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Year	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	2016	-0.002	0.002	0.296	-0.024	-0.001
	2017	-0.004	0.003	0.166	-0.045	-0.002
	2015–16	-0.004	0.003	0.133	-0.042	-0.002
	2016–17	-0.007	0.006	0.249	-0.077	-0.003
Career and technical education course credits earned	2016	-0.067	0.033	0.039*	-0.237	-0.044
	2017	0.022	0.033	0.510	0.070	0.013
	2015–16	-0.025	0.023	0.284	-0.115	-0.016
	2016–17	-0.033	0.047	0.479	-0.213	-0.021
STAAR Mathematics	2016	-1.900	3.204	0.553	-0.013	NA
	2017	3.865	3.581	0.280	0.024	NA
	2015–16	-1.526	5.439	0.779	-0.010	NA
	2016–17	-7.988	8.226	0.332	-0.049	NA
STAAR Reading	2016	0.911	2.605	0.727	0.006	NA
	2017	10.106	3.093	0.001**	0.063	NA
	2015–16	5.757	4.894	0.239	0.039	NA
	2016–17	-5.550	7.060	0.432	-0.033	NA
Discipline	2016	-0.037	0.042	0.375	-0.034	NA
	2017	-0.042	0.054	0.437	-0.041	NA
	2015–16	-0.046	0.042	0.274	-0.050	NA
	2016–17	0.020	0.076	0.794	0.021	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table E5.12: Annual Effect of College Student(s) or Paraprofessional(s) Staffing on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Year	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	2016	-0.002	0.002	0.445	-0.016	-0.001
	2017	0.003	0.002	0.240	0.029	0.001
	2015–16	-0.007	0.002	0.002**	-0.077	-0.003
	2016–17	-0.001	0.004	0.893	-0.006	0.000
Career and technical education course credits earned	2016	-0.027	0.028	0.341	-0.087	-0.017
	2017	0.006	0.026	0.826	0.019	0.003
	2015–16	-0.006	0.037	0.862	-0.022	-0.004
	2016–17	-0.032	0.033	0.338	-0.193	-0.020
STAAR Mathematics	2016	-1.170	3.001	0.697	-0.008	NA
	2017	-3.621	3.023	0.231	-0.023	NA
	2015–16	-1.416	5.065	0.780	-0.010	NA
	2016–17	3.301	6.816	0.628	0.019	NA
STAAR Reading	2016	0.746	2.526	0.768	0.005	NA
	2017	0.457	2.544	0.857	0.003	NA
	2015–16	1.896	4.770	0.691	0.013	NA
	2016–17	1.818	6.193	0.769	0.011	NA
Discipline	2016	-0.079	0.043	0.068	-0.071	NA
	2017	-0.057	0.043	0.185	-0.063	NA
	2015–16	0.001	0.039	0.973	0.001	NA
	2016–17	0.029	0.068	0.665	0.033	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
**$p < .01$.

Table E5.13: Annual Effect of High Summertime Programming Hours on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Year	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	2016	-0.004	0.002	0.130	-0.038	-0.002
	2017	-0.011	0.005	0.029*	-0.112	-0.005
	2015–16	-0.009*	0.003	0.001	-0.101*	-0.004
	2016–17	-0.007	0.006	0.215	-0.076	-0.003
Career and technical education course credits earned	2016	0.002	0.046	0.964	0.006	0.001
	2017	0.008	0.086	0.927	0.030	0.005
	2015–16	-0.020	0.041	0.622	-0.062	-0.012
	2016–17	-0.027	0.032	0.412	-0.179	-0.017
STAAR Mathematics	2016	-2.319	3.459	0.503	-0.015	NA
	2017	-1.703	6.514	0.794	-0.011	NA
	2015–16	-4.250	5.551	0.444	-0.029	NA
	2016–17	-4.037	7.682	0.599	-0.027	NA
STAAR Reading	2016	0.407	2.761	0.883	0.003	NA
	2017	-3.072	5.039	0.542	-0.020	NA
	2015–16	4.210	5.132	0.412	0.028	NA
	2016–17	-0.809	7.329	0.912	-0.005	NA
Discipline	2016	-0.055	0.047	0.235	-0.053	NA
	2017	-0.067	0.102	0.514	-0.067	NA
	2015–16	-0.008	0.037	0.836	-0.009	NA
	2016–17	-0.043	0.084	0.610	-0.041	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
*$p < .05$.

Table E5.14: Annual Effect of School-Day Teacher Staffing on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Year	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	2016	0.001	0.002	0.745	0.007	0.000
	2017	-0.002	0.003	0.456	-0.020	-0.001
	2015–16	0.004	0.002	0.068	0.049	0.002
	2016–17	0.000	0.004	0.929	0.004	0.000
Career and technical education course credits earned	2016	0.041	0.037	0.267	0.128	0.023
	2017	0.025	0.028	0.379	0.078	0.014
	2015–16	0.027	0.027	0.309	0.105	0.016
	2016–17	0.030	0.033	0.365	0.108	0.017
STAAR Mathematics	2016	0.293	3.016	0.923	0.002	NA
	2017	3.106	3.047	0.308	0.020	NA
	2015–16	3.076	5.230	0.556	0.021	NA
	2016–17	-1.352	6.976	0.846	-0.009	NA
STAAR Reading	2016	-0.973	2.500	0.697	-0.007	NA
	2017	0.432	2.577	0.867	0.003	NA
	2015–16	-0.790	4.857	0.871	-0.005	NA
	2016–17	-0.658	5.672	0.908	-0.004	NA
Discipline	2016	0.048	0.040	0.225	0.040	NA
	2017	0.007	0.041	0.859	0.005	NA
	2015–16	-0.037	0.041	0.360	-0.034	NA
	2016–17	-0.052	0.074	0.484	-0.041	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.

Table E5.15: Annual Effect of Serving a Higher Need Population on Student Outcomes

Outcome	Year	Model estimate	Standard error	*P*-value	Effect size	Effect (rate)
Attendance	2016	0.001	0.002	0.819	0.005	0.000
	2017	0.003	0.003	0.285	0.031	0.001
	2015–16	0.001	0.003	0.714	0.011	0.000
	2016–17	0.003	0.006	0.613	0.034	0.001
Career and technical education course credits earned	2016	-0.076	0.043	0.081	-0.213	-0.050
	2017	0.010	0.031	0.753	0.032	0.006
	2015–16	-0.069	0.042	0.097	-0.269	-0.045
	2016–17	0.051	0.040	0.205	0.217	0.028
STAAR Mathematics	2016	1.069	3.544	0.763	0.007	NA
	2017	-2.075	3.149	0.510	-0.014	NA
	2015–16	-3.134	5.869	0.593	-0.022	NA
	2016–17	-0.912	8.527	0.915	-0.006	NA
STAAR Reading	2016	-4.581	2.943	0.120	-0.031	NA
	2017	-8.771	2.648	0.001**	-0.059	NA
	2015–16	-11.915	5.266	0.024*	-0.082	NA
	2016–17	-0.308	7.121	0.965	-0.002	NA
Discipline	2016	0.015	0.049	0.758	0.014	NA
	2017	-0.052	0.049	0.287	-0.046	NA
	2015–16	0.043	0.040	0.287	0.046	NA
	2016–17	-0.070	0.080	0.382	-0.067	NA

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), 2014–15 to 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2014–15 to 2016–17; and Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2014–15 to 2016–17.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Annual Effects of Center Characteristics

Tables E5.16 to E5.19 outline mean center effects associated with characteristics derived from site visit data.

Table E5.16: Mean Effects Comparing Centers Targeting Students Who Are at Risk and Centers That Did Not: Site Visit Sample

Center characteristic	At-risk population targeted		At-risk population not targeted	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
STAAR Reading effect (scale score points)	-18.45	13	10.00	6
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	-6.51	13	23.45	6
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	.01	14	.01	6
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-3.53%	14	-7.83%	6

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2017 site visit.

Table E5.17. Mean Effects Comparing Centers Obtaining Youth Input and Centers That Did Not: Site Visit Sample

Center characteristic	Youth input obtained		Youth input not Obtained	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
STAAR Reading effect (scale score points)	-6.17	16	-27.08	3
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	6.53	16	-16.16	3
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	.01	17	.01	3
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-4.94%	17	-4.14%	3

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2017 site visit.

Table E5.18: Mean Effects Comparing Centers Using a Quality Tool and Centers That Did Not: Site Visit Sample

Center characteristic	Quality tool used		Quality tool not used	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
STAAR Reading effect (scale score points)	-12.77	5	-8.29	14
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	2.83	5	2.99	14
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	.01	5	.01	15
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-11.55%	5	-2.58%	15

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17; and center characteristic data obtained during the spring 2017 site visit.

Table E5.19: Mean Effects Comparing Centers With Higher Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Scores and Centers With Lower PQA Scores: Site Visit Sample

Center characteristic	Higher PQA Score		Lower PQA Score	
	Mean	Number of centers	Mean	Number of centers
STAAR Reading effect (scale score points)	-4.29	9	-14.13	10
STAAR Mathematics effect (scale score points)	8.37	9	-1.93	10
School-day attendance effect (percentage points)	.01	10	.01	10
Disciplinary incident effect (percentage rate)	-4.99%	10	-4.66%	10

Source. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), 2016–17; Public Education Information Management System data, 2016–17; Tx21st Student Tracking System, 2016–17; and center characteristic data obtained during spring 2017 site visit.

Appendix F. Data Sources

Table F1: Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
Tx21st Student Tracking System	Texas Education Agency (TEA) • Program characteristics	The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a descriptive analysis of Texas 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grantee and center program characteristics.
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) staff and youth surveys	Data collection by the American Institutes for Research/Gibson Consulting Group • Youth activity leader surveys • Youth experience survey	AIR conducted independent descriptive analyses of the responses from the 21st CLCC staff survey and youth survey. For each survey, scaled survey responses were developed from dichotomous (i.e., yes-or-no) answers to rating scales (e.g., Likert scales of strongly agree to strongly disagree) to analyze staff and youth engagement. Items were then combined to reduce a large set of items to a small number of summary scores that represented each construct. Thus, one or two scale scores, rather than (for example) five or 10 individual survey items, summarize a construct. After the items were combined, Rasch scale scores were created for each construct using Winsteps (Linacre, 2015), a Rasch analysis software program. The scales were examined for item fit and internal consistency.

Table Continues

Table F1 (Continued): Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) **State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)** **Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)**	Texas Education Agency PEIMS • Students served by the program • Schools that students attend STAAR • Reading and mathematics assessment outcomes • End-of-course assessments TAPR • School and district information	AIR used correlational hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) as well as multiple regression approaches to explore the relationship between students' participation levels (in terms of days[34]) and associated outcomes such as truancy rates, grade promotion, and reading and mathematics achievement. To disentangle preexisting differences between students who attended the 21st CCLC program and those who did not, from the effect of attending the program, the evaluation team conducted propensity score matching (PSM) using PEIMS, STAAR, and TARP data to identify a group of matched comparison students who are similar to students enrolled in the 21st CCLC program. PSM is a two-stage process that is designed to address the problem of potential selection bias. In the first stage, the probability that each student participates is modeled on available observable characteristics. By modeling selection into the afterschool program, this approach allowed us to compare participating and nonparticipating students who had a similar propensity to select into the program based on observable characteristics that were available in the data received from TEA (e.g., prior years' outcome scores, student- and school-level demographics). In the second stage, the predicted probability of participation was used to model student outcomes while accounting for selection bias using an HLM approach with students nested within schools to account for the clustering data structure. Steps were taken to balance pretreatment group differences in observed covariates using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009).
Locale codes	U.S. Department of Education (ED), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) • 2014 EDGE Locales, Texas	Locale codes were used in the descriptive analysis in Chapter 2 to understand the distribution of Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) across four locale types categorized by NCES. "The NCES locale framework classifies all territory in the U.S. into four types of areas—City, Suburban, Town, and Rural. Each area is divided into three subtypes based on population size (in the case of City and Suburban assignments) and proximity to urban areas (in the case of Town and Rural assignments)" (ED, n.d.).

Table Continues

[34] Youth participating in programming was broken up into the following five categories: Less than 45 days, 45–59 days, 60–89 days, 90–119 days, and 120 days or more either in 2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17. Separate impact estimates were calculated for youth in each attendance group for each school year (i.e., 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17). In addition, impact analyses were conducted for students who participated in programming 60 days or more in both the 2014–15 and 2015–16 school years and both the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years.

Table F1 (Continued): Analytic Approach by Data Source

Data	Source/data	Analytic approach
Stakeholder interview and focus group data	Data collection by AIR/Gibson Consulting Group • Interviews with Texas ACE project directors, center coordinators, family engagement specialists, school principals, advisory board members • Focus groups with Texas ACE staff	Both interviews and focus groups were audio recorded with participant consent. Audio files were then transcribed. Transcripts were coded and analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Gibson Consulting Group staff looked for primary themes that emerged across the varied areas of implementation, including local goals and objectives. Summary percentages presented in the report are based on respondents from a given center who explicitly mentioned a particular theme.

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Appendix G. Site Visit Methodology

An initial sample of forty 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) centers was selected across the state. After organizing the sample by location, 20 centers in geographically diverse areas that were also in operation during the site visit period were selected for site visits (six centers in Central Texas, four centers in North Texas/Dallas Metroplex, six centers in Houston/Gulf Coast, two centers in South Texas, and two centers in West Texas). The Gibson Consulting Group conducted two-day site visits to each center to collect qualitative data related to center operational practices. Site visits occurred from April 24, 2017 to May 26, 2017.

While on-site, members of the evaluation team conducted four observations of afterschool offerings with an attempt to focus on sessions that involved English language arts, mathematics, or science content. They also conducted in-person interviews with the project director, the site coordinator, the family engagement specialist, and the campus principal or assistant principal, and they facilitated a group interview with afterschool activity leaders. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with an advisory board member when possible.[35,36] Afterschool program offerings were observed by members of the evaluation team using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) for Grades 6–12 or the School-Age Youth Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) for Grades K–5. Researchers also used the Assessment of Afterschool Practices Observation Tool (APT-O) to provide customized ratings of targeted academic skill building. For each of the afterschool offerings observed, evaluation team members checked whether a series of activities related to reading, written communications, verbal communications, and mathematics were present in the activity.[37] A total of 79 observations of afterschool activities were conducted and scored using the YPQA or SAPQA observation tools plus the APT-O observation protocol.

A total of 103 interviews were completed, and audio files were transcribed for analysis. Audio files were transcribed with the permission of the interviewees, and data from the 103 completed interviews were imported into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The research team then engaged in a process of iterative coding and analysis. Site visit interviews were coded for primary themes emerging across a variety of areas of implementation, including local goals and objectives. Summary percentages presented in the report are based on respondents from a given center that explicitly mentioned a particular theme. Interview procedures included avoiding frequent prompts to probe for a variety of possible responses. Therefore, the lack of an explicit response does not mean the practice was not occurring at a center, given the possibility of an omission from the respondent.

In addition to the on-site data collection activities and related telephone interviews, the evaluation team administered paper Scantron surveys to all youth activity leaders and 21st CCLC students. Survey packets were delivered to site coordinators during the week of May 8, 2017, with instructions to administer the surveys to youth activity leaders and students between the May 15 and May 25, 2017. Detailed instructions were provided to the site coordinators regarding the protocol for administering the two surveys. Both surveys were administered at all twenty 21st CCLC centers that were included in the site visit sample. All completed surveys were received by June 7, 2017. For the youth activity leader

[35] The research team visited some centers that shared a Texas Afterschool Centers on Education program project director and family engagement specialist. In such cases, the project director and family engagement specialist were interviewed only once at one of the sites.
[36] Not all sites have an advisory board in place, and it was not possible to reach board members for a small number of centers.
[37] The APT-O observation protocol also included seven additional Program Quality Assessment items (scored for activities involving students in Grades 6–12) related to academic climate.

survey, 202 completed surveys were received from 19 of the 20 sampled 21st CCLCs. For the student survey, 845 completed surveys were received from 19 of the 20 sampled 21st CCLCs.

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Appendix H. Site Interview Protocols and Surveys

- Activity leader survey
- Youth experience survey (English and Spanish)
- Community board member interview
- Family engagement specialist interview
- Parent/guardian passive consent (English and Spanish)
- Principal interview
- Project director interview
- Staff focus group
- Site coordinator interview

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Activity Leader Survey: Daily Activities

The survey you are being asked to complete is part of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation being conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) in order to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of the project is to better understand how centers funded by 21st CCLC support positive youth outcomes and the role program quality and youth experiences in programming play in this process.

This survey asks about the types of things youth did in the activities you led in today's Texas ACE program and some questions related to your background and role in the program. If you led more than one activity in today's program, you will asked to complete a separate survey for each activity.

It is important to note that this effort is not an evaluation of you or your program specifically. All responses you provide in taking this survey will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. No identifiable survey results will be made to anyone outside the study team at AIR.

There are no foreseeable risks to you based on your participation in this survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey is voluntary. You can opt not to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Neil Naftzger at nnaftzger@air.org, 630-649-6616 or Brenda Arellano at barellano@air.org, 312-690-7371. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant in this data collection effort, you may contact the hair of AIR's Institutional Review Board (which is responsible for protecting the rights of study participants) at IRBChair@air.org, toll free at 1-800-634-0797, or c/o AIR, 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20007.

Texas ACE Evaluation

Activity Leader Survey: Daily Activities

Activity Name:

1. **Please indicate how you would classify this activity (please select one option).**
   - ○ Tutoring
   - ○ Homework Help
   - ○ Academic direct instruction
   - ○ Academic enrichment
   - ○ Nonacademic enrichment
   - ○ Sports/Physical activity
   - ○ Community/Service learning
   - ○ Youth Leadership
   - ○ Other

2. **Please indicate if any of the following content areas were part of the activities you provided today.**
   - ○ Reading/Language Arts
   - ○ Mathematics
   - ○ Science
   - ○ Computers/other technology
   - ○ STEM/STEAM (intentional integration of more than one STEM/STEAM content areas)
   - ○ Art
   - ○ Music
   - ○ Languages other than English/Cultural or social studies
   - ○ Entrepreneurship
   - ○ Health/nutrition
   - ○ English language acquisition
   - ○ Other

3. **Please answer the following questions about what youth did today in *this activity*.**

To what extent did youth do the following in this activity today?	No programming time was spent doing this	Less than half of the programming time today was spent doing this	Most programming time today was spent doing this
a. Youth primarily worked alone on tasks related to the activity	○	○	○
b. Youth primarily worked in small groups on tasks related to the activity	○	○	○
c. Youth received *direct instruction*[1] in a particular academic content area (e.g., math, science, reading, etc.)	○	○	○
d. Youth worked on a project that required them to make or build things	○	○	○
e. Youth worked on a group project that will take multiple sessions to complete	○	○	○

[1] In this survey, the term *direct instruction* refers to the following set of activities:

- Group Instruction - These activities largely mirror typical school-day classroom instruction with the activity leader or teacher spending the bulk of the activity teaching a lesson with an explicit academic focus to a group of participating students.
- Tutoring - Tutors or teachers *directly* work with students individually and/or in small groups to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to concepts addressed during the school day.

To what extent did youth do the following in this activity today?	No programming time was spent doing this	Less than half of the programming time today was spent doing this	A majority of programming time today was spent doing this
f. Youth participated in activities that allowed them to explore and discover new things on their own	○	○	○
g. Youth learned or practiced a skill that is not related to a specific school-day content area (e.g., learning tae kwon do, etc.)	○	○	○
h. Youth participated in a competition, contest, or game	○	○	○
i. Youth participated in whole group discussions you facilitated	○	○	○
j. Youth delivered a presentation to the whole group or an external audience	○	○	○
k. Youth went on a field trip	○	○	○
l. Youth listened to a presentation from a speaker or special guest from outside the program	○	○	○
m. Youth planned future activities or projects	○	○	○
n. Youth participated in an activity that was designed to make a contribution or be helpful to others or the community (e.g., service learning project)	○	○	○

4. Which of the following best describes your primary role in the program?

○ I teach (co-teach) or lead (co-lead) regular program activities (e.g., group leader).
○ I assist with activities (e.g., assistant group leader).

5. What is your highest level of education?

○ Less than high school
○ Completed high school or GED but did not go any further
○ Some college, other classes/training not culminating in a degree
○ Completed two year college degree
○ Completed four year college degree
○ Some graduate work
○ Master's degree or higher

6. Do you hold a teaching credential or certificate?

○ Yes
○ No

Texas ACE Evaluation: Youth Experience Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out more about afterschool programs like your Texas ACE program and how kids like you feel about these programs. We care about what you think about this program, and your answers will help make afterschool programs better for kids in Texas. We need your honest feedback. The questions on the survey ask about what you experienced in this afterschool program today. This is not a test. There are no "wrong" answers. Please choose the answer that best describes your experience today. This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to answer all of the questions.

This survey is voluntary. You only have to take the survey if you want to but your parent(s)/guardian(s) know you may be taking this survey. This survey does not have your name on it, so everything you write is confidential, which means that no one (not your parents, teachers, school staff or other students) will be allowed to know how you answer these questions.

Your answers will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law—no one in the program or your family will know what you answered.

Please answer each question by checking the boxes or filling in the circle next to the answer**.** You can skip questions you don't want to answer and you can stop taking the survey if you don't want to finish it.

I understand that this survey is voluntary, and I am choosing to take it: ☐ *(check if yes)*

Texas ACE Evaluation

Youth Experience Survey

1. Please answer these questions about TODAY's AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
a. How challenging were today's activities?	○	○	○	○
b. Were you good at today's activities?	○	○	○	○
c. Were today's activities interesting?	○	○	○	○
d. Were today's activities important to you?	○	○	○	○
e. Were today's activities important to your future goals?	○	○	○	○
f. Could you see yourself using what you were learning in today's activities outside this program?	○	○	○	○
g. Did you work with other kids during today's activities?	○	○	○	○
	Not at All	**A Little**	**Somewhat**	**Very Much**
h. Did you enjoy today's activities?	○	○	○	○
i. Did you have to concentrate to do today's activities?	○	○	○	○
j. Do you feel like you learned something or got better at something today?	○	○	○	○
k. Did you feel in control of the situation today?	○	○	○	○
l. Do you feel you worked hard during today's activities?	○	○	○	○
m. Did you feel like you were making a difference for others during today's activities?	○	○	○	○
n. Was it easy to pay attention during today's activities?	○	○	○	○
	Not at All	**A Little**	**Somewhat**	**Very Much**
o. How HAPPY were you feeling in the program today?	○	○	○	○
p. How EXCITED were you feeling in the program today?	○	○	○	○
q. How FRUSTRATED were you feeling in the program today?	○	○	○	○
r. How BORED were you feeling in the program today?	○	○	○	○
s. How STRESSED were you feeling in the program today?	○	○	○	○

Evaluación del programa Texas ACE:
Encuesta sobre las experiencias de los niños

El objetivo de esta encuesta es obtener más información sobre los programas extracurriculares como el programa Texas ACE al que asistes, y sobre qué opinan de ellos los niños como tú. Nos interesa lo que piensas sobre este programa, y tus respuestas servirán para mejorar los programas extracurriculares en beneficio de los niños de Texas. Necesitamos tus opiniones sinceras. Las preguntas de la encuesta se refieren a las experiencias que tuviste en este programa extracurricular hoy. Esta encuesta no es un examen. Ninguna respuesta es incorrecta. Escoge la respuesta que describa mejor las experiencias que tuviste hoy. Tardarás entre 10 y 15 minutos en responder a todas las preguntas de esta encuesta.

Esta encuesta es voluntaria. Solo tienes que responderla si quieres hacerlo, y si tu padre, tu madre o tu(s) tutor(es) saben que quizá la estás respondiendo. La encuesta no lleva tu nombre, de modo que todo lo que escribas es confidencial. Eso significa que nadie podrá enterarse de las respuestas que des a estas preguntas (ni siquiera tus padres, tus maestros, el personal de la escuela ni otros estudiantes).

Tus respuestas serán confidenciales hasta donde lo permita la ley. Ninguna persona del programa ni de tu familia se enterará de lo que respondiste.

Responde a cada pregunta llenando el círculo correspondiente a la respuesta**.** Puedes saltarte las preguntas que no quieras responder y dejar de realizar la encuesta si no quieres terminarla.

Entiendo que esta encuesta es voluntaria y he decidido responderla: ☐ *(llenando el círculo aquí si estás de acuerdo)*

Evaluación del programa Texas ACE

Encuesta sobre las experiencias de los niños

1. Responde a esas preguntas sobre las <u>actividades extracurriculares de hoy</u>.

	Nada	Un poco	Algo	Mucho
a. ¿Qué tan complicadas fueron las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
b. ¿Te fue bien en las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
c. ¿Fueron interesantes las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
d. ¿Fueron importantes para ti las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
e. ¿Fueron importantes para tus metas futuras las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
f. ¿Te imaginaste poniendo en práctica fuera de este programa lo que aprendiste en las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
g. ¿Trabajaste con otros niños durante las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
	Nada	**Un poco**	**Algo**	**Mucho**
h. ¿Disfrutaste de las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
i. ¿Tuviste que concentrarte para realizar las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
j. ¿Te parece que aprendiste algo o que mejoraste en algo hoy?	○	○	○	○
k. ¿Sentiste que tenías el control de la situación hoy?	○	○	○	○
l. ¿Crees que trabajaste duro en las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
m. ¿Te pareció que tuviste un efecto importante en otras personas durante las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
n. ¿Te fue fácil prestar atención durante las actividades de hoy?	○	○	○	○
	Nada	**Un poco**	**Algo**	**Mucho**
o. ¿Qué tan **feliz** te sentías en el programa hoy?	○	○	○	○
p. ¿Qué tan **emocionado** te sentías en el programa hoy?	○	○	○	○
q. ¿Qué tan **frustrado** te sentías en el programa hoy?	○	○	○	○
r. ¿Qué tan **aburrido** te sentías en el programa hoy?	○	○	○	○
s. ¿Qué tan **estresado** te sentías en el programa hoy?	○	○	○	○

TX ACE Evaluation-Spring 2017

Advisory Board Member Interview Questions

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation. This interview should take approximately 20 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to understand your role as an Advisory Board member for the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program you help oversee. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of how Advisory Boards are supporting ACE programs. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your site will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the 21st CCLC program. For example, I'll ask questions on your primary program goals and objectives, your programming and practices with youth, and staff development.

I would like to tape record our interview in order to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

1. How did you end up getting involved as an Advisory Board member for the ACE program at this site?

2. What do you see as the primary purpose of the Advisory Board? How would you describe your role on the Board?

3. How often are Advisory Board meetings scheduled? What does the typical agenda involve? How long do meetings typically last?

4. How is the Advisory Board involved in making decisions in the following areas?
   - Conducting marketing/ publicity activities related to the ACE program
   - Helping to identify and define student, family, and community needs
   - Making recommendations about program offerings and structure
   - Reviewing data on program quality and youth outcomes
   - Discussing funding and resource allocation.

5. Do you receive additional information about the program between Advisory Board meetings? If so, what kind of information do you receive, and who does it come from?

6. What aspects of the ACE program would you like more information about to enhance your understanding of the program's operations and potential impacts?

7. What do you see as the primary goals and objectives of the ACE program you help oversee and support?

8. How well do you feel the program in meeting these goals and objectives? What is going well? Where are there opportunities for growth?

9. How do you think youth benefit from participating in the ACE program? Parents and other adult family members?

10. To what extent has the Advisory Board discussed strategies to sustain the program once ACE funding has ended? What role does the Advisory Board have in identifying and securing funding for the program? Developing partnerships that may support program sustainability?

11. Is there anything that I haven't asked about today that I really should know if I really want to understand how the Advisory Board functions?

TX ACE Evaluation-Spring 2017

Family Engagement Specialist Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation being conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR). TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC program (also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to understand your role as a Family Engagement Specialist for the Texas ACE program you work in. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of how Family Engagement Specialists are supporting Texas ACE programs. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the Texas ACE program. For example, I'll ask questions about your role in supporting the Texas ACE program and your work with the families of participating youth.

I would like to tape record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

1. What are your major responsibilities as a family engagement specialist?

2. How long have you been in your current position? Is your position full-time or part-time? How many hours do you work in this position in the typical week?

3. Tell me about your prior experience in working in afterschool/out-of-school-time programs (Texas ACE or other). How long have you worked in the afterschool/youth development field?

4. Can you tell me about your recruitment and enrollment strategies for getting parents and adult family members involved in programming?

- Is there a select population of adults that are a focus of your recruitment efforts?
- Are there particular times of the year that are a focus of your recruitment efforts?

5. Does your Texas ACE program offer any activities that target parents and adult family members that are designed to help these adults better support the positive development of their children in the program?

    - Can you describe these activities for me?
    - Why are these activities in particular being provided?

6. Does your Texas ACE program offer any activities that target parents and adult family members that are designed to provide services to parents (e.g., health services, financial aid information, information about local colleges) or that enhance the education or job skills of these adults? Do you try to connect families to these resources by making referrals to outside organizations that provide these services? Do you have a family resource center in place?

    - Can you describe these activities for me?
    - Why are these activities in particular being provided?

7. In what ways do you work with school-day staff (e.g., principal, teachers, etc.) and center program staff to reach parents and adult family members of youth enrolled in Texas ACE?

8. In what ways, if any, do you coordinate with other federally-funded family engagement activities on the campus (e.g., Title I Part A program activities)?

9. What challenges have you experienced in getting parents and adult family members involved in Texas ACE programming?

    - What barriers do parents and adult family members face in terms of participating in Texas ACE programming?
    - What strategies have you developed to help overcome these challenges?
    - What challenges remain?

10. What role do special events play in your efforts to get parents and adult family members involved in the Texas ACE program?

11. In what ways and how frequently do you communicate to parents and adult family members about the Texas ACE program?

    - Do many of the parents and adult family members speak English as a second language?

- If yes, do you have a way to communicate with them in their primary language?

12. Are there any specific tools or resources that have especially informed your thinking on how to reach out and get parents and adult family members involved in Texas ACE?

13. Aside from more funding, are there any additional resources you wish you had that would help you more effectively engage parents and adult family members in Texas ACE programming?

14. What advice would you give to a person new to being a family engagement specialist?

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child is currently attending out-of-school-time programming provided by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE), and your child is in grades 4–12. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the program and ensure its success with students, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is working with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an evaluation of the Texas ACE program. The evaluation will help us learn how the Texas ACE program helps students and how it can be improved for the future.

We ask permission for your child to complete a survey that will ask your child how they feel about their experience with the activities in the Texas ACE program. The survey will be given to students at a time that will minimize the amount of time your child is not participating in program activities. The survey should take your child approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Participating in the evaluation will not affect your child in school, in the program, or in any other way. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or choose to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty (e.g., it will not affect your child's enrollment in the program or your child's grades in school). The results of the study will be published, but your child's name will not be used in any way. Your child's identity will be completely protected and will not be used in any reports resulting from this evaluation.

The only people who will have access to individual student responses collected from the surveys are members of the evaluation team, including TEA staff, involved in this study. In other words, the Texas ACE program staff and your child's teachers and principal will not have access to individual student survey responses.

Your child may directly benefit from participating in the survey in that his or her feedback about the program may influence decisions about improving the 21st CCLC/Texas ACE program in the future.

If you **do not** want your child to participate, please sign and return this form to your child's Texas ACE center within 5 days, and your child's data will not be included in evaluation analyses.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, you may contact the Chair of AIR's Institutional Review Board (which is responsible for protecting the rights of study participants) at IRBChair@air.org, toll free at 1-800-634-0797, or c/o AIR, 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20007.

Questions regarding the evaluation being conducted by AIR or to verify that TEA has approved the administration of the survey your child may be asked to complete can be directed to:

Jennifer Broussard, PhD
Director, Evaluation Activities
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701-1494
(512) 475-3523
Jennifer.Broussard@tea.texas.gov

Thank you!

Neil Naftzger
Project Director

Please see the attached page for the denial of participation form.

If you **do not** want your child to complete a survey, please sign this form and return it to your child's Texas ACE center:

☐ I **do not** want my child to complete a survey.

Student Name _____

Parent Name _____

Parent Signature_____ Date _____

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Estimado padre, madre o tutor:

Su hijo, que está entre el grado 4 y el grado 12, asiste a la programación extracurricular que proporciona el programa 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), y que se conoce como Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE). Con el fin de supervisar la eficacia del programa y garantizar su éxito con los estudiantes, la Texas Education Agency (TEA) está trabajando con los American Institutes for Research (AIR) para hacer una evaluación del programa Texas ACE. La evaluación nos ayudará a saber cómo ayuda a los estudiantes este programa y cómo se puede mejorar en el futuro.

Le pedimos permiso para que su hijo responda a una encuesta que le preguntará su opinión sobre las experiencias que ha tenido con las actividades del programa Texas ACE. Se les dará la encuesta a los alumnos a una hora que reduzca al mínimo el tiempo en que dejen de participar en las actividades del programa. Su hijo tardará unos 5 minutos en responderla.

Participar en la evaluación no afectará a su hijo en la escuela, en el programa ni en ningún otro aspecto. La participación de su hijo en este estudio es voluntaria. Si decide no permitir que su hijo participe o retirarlo del estudio en cualquier momento, no habrá penalización (por ejemplo, eso no afectará la inscripción de su hijo en el programa ni sus calificaciones en la escuela). Los resultados del estudio serán publicados, pero el nombre de su hijo no se utilizará de ninguna manera. La identidad de su hijo estará completamente protegida y no se utilizará en los informes que se realicen durante esta evaluación.

Las únicas personas que tendrán acceso a las respuestas individuales de los estudiantes que se obtengan de las encuestas serán los miembros del equipo de evaluación que participan en este estudio, incluido el personal de TEA. En otras palabras, ni el personal del programa Texas ACE ni los maestros ni el director de la escuela a la que asiste su hijo tendrán acceso a las respuestas individuales de cada estudiante en la encuesta.

Su hijo podría beneficiarse directamente por participar en la encuesta debido a que su opinión sobre el programa podría influir en las decisiones sobre las mejoras del programa 21st CCLC/Texas ACE en el futuro.

Si **no** desea que su hijo participe, usted debe firmar y devolver este formulario en el plazo de 5 días al centro de Texas ACE al que su hijo asiste. De esta forma, los datos de su hijo no se incluirán en los análisis de evaluación.

Si tiene preguntas acerca del estudio de investigación o de la participación de su hijo en este estudio, podrá comunicarse con el presidente de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de AIR (responsable de la protección de los participantes en el estudio) escribiendo a IRB@air.org, llamando gratis al 1-800-634-0797 o escribiendo a: AIR, 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007.

Si tiene preguntas relacionadas con la evaluación que realiza AIR o desea verificar si la TEA ha aprobado la administración de la encuesta que le pueden entregar a su hijo, escriba a:

Jennifer Broussard, Ph.D.
Directora de las actividades de evaluación
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701-1494
(512) 475-3523
Jennifer.Broussard@tea.texas.gov

¡Gracias!

Neil Naftzger
Director de proyecto

Véase el formulario de negación de la participación en la página adjunta.

Si **no** desea que su hijo responda a una encuesta, sírvase firmar este formulario y devuélvalo al centro de Texas ACE al que su hijo asiste:

☐ **No** deseo que mi hijo responda a una encuesta.

Nombre del estudiante _____

Nombre del padre o la madre _____

Firma del padre o la madre_____ Fecha _____

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation-Spring 2017
Principal Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes. TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as Texas ACE - Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of this interview is to understand how the Texas ACE program and the regular school interact and support one another. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE program looks like on site. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your Texas ACE centers will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. Your participation is voluntary. You can opt not to answer any question and stop participating at any time.

If you think I have not asked about something that would be helpful for the evaluation, please let me know so we can address it during this interview.

I would like to tape record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

Principal Role and Support

1. Please describe any decisions and/or weigh in on decisions about the Texas ACE program? (This might include decisions about staffing, programming, facilities use, aligning activities with the regular school day, and so forth).

2. How do you and/or other administrators in the school show support for the Texas ACE program?

   PROBE (if not mentioned in primary question): How do you support student recruitment, attendance, and retention in the Texas ACE program?

Program Goals

3. Is there a set of goals for the Texas ACE program serving your students? If so, what are they? Are the right students being served?

4. To what extent is the Texas ACE program is meeting those goals?

5. To what extent is the Texas ACE program meeting the needs of students and their families?

6. Is there a need or demand for more afterschool/summer programs for students?

Student and Family Benefits

7. What benefits have students gained from participating in the Texas ACE program?

8. How do you learn if the Texas ACE program is meeting the needs of the students in this school? (*Read this to Principals*: Consider whether their academic performance has improved, if behavior has improved, school-day attendance has improved, and whether students are developing skills that might serve them in life and in school.)

9. What benefits have families gained from their students participating in the Texas ACE program?

Alignment with the School Day Curriculum and School Day Goals

10. To what extent do the activities in the Texas ACE program align with the school-day curriculum?

11. To what extent does the school consider the Texas ACE program an extension of students' regular school day activities?

12. Has the Texas ACE program been formally incorporated into your school improvement plan?

13. How does the alignment of the Texas ACE programmingto the school day help achieve the goals of the campus?

14. Do you think Texas ACE programming could be designed to better meet the needs of the school and students? If so, in what ways?

15. What is working well with the Texas ACE program?

Communication with Teachers

16. How frequently do you and the site coordinator for the Texas ACE program meet? What are the major topics that you discuss when you meet?

17. To what extent are the Texas ACE program staff informed about students who need additional support during homework help or other academic sessions?

18. What types of information or data that are shared with Texas ACE program staff to help them better understand student learning needs or monitor the academic progress of enrolled students? Is so, can you please describe what is shared and how it us used by the Texas ACE program? Is data shared from the program back to school-day staff?

Site Coordinator Communication

19. In what ways, if any, does the site coordinator communicate with the school-day staff about the Texas ACE program?

20. Does the site coordinator have an office in the school? Is the site coordinator available to administrators and teachers during the school day?

Space and Resources

21. In general, how well does the school facility accommodate an afterschool program? (In particular, consider the space and rooms available for the program activities.)

Other

22. To what extent are you involved with the Advisory Board that oversees the Texas ACE program at your schools?

23. If the Texas ACE center has a family engagement specialist, to what extent are you involved in coordination of any activities or facilitating communication with parents?

24. To what extent have you been involved in discussion related to sustaining the Texas ACE program at your school?

25. Is there anything we have not discussed that you think would be helpful for the evaluation?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation - Spring 2017
Project Director Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 30–40 minutes. TEA has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as the Texas ACE Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program). This spring we are visiting 20 Texas ACE programs to learn more about how the programs support and deliver high quality program activities.

Information from this interview and other data we collect from your centers will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified.

The interview covers several topics associated with the program activities, and has many specific questions. If you think I have not asked about something that would be helpful for the evaluation, please let me know when the interview is completed.

I would like to tape record our interview to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

Goals

1. Is there a general set of goals for your Texas ACE program? If so, what are they?

(Note to interviewer: Do not read list below)

- Academic skill development
- Social and emotional learning skill and competency development
- Development of youth interest in specific content areas
- Support sense of belonging and school connectedness
- Career and college readiness
- Continuous improvement

2. How do these goals align with the centers' goals in their individual Texas ACE program logic models? In what ways do goals differ across centers in your program, and from overall program goals (if at all)?

3. Is there variation among your centers in their operational effectiveness and ability to meet goals? Please explain.

Staffing

4. What role do you play in hiring site coordinators and front-line staff for your Texas ACE centers?

5. From your perspective as a project director, what have you determined are the key qualifications staff should possess to effectively deliver activities to the youth served in your Texas ACE centers?

6. Tell me about how your Texas ACE centers are staffed. (e.g., certified teachers, paraprofessionals, youth development workers from partner agencies, college students)

7. What approaches have been effective – or not effective – in hiring and retaining qualified staff?

Partnerships

8. To what extent do you rely on staff from partnering, community-based organizations to staff your Texas ACE centers? What role do you play in developing these partnerships? How stable have these partnerships been?

9. To what extent are you involved in working with school principals to develop a shared vision for what should be happening in the Texas ACE program? What are some of the challenges that have arisen when trying to come to consensus on a shared vision for the program?

10. What topics do you typically cover when discussing the Texas ACE program with principals?

11. How would you describe your Texas ACE program's role in the district's overall education strategy?

12. What has your role been in establishing a Community Advisory Board? To what extent are you involved with the board and its activities? To what extent do you seek and implement feedback from the board to inform your Texas ACE programming?

Programming

13. How are you involved in helping to craft center-level Texas ACE program logic models? What role do you play in making decisions about what programming is provided at a given Texas ACE center, and what data are involved in making these decisions?

14. To what extent do your Texas ACE centers implement the same activities? Do site coordinators have some choice in what to adopt, or are they expected to provide a specific set of activities?

15. Are Texas ACE centers expected to use specific curriculum to support programming? Can you please describe the curriculum being used and why it was selected?

16. What kinds of strategies have you crafted with your Texas ACE centers to support effective recruitment and retention of youth in the program?

17. What other guidelines, other than the centers' logic models, are your centers expected to follow in the design and delivery of programming (e.g., staff to student ratios, role of youth in planning activities and program governance, etc.)?

Supporting Families

18. Do you have a family engagement specialist on staff? IF YES, what steps has that person taken to get family members involved in the Texas ACE program? How do you coordinate with the family engagement specialist to facilitate his or her work?

19. Can you please describe your Texas ACE program's approach to (a) involving families in the design, delivery, and oversight of programming and (b) offering activities and services designed to help adult family members?

20. What strategies have been especially successful in engaging families? How have families benefited from the Texas ACE programming?

21. What challenges remain for engaging families?

Professional Development

22. As the Texas ACE grantee, what is your organization's role in providing professional development to your site coordinators? To front-line staff?

23. What topics are typically addressed in professional development offerings? How are these offerings related to center logic models? Meeting Texas ACE program goals?

Management and Continuous Improvement

24. What do you think are the primary features of high quality afterschool programs?

25. What approaches do you use to ensure that quality programming is occurring at each of your Texas ACE program centers? Are there particular tools, resources, or data you use to support these efforts? If so, what are they?

26. How often do you meet with your site coordinators as a group? What is discussed at those site coordinator meetings, and what kinds of decisions are made?

27. How often do you visit each of your Texas ACE centers and what do you look for during those visits?
    a. Do you also meet with school-day leadership when making site visits? What do you discuss with school leaders?

28. What changes, if any, have been implemented at centers because of your visits and interactions with site coordinators and front-line staff?

Sustainability

29. What strategies for program sustainability have you identified? Of those, which strategies are currently being implemented? What role is the district or other partners playing in this process?

Resources and Wrap-Up

30. Aside from more funding, are there any additional resources you feel you need in order to more effectively implement your Texas ACE program?

31. Are there additional ways that TEA could support the delivery of high quality Texas ACE programs?

32. What advice would you have for new programs starting out to ensure quality Texas ACE programming?

33. Is there anything we haven't asked about that you think we should know about your Texas ACE program?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation

Guiding Questions for Staff Focus Group – Spring 2017

Hello, I'm _____ from Gibson Consulting Group. We are an organization that conducts educational research and evaluation studies. We are part of an evaluation team funded through a contract between the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE). The purpose of the evaluation is to better understand how well out-of-school-time programs funded by 21st CCLC have fared relative to the goals and objectives specified for the program and to inform the development of promising and effective service delivery. The information you provide during today's focus group will be utilized to provide TEA with a better understanding of the procedures and approaches programs funded by 21st CCLC employ when delivering out-of-school-time programming. Your center was randomly selected to be visited among a list of Texas ACE programs that TEA provided to us.

The purpose of this focus group is to understand your perceptions of how the Texas ACE program is being implemented at your center. This meeting should take approximately 45-60 minutes. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE programs look like on site. Please note that participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can choose to decline to answer any question I ask and can stop participating at any time. Information from this focus group and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position. All your responses will kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and we will not share your responses with any of your program administrators.

I will be taking notes as we talk and would also like to tape-record our conversation to ensure accuracy. Do I have your permission to tape-record this conversation?

Since I will be relying on our tape-recording to clean up my notes, please state your first name when you answer a question and share your thoughts. This is a group conversation so please feel free to share your thoughts and add comments openly but not to interrupt each other. You are also free to leave the group at any time.

1. Let's take a few minutes for introductions. Please tell me:
   - Your name
   - Your role in the program
   - What type of program activities you facilitate, and
   - How long you have been at the program.

(Note: Remind the participants to state their names each time they share their comments)

2. Can you please describe the types of opportunities and experiences you want to make sure youth have in the Texas ACE program?

3. How do you think these opportunities and experiences contribute to the positive development of the youth you serve?

Skill Building

4. We'd like to hear about your goals when planning lessons and activities that you lead. Tell us about how you plan activities and prepare for individual activity sessions. What factors you consider when preparing for a given day's activities?

5. To what extent, if any, does information you may receive from school-day teaching staff influence how you approach activity and lesson planning? Do you ever provide information back to school-day teachers?

Youth Engagement and Leadership

6. What kind of strategies do you employ to get students actively engaged in the activities you're leading?

7. What approaches have proven effective in supporting student engagement?

8. What challenges have you experienced in keeping youth engaged?

Staff Involvement in Decision Making

9. Tell me a little about your staff meetings. What kinds of things do you typically discuss during these meetings?
   a. To what extent are you <u>involved in planning for Texas ACE program activities</u> such as decisions about the content and format of activities that are offered at this center? Can you give me examples?

b. Do you review program data (e.g., observation results, satisfaction surveys) as a group to plan for program activities? What kind of decisions do you make based on these reviews?

c. Do you review student data (e.g., grades, teacher notes) to address student needs? What kind of decisions do you make based on these reviews?

Staff Development

10. Have you attended any professional development related to your role in the Texas ACE program since Summer 2016? If so, can you please describe the focus of this PD?

11. [ONLY ASK IF PD ATTENDED) Do you find these trainings helpful? Why?

12. [ONLY ASK IF PD ATTENDED] To what extent are you able to use this information directly in the activities you deliver? Can you give me examples?

Impact

11. How do you think youth benefit from participating in your Texas ACE program?

12. What do you think is the most important ingredient to your program's success in supporting children's development?

13. What challenges or barriers remain in being able to effectively provide youth with the opportunities and experiences you want them to have when participating in Texas ACE programming?

TX 21st CCLC Evaluation-Spring 2017
Site Coordinator Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) evaluation. This interview should take approximately 75 minutes. TEA has contracted with AIR to evaluate the 21st CCLC programs (also known as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) program) to assess programs, student participation and outcomes, and to learn more about the activities and supports of high quality programs. The purpose of this interview is to understand your thoughts and perceptions of how the Texas ACE program is being implemented at your center. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, and to give us a sense of what the Texas ACE program looks like on site. Information from this interview and other data we collect from your center will be included in a written report that we will submit to TEA. In our reporting of findings, you will not be individually identified by name or position.

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. In our reports, none of the respondents will be identified. The interview covers several topics associated with the implementation of the Texas ACE program. For example, I'll ask questions on your primary program goals and objectives, your programming and practices with youth, and staff development.

I would like to tape record our interview in order to accurately capture everything you tell me. Do I have your permission to record this interview with you?

INTERVIEWER: [If Yes, turn on voice recorder and proceed.] I am here with [respondent name], at [program name], and today is [name of day, month, and date]. "Do I have your permission to record the interview?"

Program Goals and Objectives

1. Was your center involved in a formal needs assessment process to help develop your center's logic model and inform the goals and objectives and service approach adopted by your center?
   - What types of methods were used to gather information?
   - Was data from the school day used to support the needs assessment?
   - Were key program decisions (e.g., planning services and identifying high-need students and families) made using the needs assessment?

Intentionality in Program Design

2. Can you describe the primary components of your Texas ACE program's logic model? Is your logic model still reflective of how you design and deliver programming? Has anything changed? How does the logic model support continuous improvement?

3. Please explain how your center's activities are tied to your Texas ACE program goals? Can you give me an example of center activities most closely tied to your program goals?

4. How would you define the target student population for the Texas ACE program? To what extent was this informed by the needs assessment? What methods do you use to recruit and retain these youth?

5. In what ways do you interact with regular school-day staff to help identify and recruit your center's target population?

6. To what extent is ensuring activities are supporting student skill building and mastery in core academic areas a primary consideration for how you design and deliver Texas ACE programming?

7. To what extent are you trying to support the social and emotional development of participating youth? How do you go about doing this in your Texas ACE program?

8. Do you gather student feedback to determine program offerings? If so, how?

8. To what extent does your Texas ACE program rely upon outside organizations and agencies to support the delivery of programming? What types of programming are provided by these organizations?

Linkages to School Day

9. Do you try to monitor how youth are progressing academically? What data do you rely on, and how it is used to benefit students?

10. Are you on campus during the school-day to connect and interact with school-day staff? Youth in your program?
11. What kinds of approaches or strategies are in place to support communication between school-day teachers and Texas ACE program staff?

12. How would you describe the support you receive from school and district administrators in implementing the Texas ACE program? Recruitment and retention? Promoting program attendance?

Community Advisory Board

13. Do you have an Advisory Board (AB) in place to support the ACE program at this center?

14. How many board members do you have and how often are AB meetings scheduled?

15. Please explain the level of involvement of the board in making decisions related to the Texas ACE program?

Family Engagement and Involvement

19. What methods have you used to encourage parent and family involvement in the Texas ACE program? Are parents and family members involved in program planning efforts?

20. Can you describe the activities and offerings you have developed that are provided to the family members of youth participating in Texas ACE programming? How well are these activities attended?

21. Do you have a family engagement specialist on staff? IF YES, what steps have they taken to get family members involved in the Texas ACE program? How do you coordinate with the activities of the family engagement specialist?

Staff Development

22. Tell me about how your Texas ACE program is staffed.

23. Is discussion of the logic model part of the orientation process?What sort of orientation do you provide for new staff? Approximately how many hours do staff participate in pre-service orientation?

24. Beyond new employee orientation, do you offer either in-house or off-site professional development opportunities for staff? What are some recent examples? How are professional development offerings informed by or aligned with the logic model?

25. What sort of group-planning process do you have with staff before or at the start of a program term? Are all staff involved in these planning processes?

Leadership Support

26. What resources, trainings, tools, or other supports that have been particularly helpful in helping you be a more effective site coordinator? How did you come across them?

Program Quality and Data Use

27. What do you think are the primary features of high quality Texas ACE programs? How do you and your team go about ensuring your programming is high quality?

28. What steps, if any, do you take to monitor point-of-service quality? (i.e., how youth interact with each other, how staff interact with one another and youth, how the program space is used)? What kinds of point-of-service quality data do you collect, if any, and how is it used?

29. How do you measure youth outcomes? Are staff involved in interpreting youth outcome results? In what ways do you think youth benefit from participating in your Texas ACE program? (Please try to name the top three ways in which students benefit from your program.)

30. What do you think is the most important ingredient to your Texas ACE program's success in supporting children's development?

31. How do you think families benefit from their students participating in your Texas ACE program?

32. What barriers or challenges do you have in terms of impacting youth in the manner you want to?

33. To what extent are you involved in discussions related to Texas ACE program sustainability?

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Appendix I. Additional Documents

Local Evaluation Artifacts

Table I1: Local Evaluation Timeline for Implementation Year 1: 2017–18

School year: 2017–18	
June 2017 **July 2017**	**Phase 1a.** Planning meetings held with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Diehl, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to finalize revised local evaluation concept.
August 2017	**Phase 1b.** Planning meeting held with AIR, Diehl, and TEA to review draft materials for the Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG). Introductory webinar presented on LEAG overview for invited stakeholders to decide to participate.
September 2017	**Phase 1c./Phase 2a.** Convened LEAG (first meeting) and reviewed purpose and local evaluation concept, as well as core components. Feedback was used to inform guidelines and the Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI).
October 2017	**Phase 1d.** Introductory webinar presented on LESI overview for centers to decide to participate.
November 2017	**Phase 1e.** Convened LEAG (second meeting) to review LESI materials. **Phase 1f.** LESI centers nominated, selected, and notified.
December 2017	**Phase 1g.** Up to 32 Cycle 9 volunteer centers participated in LESI and were provided with webinar training: • Overview of quality assessment measures and process including key criteria and the use of the decision guide for instrument selection • Developing local evaluation questions based on prior year evaluation reports and key performance measure data • Youth experience survey administration to support key performance indicators (KPIs) **Phase 1h.** LESI centers selected program quality assessment measure and submitted decision.
January 2018	**Phase 1i.** Centers submitted plans for local evaluation questions; AIR team reviewed each plan and provided written feedback and advice on measures and approaches that may warrant further consideration. Centers assigned to liaison on statewide evaluation team for support. **Phase 1j.** LESI centers were trained on chosen program quality assessment measure (center coordinated). **Phase 1k.** LESI technical support check-in webinar presented to support implementation.
February 2018	**Phase 1l.** LESI centers conducted program quality assessment and collected data to implement their plan for local evaluation questions. **Phase 1m.** Webinar training presented on action planning.

Table Continues

Table I1 (Continued): Local Evaluation Timeline for Implementation Year 1: 2017–18

	School year: 2017–18
March 2018	**Phase 1n.** Centers developed and submitted action plans. **Phase 1o.** LESI mid-reflection survey on program quality assessment and planning for local evaluation questions. **Phase 2b.** Convened LEAG (third meeting); reviewed outline of local evaluation guidelines with key decision-making prompts. **Phase 1p.** LESI technical support check-in webinar presented to support implementation. **Phase 1f.** Administration of the youth experience survey to all LESI centers.
April 2018	**Phase 1q.** AIR reviewed action plans and provided written feedback. Centers implemented action plans. **Phase 1r.** AIR developed KPI reports for LESI center. **Phase 2c.** AIR drafted revised Local Evaluation Guide.
May 2018	**Phase 2d.** Convened LEAG (fourth meeting); reviewed draft of Local Evaluation Guide and provided feedback.
June 2018	**Phase 2e.** AIR finalized Local Evaluation Guide and assisted TEA in dissemination. **Phase 1s./Phase 2f./Phase 3a.** Presented on LESI, LEAG, and new Local Evaluation Guide at the Out of School Time Initiatives Conference.
July 2018	**Phase 1t.** AIR generated final LESI KPI reports and supported dissemination. **Phase 1u.** LESI centers submitted draft evaluation report to AIR (optional). AIR reviewed draft evaluation reports and provided written feedback to centers. **Phase 3b.** AIR developed draft Evaluation Toolkit.

Table I2: Affiliations and Roles of Local Evaluation Advisory Group Participants, 2017–18

District affiliation	Cycle affiliation	Role
Austin Independent School District (ISD)	Cycle 9	Internal evaluator
Birdville ISD	Cycle 9	Project director
Fort Worth, Greenville, Birdville	Cycle 8, Cycle 9	Independent evaluator
Austin ISD	Cycle 9	Internal evaluator
Austin ISD	Cycle 9	Project director
YES Prep Public Schools, Spring ISD	Cycle 8	Independent evaluator
Greenville ISD	Cycle 9	Project director
New Summerfield ISD, Palestine ISD	Cycle 8	Independent evaluator
Clayton Youth Enrichment Services	Cycle 9	Project director
Texas City ISD	Cycle 8	Independent evaluator
Fort Worth ISD, Clayton Youth Enrichment Services!	Cycle 8, Cycle 9	Project director and independent evaluator
Communities in Schools of the South Plains	Cycle 9	Project director
New Summerfield ISD	Cycle 8	Project director
IDEA Public Schools	Cycle 9	Project director
ESC 13	Cycle 9	Family engagement specialist
Quinlan ISD	Cycle 8	Project director
Austin ISD	Cycle 9	Internal evaluator

Table I3: Participating Grantees and Centers in the Local Evaluation Support Initiative, 2017–18

District	Center 1	Center 2
Birdville Independent School District (ISD)	Carrie F. Thomas Elementary School (ES)	West Birdville ES
Clayton Youth Enrichment	Bill J. Elliot ES	Clifford Davis ES
Communities in Schools of the South Plains	Lockney ES	Floydada ES
Corpus Christi ISD	Zavala ES	South Park Middle School
DeSoto ISD	Cockrell Hill ES	Not applicable
Edinburg Consolidated ISD	San Carlos ES	Monte Cristo ES
Education Service Center—Region 12	Cranfills Gap School	Not applicable
Greenville ISD	Crockett ES	Lamar ES
Harris County Department of Education	North Shore Ninth-Grade Center	Not applicable
Pasadena ISD	Richey ES	South Shaver ES
Northside ISD	Westwood Terrace ES	Valley Hi ES

Agendas

Local Evaluation Advisory Group Meetings

- August 24, 2017: Introduction to the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG)
  - Introductions
  - Overview of the Texas ACE independent evaluation guide and related tools
  - The purpose of the LEAG
  - Why be part of an LEAG?
  - What to expect in an LEAG?
  - Questions and answers
- September 12, 2017: Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG) Meeting 1
  - Introductions
    - Local Evaluation Advisory Group purpose
    - Operational principles guiding the Local Evaluation Advisory Group
  - Local Evaluation Concept Overview
  - Discussion of Core Components
  - Small-group breakouts and debrief
  - Next Steps
- 11-11-17 Local Evaluation Advisory Group Meeting #2
  - Review of Purpose and Introductions
  - Update on Progress
  - Overview of Local Evaluation Support Initiative
    - Review Manual
    - Discussion of Core Components and Tools
  - Next Steps
- 3-1-18 Local Evaluation Advisory Group Meeting #3
  - Introductions
  - Review and Updates
    - Local Evaluation Advisory Group Purpose and Principles
    - Local Evaluation Support Initiative
  - Review of Evaluation Guidelines and Toolkit
  - Combination, large- and small-group breakouts and debrief
  - Next Steps
- 5-31-18 Local Evaluation Advisory Group Meeting 4

  - Introductions
  - Review and updates
    - LEAG
    - LESI
  - Discussion of draft Evaluation Guide
  - Closing

Local Evaluation Support Initiative Training Series

- November 15, 2017: Introduction to the Texas ACE LESI
  - Brief introductions
  - Learn about the Texas ACE LESI
  - Why be part of the initiative?
  - What is my commitment?
  - Questions and answers
- December 5–6, 2017: Training Webinar 1: Overview and Program Quality Assessment Process
  - Brief introductions
  - Quick overview of the Texas ACE LESI
  - Program quality assessment process
  - Measurement selection
  - Assessment and scoring
- December 12–13, 2017: Training Webinar 2: Deriving Local Evaluation Questions and Youth Experience Survey
  - Brief introductions
  - Review of purpose
  - Check-in from Webinar 1
  - Local evaluation questions
  - Youth experience survey
  - Next steps
- January 31, 2018: Technical Support Check-in 1
  - Introductions
  - Review purpose of LESI
  - Check-in from Webinar 1
  - Check-in from Webinar 2
  - Next steps
- February 13–14, 2018: Training Webinar 3: Action Planning

  - Introductions
  - Setting the stage
  - Collaborative action planning process
  - Improvement resources
  - Closing and next steps
- March 6, 2018: Technical Support Check-in 2
  - Introductions and recap LESI
  - Discussion
    - Quality assessment process
    - Local evaluation questions
    - Action planning
  - Next steps

Texas ACE Local Evaluation Support Initiative: Reference Manual
December 4, 2017

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) contracted with an external vendor, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), and subcontractors, Diehl Consulting Group and Gibson Consulting Group, to provide support for conducting local program evaluation activities. The purpose is to support centers' capacity to engage in and conduct relevant, meaningful local evaluations that drive program improvement efforts and support sustainability.

Toward this aim, the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) Independent Evaluation Guide will be further developed, and an evaluation toolkit created. A group of centers participating in this initiative also will receive support to further customize the local evaluation process to capture center-specific implementation progress and measure targeted outcomes.

This reference manual includes background information and materials to assist participating centers in the local evaluation support initiative. An overview of the process is provided first, including expectations, the timeline, building the local evaluation team, and the local evaluation framework. Following is a detailed description of all three core evaluation approaches.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative Overview

The state evaluation team acknowledges the time demands on center staff and evaluators. Further, it is understood that the timing of this initiative may be challenging given other evaluation activities already underway at a center. Therefore, centers are encouraged to continue with evaluation activities deemed valuable to their program, while integrating or strengthening evaluation activities by using the core evaluation approaches outlined in this reference manual.

To support participating centers, a webinar training series on each approach described in the following sections is being offered. The statewide evaluation team also is available for coaching on key milestones. Subsequent sections of the reference manual include detailed information to support implementation of each approach.

Expectations for Participating Centers

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

Table I4: Timeline[38]

Month	Activities	Components
November 15, 2017	Centers attend introductory webinar	
November 17, 2017	Center nominations due	
November 27, 2017	Statewide evaluation team notifies participating centers	
December 5, 2017 or December 6, 2017	Centers attend training Webinar 1	
December 12, 2017 or December 13, 2018	Centers attend training Webinar 2	
December 22, 2017	Centers submit decision on program quality assessment (PQA) measure (centers arrange training, if needed)	
January 2018	Centers develop evaluation plans for local evaluation questions	
January 2018	Centers are trained on chosen PQA measure (online or in-person)	
January 16, 2018	Centers attend technical support check-in webinar—*Optional*	

Table Continues

Component Key

 PQA Process

 Local Evaluation Questions

 KPIs

[38] This was the original timeline in the beginning of the Local Evaluation Support Initiative, before adaptation.

Table I4 (Continued): Timeline

Month	Activities	Components
January 31, 2018	Centers submit evaluation plans for local evaluation questions	
February–March 2018	Centers select sample of youth and administer electronic youth experience survey	
February 6, 2018 or February 7, 2018	Centers attend training Webinar 3	
February 2018	Centers collect data: PQA observations/ interviews and scoring meeting	
February 2018	Centers collect data: local evaluation questions	
End of February 2018	Centers receive key performance indicator (KPI) reports	
February 28, 2018	Centers submit reflection on the PQA process	
March 2018	Centers develop action plans	
March 6, 2018	Centers attend technical support check-in webinar—*Optional*	
March 30, 2018	Centers submit action plans	
April 2018	State evaluation team reviews action plans and provides feedback	

Table Continues

Component Key

 PQA Process

 Local Evaluation Questions

 KPIs

Table I4 (Continued): Timeline

Month	Activities	Components
April–May 2018	Centers implement action plans	
May 31, 2018	Centers submit draft end-of-year evaluation reports to the state evaluation team	
June 2018	State evaluation team review end-of-year evaluation reports and provide feedback to assist in final submission to TEA in July	

Component Key

 PQA Process

 Local Evaluation Questions

 KPIs

Creating the Local Evaluation Team

The Local Evaluation Support Initiative (LESI) should be a collaborative process between center staff, partners, and local evaluators. It is expected that a local evaluation team will be created to facilitate this process. Membership on this team may include key center staff, community partners, and the local evaluator. It also may be useful to engage other key stakeholders, such as parents or youth. It often is crucial that a couple of frontline staff, such as youth workers or teachers, are included, because they are the direct line to the point of service, providing for both more valid assessment results and a greater likelihood of successful implementation of the action plans and program improvement. Giving staff ownership over this process builds buy-in and creates champions to garner support from the rest of the staff.

In addition, it is necessary to designate a leader to be the facilitator of this process. As the QA process often requires all stakeholders to collect information, many parts need to be coordinated. This requires someone who has enough time to bring together all the stakeholders and ensure that everything is done in a timely matter but does not necessarily need to be a program administrator. It could be any person on the evaluation team who takes on this facilitator role. This person also will serve as a liaison for training and submission of all initiative activities.

Local Evaluation Support Initiative Framework

The local evaluation support framework is grounded in the following key principles associated with conducting meaningful local evaluation.

Principles Associated With Meaningful Local Evaluation

- ✓ **Includes a collaborative process.** Evaluation should be a collaborative process between grant management, center level staff, and local independent evaluators.
- ✓ **Seeks intentional program design guided by a logic model.** Programs grounded in a sound theory of change and illustrated by a logic model facilitate shared understanding of intentional connections between needs, core program components, outputs, and outcomes.
- ✓ **Assesses implementation.** To guide improvement efforts and help explain positive or negative outcomes, ongoing assessment of implementation practices should be conducted. This includes measuring core aspects of fidelity (e.g., adherence to program design, exposure/dosage, quality of program delivery, and participant engagement).
- ✓ **Uses locally informed and accessible outcome measures**. Assessing outcomes related to program activities allows centers to understand progress toward selected KPIs. This helps in identifying promising aspects of the program to sustain, as well as areas to improve or adjust. As such, outcome measures are most effective for this purpose when they are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope.
- ✓ **Ensures that centers have capacity to develop and implement evaluations.** Evaluation capacity is achieved when centers possess the knowledge and understanding to participate fully in evaluation planning and implementation and when they have access to resources and tools that support evaluation capacity.

Centers participating in the LESI will engage in three core approaches to conducting local evaluation, including (a) implementing a QA process, (b) using KPIs to answer fundamental evaluation questions about a program, and (c) deriving local evaluation questions specific to unique program needs.

- **Implementing a QA process.** To engage in a PQA process, two types of assessments provide centers with important information about programming provided to youth and families: (a) point of service and (b) organizational level assessment.
  - *Point of service* (observation-based) assessment tools allow the quality of afterschool program delivery to be examined.
  - *Organizational* assessment tools allow centers to examine structural components of programs (e.g., policies/procedures) that are useful in informing how programs operate.

  Centers will explore different program quality measures to determine the best fit for their center. This process may include choosing a measure already being used by the center or selecting another measure based on recommendations informed by afterschool best practice. Although no specific assessment is endorsed as part of this process, a set of criteria and a decision guide have been developed to help centers select an assessment that will align with center-specific needs. Although centers have flexibility in choosing the measure, they will complete a standardized action plan based on results of the PQA to inform program improvement efforts.
- **Using key performance indicators.** To help centers monitor the participation and progress of attendees, the statewide evaluation team is developing a set of KPIs in partnership with TEA and a Local Evaluation Advisory Group (LEAG). The KPIs bring together data from several sources within Texas and will be disseminated for participating centers in a customized report that describes characteristics of Texas ACE–funded programs and their participants. The purpose of this report is to

provide centers with information to help in assessing how well goals related to program implementation are being met and the extent to which participants are progressing on desired outcomes. During the 2017–18 school year, the KPI report will be prepared for centers by the statewide evaluation team and provided electronically in February 2018.

- **Deriving local evaluation questions.** Based on a review of prior year data, centers will generate at least two specific evaluation questions (with a plan to collect data to address the questions), allowing for a deeper dive into issues of particular importance to the center.

Implementing a Program Quality Assessment Process

Description: Participating centers are encouraged to conduct quality measurement to assess point of service and/or organizational quality of their programs. Participating centers will select a PQA tool to collect this information. Point-of-service measures often are collected through observational assessment, and organizational measures often are done through surveys or interviews. This PQA process will be a self-assessment of the implementation of various components of the program.

Point-of-service measures examine the environment where youth experience the program. These measures tend to focus on staff practices related to creating a caring, nurturing, and supportive environment; structuring activities to support youth skill building; providing opportunities for positive youth interactions; and providing youth with sufficient autonomy to be active participants in their own learning and development. They examine the relationships between staff and youth, the relationships among youth, and the nature of the activities to determine if they are engaging and youth-centered.

Organizational measures focus on the adoption of effective organizational processes that help ensure the creation of developmentally appropriate settings for participating youth. For example, these measures are more likely to describe criteria for effective management and financial practices, staff development, and sustainability. They also look at how the program works with various external partners like families, schools, and community organizations.

Examples of common constructs associated with point-of-service measurement:

- Safety
- Relationships
- Environment and climate
- Programming and activities
- Youth participation and engagement

Examples of common constructs associated with organizational measurement:

- Management and governance
- Staffing and staff development
- Community partnerships
- Coordination/alignment with school
- Parent and family engagement
- Program sustainability and growth

Both point-of-service and organizational measures yield information beneficial to centers by outlining strengths and areas of need in the program. Centers will use findings from their assessments to create action plans for improvement. This PQA process will generate a cycle of continuous quality improvement where programs use quality data to inform change in their programs.

Benefits: Research has shown that a focus on creating a high-quality program increases youth engagement and participation, which then increases the likelihood of youth improving on desired outcomes, such as academic or social and emotional skills (Naftzger et al., 2013). The use of PQA measurement tools is fairly common in out-of-school programs, but the quality criteria and youth development best practices included in the available measures is diverse. What is universal is the importance of focusing on the process of quality improvement and not specific quality scores. By creating a low-stakes environment, staff are encouraged to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses, which makes the assessment a more accurate representation of a center's current state. This makes the data more meaningful and more likely to lead to program improvement through reflection and action planning. In addition, there often are aligned professional development (PD) trainings and resources to

support centers in making changes. Even the initial collection of this program quality data can help staff in understanding best practices and give them tangible ideas that they can begin to use immediately to make the program operate more effectively and make their jobs easier. In short, a focus on QA and improvement provides a more pleasant and beneficial experience for everyone involved in the program.

Key Steps in the Process: This first year, the focus will be on both building the process for each center, as well as undergoing the first cycle of assessment and action planning. An overview of the process follows.

Step 1. Select the PQA measure.
• All participating centers will need to establish which measurement tool works best for measuring program quality. The PQA Decision Guide has been developed to support making this decision. Programs might already have a measure that they are using, but it is suggested that centers use the Decision Guide to examine criteria associated with selecting a robust assessment measure and necessary processes for centers to do this assessment well.
Step 2. Prepare for PQA process.
• Once the PQA measure has been selected, the center will need to reach out to the organization that supplies the measurement tool to arrange all necessary components to use the measure. The state evaluation team has provided copies of some of the available measures for informational purposes only and is not able to grant permission to use the measures. • Preparation also includes the purchase of training and associated materials. Validated measures often have training available on how to use the measure so that the entire evaluation team can conduct this assessment to the best of their abilities. Training is available online or in person for various measures. Importantly, training cost may be incurred by centers so this may be an important consideration when selecting the tool. All arrangements for obtaining training can be made with the organization who owns the measure.
Step 3. Receive training in PQA measure.
• All local evaluation team members who will be using the PQA measure should obtain training in the measure, whether online or in person. Training will focus both on understanding core concepts in the measure, as well as the process of data collection. Importantly, training cost may be incurred by centers, so this may be an important consideration when selecting the measurement tool. This ensures that participants understand exactly what is being measured, feel prepared for the process, and ensures that the data collected are accurate and meaningful.
Step 4. Conduct assessment and scoring meeting.
• Most point-of-service QA measures are collected through observations. Organizational assessments are more likely to rely on interviews or surveys. Observations or survey input should be included from everyone on the evaluation team because they all have perspectives that can give a more holistic view of the program. This often culminates in a scoring meeting where the evaluation team comes together to come to consensus on final scores to summarize where the program is at this time.
Step 5. Develop an action plan.
• Using the PQA scores, bring the evaluation team back together to develop an action plan, using the Action Plan template provided. Each center will select two improvement areas and strategies that are framed with SMART (specific-measurable-attainable-relevant-timely) criteria. The team will outline a clear plan for all the necessary components for how they will work together to achieve these goals. It is suggested that one goal be a “low-hanging fruit,” something that can be addressed more quickly and give the team a quick win, and the other goal should be more challenging and might even take more than this year to achieve fully.
Step 6. Implement the action plan.

- Explore resources that can help the center successfully implement the action plan and accomplish all strategies. There often are trainings and toolkits available that are aligned with validated quality improvement measures. Staff can benefit greatly from access to these resources. Set aside time in the program to have ongoing conversations about the action plan and progress toward completion.

Communicating and Using Results: As shown earlier, the assessment data are best used for program improvement, through the process of action planning and implementation. In the initiative process, this action plan will feed into annual planning for the program. Results from the assessment and progress made on the action plan are recommended to be included in the final evaluation report as well. Further, data also can be shared with interested external stakeholders (e.g., funders, partners, parents) to highlight the work being done to ensure that the program is of the highest quality and demonstrate the effort to encourage youth engagement and subsequent achievement of youth outcomes.

Using Key Performance Indicators

Description: To help participating centers monitor the participation and progress of attendees, the statewide evaluation team is developing a set of KPIs in partnership with TEA and a LEAG. The KPIs bring together data from multiple extant sources within Texas, plus a youth experience survey, and will be disseminated for participating centers in a customized report. The KPI reports will describe characteristics of Texas ACE–funded programs and their participants. The purpose of this report is to provide centers with information to help in assessing how well goals related to program implementation are being met and the extent to which participants are progressing on desired outcomes.

During the 2017–18 school year, the KPI report will be prepared for centers by the statewide evaluation team and provided electronically in early 2018. Results will be summarized for each center specifically. The evaluation questions to be answered by the KPIs this year follow, and Table I5 presents example indicators to be developed for each domain.

Texas ACE Attendance-Related Metrics	*To what extent is each center retaining youth in Texas ACE programming, both during the span of the school year and across school years?*
	• Youth benefit more from 21st Century Community Learning Center programming the more they participate. Keeping youth enrolled in programming is linked both to the underlying quality of a center's activities and ensuring that youth have access to developmentally appropriate activities across time that keep them interested and engaged. These indicators are designed to provide centers with information on the extent to which youth are attending programming across time. Data for this set of indicators are based on data provided in the TX 21st Student Tracking System (Tx21st).

Youth Experience-Related Metrics	*To what extent are youth reporting having positive experiences in the program?*
	• The statewide evaluation team considers it vital for programs to understand the subjective experiences that youth have while participating in programming and use this information to enhance program offerings to ensure a "goodness of fit" between where youth are and what learning supports and opportunities the program is providing. The indicators associated with this question are based on data collected from a youth experience survey. The statewide evaluation team will work with centers to administer the survey electronically in early 2018 to a sample of enrolled youth in Grade 4 and above. A supplemental document will provide more details on administration of this youth experience survey. If the center finds the indicators based on youth survey data to be valuable for the

	program and wish to have access to these data in the future, then the AIR evaluation team will work with the center on a plan in spring 2018 for how to administer the survey locally and calculate the indicators as part of local evaluation efforts in future years.
Youth Outcome-Related Metrics	*To what extent are youth demonstrating improvement on those outcomes each center is specifically attempting to impact?* • Texas ACE programs are charged with developing and implementing programming that is designed to have a positive impact on a series of school-related outcomes. The goal of this set of indicators is to provide centers with a sense of the extent to which youth participating regularly in the program are improving on school-related outcomes and how they are performing relative to similar youth participating in programming less frequently. Although the report will contain data on a variety of school-related outcomes, such as school attendance and performance on State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessments, centers will be encouraged to focus on reviewing indicators that align to unique participant needs and overall program goals. The indicators associated with this question are based on data from STAAR and the Public Education Information Management System obtained by the statewide evaluation team from TEA directly. Here again, if the center finds the indicators based on youth survey data to be valuable for the program and wish to have access to these data in the future, then the AIR evaluation team at AIR will work with the center on a plan in spring 2018 for how to calculate the indicators as part of local evaluation efforts in future years.

Table I5: Examples of Key Performance Indicators

Indicator title	Indicator definition
Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (Texas ACE) attendance-related metrics (derived from TX21st Student Tracking System [Tx21st] database)	
Within year program retention	Percentage of youth participating in Texas ACE programming for a minimum of 20 hours in both the fall and spring semesters of the school year of interest
Impact-level program attendance	Percentage of youth enrolled in Texas ACE programming more than 120 hours during the school year and summer of interest
Cross-year program retention at impact levels	Percentage of youth enrolled in Texas ACE programming in the prior school year/summer for 120 or more hours that also participated in 120 hours or more of programming in the school year and summer of interest
Youth experience-related metrics (derived from the youth experience survey)	
Youth motivation to attend programming	Percentage of youth completing the youth experience survey that report they really look forward to attending the Texas ACE–funded program
Opportunities to experience agency	Average score summarizing how frequently youth have the opportunity to participate in activities that provide the opportunity to experience a sense of agency
Relationship with peers	Average score summarizing how youth feel about other youth attending the Texas ACE–funded program they attend
Relationship with adults	Average score summarizing how youth feel about the adults working in the Texas ACE–funded program they attend

Table Continues

Table I5 (Continued): Examples of Key Performance Indicators

Indicator title	Indicator definition
Perceived program impacts	Percentage of youth responding to the survey that indicate the program is impacting them in a particular way (e.g., discover things I want to learn more about; find out what I like to do; feel good about myself)
Youth outcome-related metrics (derived from the Public Education Information Management System and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness [STAAR])	
Early reading	Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming more than 120 hours during the school year and summer of interest who were identified as needing accelerated reading instruction at the beginning of their first-grade year who were no longer identified as needing accelerated reading instruction at the beginning of their second-grade year.
STAAR Mathematics	Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming 120 hours or more during the school year and summer of interest who were in the *Did Not Meet* or *Approaches* performance levels in the previous year that met or exceeded 15% of their expected growth target in STAAR Mathematics for the school year in question.
STAAR Reading	Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming 120 hours or more during the school year and summer of interest who were in the *Did Not Meet* or *Approaches* performance levels in the previous year that met or exceeded 15% of their expected growth target in reading for the school year in question.
CTE course completion	Percentage of career and technical education (CTE) courses passed and credits earned by youth attending Texas ACE programming for 120 hours or more during the school year and summer of interest compared with the percentage CTE courses passed by youth attending Texas ACE programming less than 60 hours and between 60 and 119 hours.
School-day absences	Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming 120 hours or more during the school year and summer of interest who were absent for 10% or more of school days in the previous school year and demonstrated fewer school-day absences during the school year of interest.
Disciplinary incidents	Percentage of youth attending Texas ACE programming 120 hours or more during the school year and summer of interest with one or more disciplinary incidents compared with the percentage of youth attending ACE programming less than 60 hours and between 60 and 119 hours with one or more disciplinary incident.

Benefits: Each year, ACE grantees report Tx21st information regarding implementation of their program. A key goal of the KPIs is to further leverage these data and combine them with other sources of student data provided by TEA and from participating youth. The KPIs will provide centers with a value-added product that better monitors the participation and progress of enrolled youth. The intent is for KPI data to guide and target program refinements to enhance quality and effectiveness. The generation of KPI data by the statewide evaluation team will free up Texas ACE centers and their local evaluators from compiling these data themselves (at least in the short-term). KPI reports allow programs to concentrate on interpreting data housed in the report and what these results may mean for program refinement and success. The hope is that local evaluation resources could potentially be further directed at supporting quality improvement efforts, particularly during the year the AIR evaluation team is providing evaluation

support and pursuing a more targeted set of local evaluation questions especially pertinent to each center's specific needs and interests.

Using the KPI Report: Once a center receives the KPI report and has attended the KPI training webinar, the center should convene the local evaluation team to review the report and answer the following questions:

- How are data outlined in the KPI report relevant to our program? Are there certain pieces of information that are more important for our program to pay attention to? If so, what are these, and why should we be especially concerned about these particular indicators?
- Is there anything about the indicators we don't understand? Do we need additional information from the statewide evaluation team to better understand what we're seeing in the report?
- Is there anything about the indicator results that surprises us? Should we invest more effort in collecting additional data or information to further uncover what is happening in this area? Do we have the time and resources needed to dig deeper into this area? What is feasible for us to do in terms of collecting additional information to find out more about what is happening in this area?
- Are there areas where we're especially happy about what the indicators are telling us? Are there aspects of how we design and deliver the program that may be related to these positive results?
- Are there areas where we're not satisfied with the indicator results? Is there a reason why the indicator results may look the way they do? If we think the indicator results point to an area where we can improve, what changes could we potentially make to improve in this area? If there are multiple indicators where this is the case, what should our priority be?
- What is missing from these indicators in terms of key facets of our program design, implementation, and outcomes to have a more complete view of our program? Does our current evaluation plan address some of these areas not addressed by the KPIs? If not, what things might we want to address in our evaluation plans in the future?

In reviewing the KPI report, it is important to keep in mind that this information is being provided to centers to support quality improvement and local evaluation efforts. The goal is to have centers engage with the report to foster improved understanding of the program and target those areas where improvement can be made in the future.

Feedback and Improvement of the KPIs: The KPI reports are being created for the first time this school year, and as a result, the statewide evaluation team is trying to understand how best to use and support the report moving forward. The short-term goal of the evaluation team is to determine the role that KPIs should play in programs once the year of local evaluation support from the statewide evaluation team is over. The current plan is to work with centers on determining the KPIs of most value. Next, the statewide evaluation team and local evaluators will develop a work plan for how these indicators will be calculated at the local level in the future. If the cost-to-benefit ratio of calculating some portion of the KPIs is not sufficiently favorable to undertaking the work involved to re-create them, then there is no expectation or requirement to take steps to re-create some portion of the KPIs for individual use.

Finally, the statewide evaluation team is very interested in hearing ideas to continue to gain access to KPI data in future years, while minimizing the amount of work that needs to be invested at the local level to do so. As such, the statewide team will be reaching out to obtain feedback in the spring as well.

Deriving Local Evaluation Questions

Description: Based on a review of prior year data, participating centers will generate at least two specific evaluation questions and a plan to collect data to address the questions during the current school year or summer.

Benefits: Collaboratively reviewing prior evaluation results and deriving evaluation questions for further study allows for a deeper dive into how to solve issues of particular importance to the center. Through this process, questions most meaningful to all center staff can be explored, which allows center staff to engage more fully in the evaluation process and increase the overall likeliness of findings being used to drive program improvement and sustainability.

Key Steps in the Process: Centers are asked to use the following steps to guide the development and implementation of an evaluation plan to support identified local evaluation questions derived through this process. As outlined in the timeline, the plan is due by the end of January. The state evaluation team will provide centers with feedback into their plans as well as consultation in implementation.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Step 1. Review prior evaluation results to identify key findings and areas for further study.</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Organize prior year evaluation results. This may include organizing by either specific program goals or general categories, such as overall quality of program implementation, youth outcomes, or family outcomes. This review largely depends on data available to the center (e.g., site visit reports; staff, student, and family interviews and/or surveys; student academic and behavioral information).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Discuss the following questions:
(1) What do we know about our program? List up to five key findings from the review. A key finding is defined as a result that stands out as especially meaningful or important to the evaluation team. It could be a positive or a negative result. For example, 80% of the program staff report that students are satisfied with the program, but only 50% of the youth reflect this same level of satisfaction.
(2) What do we want to know more about? Based on the key findings generated, list any initial questions that may warrant further exploration. For example, why are staff and youth reporting different levels of satisfaction?</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Step 2. Prioritize questions for further study.</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Based on the list of initial questions identified, narrow the list down to two initial evaluation questions (or more).</td><td>When prioritizing questions, consider the following criteria:
• Extent to which the question can be addressed this school year
• Center's capacity to collect data to examine the question
• Meaningfulness of the question in relation to the needs being addressed by the center including program improvement or sustainability efforts</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Step 3. Refine and specify the evaluation questions.</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Refine and specify the evaluation questions in measurable terms.</td><td>Tips for creating good evaluation questions:
• Focus on something specific, not a general idea.
• Clearly define every word within the question to ensure consistency with interpretation.
• Avoid broad questions by limiting the scope of the question to areas deemed most important.</td></tr>
</table>

	• Ensure that it is measurable. • Link the question to program improvement or sustainability to ensure the question is useful to the center.
Step 4. Create an evaluation plan specific to each evaluation question, including core methods for examining the evaluation question. (Note: Independent evaluators have expertise in this area and will be instrumental to the successful design and implementation of the evaluation plan.)	
• **Evaluation Design.** List the evaluation design used to examine the question (e.g., pre-post, posttest only, time-series, qualitative).	
• **Participants.** Identify who data will be collected from (e.g., grade levels, gender, groups participating at differing rates).	
• **Data Source.** List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, focus group protocols) and the time period the data covers. When identifying the data source(s), describe how the data source adequately represents the area being studied. For surveys, this may include specific information about reliability and validity of the tools. In other cases, this may be an explanation of why the specific source was selected. In all cases, it is critical to ensure clear alignment between the actual focus of the evaluation question and the data source being used. It is also important to consider the timing of data availability in your planning.	
• **Data Collection Procedures.** List procedures for collecting data. This includes detailing who is responsible, what is being collected, and when it is being collected.	
• **Data Analysis and Reporting.** Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question, as well as who is responsible.	
Step 5. Implement the evaluation plan.	
• Depending on proposed methodology, provide adequate training to program staff on evaluation activities and initiate data collection.	
Step 6. Communicate and use results.	
• Once data are collected, convene the evaluation team to review results and identify areas for program improvement and aspects of sustainability. Results should be included within the required annual evaluation report and communicated to key staff. Further, results should be used to inform the planning for the subsequent school year.	

The development of local evaluation questions provides centers an opportunity to take a deeper dive into specific program areas of interest. Ultimately, discussing the results of these locally derived questions can inform program improvement and sustainability efforts.

LESI Tools

Program Quality Assessment Decision Guide

This Decision Guide is designed to assist centers in selecting a PQA measure aligned to center-specific needs. Table I6 presents an overview of selected assessments followed by a series of questions for the center local evaluation team to consider as part of the decision process.

Table I6: Overview of Common Quality Assessment Measures

The following is list of common PQA measures that are reviewed in this Decision Guide, but this is not an exhaustive list and programs may also have their own locally developed tool.

- Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA, SAPQA, ASB PQA, or Form B)
- NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-O or APT-Q)
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)
- NYSAN's Quality Self-Assessment Tool (NYSAN)

Questions for the Evaluation Team to Discuss

- When our center thinks about program quality this year, do we want to work on point-of-service or organizational quality?

Typical point-of-service topics	Typical organizational topics
✓ Safety	✓ Management and governance
✓ Relationships	✓ Staffing and professional development
✓ Environment and climate	✓ Community partnerships
✓ Programming and activities	✓ Coordination/alignment with school
✓ Youth participation and engagement	✓ Parent and family engagement
	✓ Program sustainability and growth

- Does our center already have a PQA measure being used for our program?

If yes, does our measure meet the criteria of a robust measurement tool? Note: The purpose of these criteria is to encourage centers to reflect on best practices associated with program quality measurement. Some criteria may be unique to a point-of-service or organizational assessment. • Assesses the implementation of the program and/or the quality of service delivery, not specific outcomes. • Meets the purpose of collecting information for self-assessment and program improvement. • An observation data collection method is included for a point-of-service assessment. • It has levels of quality and is not solely a checklist (i.e., how standards are framed). For example, rating on positive relationships may be on a 3- or 4-point scale, rather than only marking yes or no on the existence of these relationships. • Data collection process recommends a team process with various stakeholders, not solely program leadership or external assessors. • Training on how to use the measure is available. • Additional resources are aligned to the measure (e.g., toolkits, trainings, planning tools). • Evidence backs up the measurement constructs and the technical properties of the instrument to see how strong and rigorous it is.	*If your current measure does not meet most criteria of a robust measurement tool, centers may want to consider revising the current measure or selecting a new measure.*

- What are the content areas around point-of-service that our center most needs to address? What is our center's preferred method and capacity for data collection?
  - **Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA, SAPQA, ASB PQA)**
    - » http://cypq.org/assessment

  - » **Content.** Four overall domains: engagement, interaction, supportive environment, and safe environment. Scales: emotional safety, healthy environment, emergency preparedness, accommodating environment, nourishment, warm welcome, session flow, active engagement, skill building, encouragement, reframing conflict, belonging, collaboration, leadership, adult partners, planning, choice, and reflection.
  - » **Method.** observation, either self-assessment or external assessment
  - » **Training options available.** One-day YPQA Basics training or 2–4-hour online modules. Also, 2-day external assessor training is available for becoming reliable assessors.
  - » **Measure access.** These measures are publicly downloadable on the website. No permission is needed.
  - » YPQA is for Grades 4–12. SAPQA is for Grades K–6. ASB PQA is an adaption of the YPQA and has additional scales related to academic content.
  - » Other versions are available as well: STEM PQA, Summer Learning PQA, Arts PQA, Health and Wellness PQA, Camp PQA, and YPQA/SAPQA translated into Spanish.
- **NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool**
  - » https://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt
  - » **Content.** Three domains: learning and skill building, program organization and structure, and supportive social environment. Program features assessed: stimulating engaging/thinking, quality activities, targeted skill building, youth positively engaged, individualized needs, responsibility and leadership, positive behavior, conducive space for learning, flexible approaches, organization, connections with school, staff support, welcoming environment, supportive staff-youth relationships, positive peer relations, and connections with families.
  - » **Method.** Observation
  - » **Training options available.** One-day onsite training or online modules. Two-day training available for full suite of tools (with Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes [SAYO] measures)
  - » **Measure access.** This measure is not publicly available, and we have received special permission to share with you. If you choose this measure, please let AIR know because we will need to reach out to the owner to obtain necessary permission to use the measure.
- **School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale**
  - » http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers and https://www.ersi.info/sacers.html
  - » **Content.** Three "basic needs": protection of health and safety, positive relationships, and opportunities for stimulation and learning. Seven subscales: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure, staff development, and special needs.
  - » **Method.** Observation, ask some questions
  - » **Training options available.** Five-hour online or live option (contact for more information)
  - » **Measure access.** This measure is not publicly available, and you will need to contact the provider to obtain copies of the measure and permissions to use it.

- What are the content areas related to organizational elements that our center most needs to address? What is our center's preferred method and capacity for data collection?
  - **Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment, Form B**
    - http://cypq.org/assessment
    - **Content.** Three domains: high expectations, youth-centered policies and practices, and access. Scales cover content such as staff qualifications; program offerings; youth influence on activities; youth influence on policy; staff development; supportive social norms; high expectations; program improvement; staff availability; schedules; barriers to participation; and communication with families, organizations, and schools.
    - **Method.** Interview with staff
    - **Training options.** One-day YPQA Basics training or 2–4-hour online modules
    - **Measure access.** This measure is publicly downloadable on the website, as well as other versions of their measure. No permission is needed.
  - **NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-Q)**
    - https://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt
    - **Content.** Three domains: learning and skill building, program organization and structure, and supportive social environment. Program features: stimulating engaging/thinking, quality activities, targeted skill building, youth positively engaged, individualized needs, responsibility and leadership, positive behavior, conducive space for learning, flexible approaches, organization, connections with school, staff support, welcoming environment, supportive staff-youth relationships, positive peer relations, and connections with families.
    - **Method.** Questionnaire self-assessment
    - **Training options.** One-day on-site training or online modules. Two-day training available for full suite of tools (with SAYO measures)
    - **Measure access.** This measure is not publicly available, and we have received special permission to share with you. If you choose this measure, please let AIR know because we will need to reach out to the owner to obtain necessary permission to use the measure.
  - **NYSAN's Quality Self-Assessment Tool**
    - http://networkforyouthsuccess.org/qsa/
    - **Content.** Ten essential elements: environment and climate; administration and organization; relationships; staffing and professional development; programming and activities; linkages between day and afterschool; youth participation and engagement; parent, family, and community partnerships; program sustainability and growth; and measuring outcomes and evaluation. The elements represent a mix of activity-level, program-level, and organizational-level concerns.
    - **Method.** Primarily interview, with some observation, exclusively for self-assessment
    - **Training options.** Contact NYSAN for more information.
    - **Measure access.** This measure is publicly downloadable on the website. No permission is needed.

- How do these measures compare on the essential criteria for PQA measures? See Tables I7–I9.

Table I7: Robust Measurement Tool Criteria

Measure	Improvement purpose	Self-assessment	Recommends team process	Observation	Survey/ questionnaire	Levels of quality
APT	x	x	x	x	x	x
NYSAN	x	x (exclusively)	x	---	x	x
SACERS	x	x	---	x	---	x
YPQA	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table I8: Available Training and Resources Aligned to the Measure

Measure	Measure training available	Aligned resources
APT	Yes	Training on leadership, youth learning and enrichment, and relationship building. Is aligned to the Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes youth measures.
NYSAN	Yes	Supplemental tools are available on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); summer learning; college and career readiness; and global learning.
SACERS	Yes	—
YPQA	Yes	Youth work methods Trainings on things such as youth voice, planning and reflection, active learning, building community, and more. Supplemental versions of the measure are available (e.g., school-age, STEM, academic skill building). Also has a planning process and tools.

Table I9: Technical Properties Comparison

Measure	Score distributions	Interrater reliability	Test-retest reliability	Internal consistency	Convergent validity	Concurrent validity	Validity of scale structure
APT	—	x	—	—	—	x	—
NYSAN	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SACERS	—	x	—	x	x	x	---
YPQA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Source. Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom (2009).

- Does our program have the necessary components in place to conduct a program quality improvement process well? What is needed to build our team to get ready?

Requirements for assessment process	• Available facilitator to coordinate the process. • Available staff to participate in data collection. • Dedicated staff time for training and data collection (when not leading programs); this is critical to success of the process, and it is ideal to pay staff for the time they dedicate to this process. • Staff knowledge and skills in data collection.

Requirements for action planning process	• Knowledge about how to analyze and report the data. • Staff knowledge and skills in data analysis and interpretation. • Staff time for training and participating in action planning.
Requirements for implementation process	• Resources to support implementation of action plan (e.g., training, toolkits). • Staff meetings for ongoing discussions of action plans and progress monitoring. • Commitment to continuous improvement for future development of program.

Action Planning

Using the scores from your PQA tool, complete an Action Plan. This plan will address improvement areas as identified by the evaluation team. For each area, record the rationale for improvement. Next, create strategies that will address each area. List the action steps necessary to complete each strategy, assign tasks, record benchmarks of progress, and estimate a target completion date. Remember to make these SMART! *Complete one worksheet for each improvement area.* An example worksheet is shown in Table I10.

Table I10: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers Planning Worksheet (Example)

Program quality improvement tool used:	*Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)*
Date plan created:	*November 15, 2017*

Improvement area identified from the assessment	*Rationale for improvement (e.g., target element or scale name and score received)*
Increase youth opportunities for planning.	*Planning Scale: average score of 2.25*

Improvement strategy	**Specific action steps**	**Responsible person(s)**	**Benchmarks of progress**	**Target completion**
Provide staff resources on planning	*1. Project director will explore Weikart Youth Work Methods on Planning and Reflection, budget feasibility, etc.* *2. Training online or in person will be set up.* *3. Purchase guidebooks.* *4. In staff meeting, review and share favorites.*	*Project director, site coordinator*	• *Training dates set up* • *Materials ordered* • *Staff meeting review scheduled*	*2/28/18*
Create new project-based learning activities	*1. Staff meeting to brainstorm project-based learning activities where youth have substantial planning.* *2. Narrow list to two activities to undergo in last 2 months of programming.* *3. Develop curriculum for each month-long project. Include planning strategies from guidebook.*	*Site coordinator, OST Staff (Mary & John take lead on one project.)*	• *List of project-based learning activities created* • *Full curriculum with lesson plans and timeline created*	*5/30/18*

What are possible barriers to success?	**What could be planned to ensure success?**
• Budget approval when already spent a lot on training at beginning of the year. • Staff willingness to participate in additional training, when time is limited.	• Reallocation of funds from next year orientation on more training this year. • Have one staff preview materials and report back on what they learned.

Table I11: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers Planning Worksheet

Program quality improvement tool used:	
Date plan created:	

Improvement area identified from the assessment	*Rationale for improvement (e.g., target element or scale name, score received)*

Improvement strategy	**Specific action steps**	**Responsible person(s)**	**Benchmarks of progress**	**Target completion**

What are possible barriers to success?	**What could be planned to ensure success?**

Table I12: Evaluation Planning

Review of key findings
(1) What do we know about our program? *List up to five key findings from your review. A key finding is defined as a result that stands out as especially meaningful or important to the evaluation team. It could be a positive or a negative result. For example, 80% of the program staff report that students are satisfied with the program, but only 50% of the youth reflect this same level of satisfaction.*
(2) What do we want to know more about? *Based on the key findings generated, list any initial questions that may warrant further exploration. For example, why are staff and youth reporting different levels of satisfaction?*

Table Continues

Table I12 (Continued): Evaluation Planning

Evaluation plan		
Evaluation question 1:		
Evaluation question 2:		
Methods	**Question 1**	**Question 2**
Evaluation Design: • List the evaluation design used to examine the question (e.g., pre-post, post-test only, time-series, qualitative).		
Participants • Identify who data will be collected from (e.g., grade level, gender, participation rates).		
Data source • List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, focus group protocols).		
Data collection procedures • List procedures for collecting data (e.g., who? what? when?).		
Data analysis • Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question.		
Considerations • Ultimately, will the evaluation plan answer my evaluation question? If not, what refinements in the question or plan need to be made? • What are the limitations of this plan? Limitations include important considerations to interpreting evaluation findings. • What are potential barriers to implementing this plan and what can be done in advance to address these?		

Local Evaluation Guide

Texas ACE Local Evaluation Guide

August 2018

Support Texas ACE Centers' use of meaningful local evaluation as a means of informing continuous program improvement and sustainability.

About this Guide

This guide was collaboratively developed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the American Institutes for Research, and Diehl Consulting Group, in partnership with the Texas ACE™ Local Evaluation Advisory Group.

How to Use the Guide

The guide offers a framework for conducting high quality, meaningful, local evaluation. The concepts presented provide a roadmap for planning, conducting, and using local evaluation to drive program improvement and inform sustainability. Programs are encouraged to customize the approaches outlined within the guide to meet their unique needs.

Organizational Structure

The guide consists of a description of the Texas ACE™ evaluation requirements and a recommended framework for conducting local evaluation that is organized around a continuous improvement cycle with these key stages:

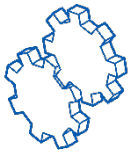
- Develop
- Assess
- Review

What is the purpose of local evaluation?

Local evaluation provides centers with meaningful information to inform areas for improvement and identify promising aspects of a program to sustain. A **meaningful evaluation** is one that generates actionable and relevant information about center-level processes and outcomes. This information assists centers in understanding areas of their program that are going well and aspects where changes can be made to maximize participant outcomes. Findings also support center efforts to sustain what is working by providing objective results to be shared with internal and external stakeholders.

Meaningful Local Evaluation Key Principles

Collaborative processes. Collaboration among grant management, center-level staff, local independent evaluators, and other stakeholders helps to ensure relevant information is being collected and used. A local evaluation team is recommended to facilitate this process. Membership may include key center staff, partners, and the independent evaluator.



Intentional program design. Programs grounded in a sound theory of change and illustrated by a logic model facilitate shared understanding of intentional connections between needs, program components, processes, and outcomes.

Assessment of implementation. Ongoing assessment of implementation practices guides improvement efforts and facilitates understanding of outcomes. This includes measuring core aspects of fidelity (e.g., adherence, exposure, quality, and engagement).

Locally informed and accessible measures. Assessing outcomes allows centers to understand progress toward selected performance indicators. Outcome measures are most effective for this purpose when they are locally derived, focused, easily accessible, and limited in scope.

Focus on center capacity. Evaluation capacity is achieved when center staff possess the *knowledge and understanding to participate in evaluation planning and implementation* (e.g., informing implementation and outcome measures, collecting data), and when they have access to resources and tools that support evaluation capacity.

Start

Throughout this guide, important information is signified by one or more of the icons described here.

Texas ACE ™ evaluation requirement

Recommended best practice

Supplemental resource (Local Evaluation Toolkit)

Getting Started

1 — Understand Local Evaluation Requirements

1. Select an independent evaluator
2. Submit a Center-level Logic Model (Due: Annually-Fall)
3. Submit an Executive Summary to TEA (Due: Annually-July 31)
4. Post an Annual Evaluation Report

Page 3

2 — Select Independent Evaluator

Align with best practices for identifying and procuring evaluation services.

Page 3

3 — Convene an Evaluation Team

Align with best practices related to membership, leadership, meetings, roles and responsibilities.

Page 4

4 — Understand Continuous Improvement Cycle and Timeline

Page 5 & 6

Develop Stage

5 — Identify/Review Theory of Change

Document the relationship between planned activities and the intended outcomes your center is working to achieve.

Page 7

6 — Create/Update Logic Model

Create a visual representation of a program, depicting key components and relationships among needs, program goals, inputs (resources), outputs (activities and implementation fidelity), and expected outcomes.

Page 8

7 — Create/Update Evaluation Plan

Communicate how the program will be evaluated, including key evaluation questions and methods used to collect, analyze, and report on program implementation (process evaluation) and outcomes (outcome evaluation).

Page 11

8 — Create/Update Action Plan

Identify key improvement areas based on evaluation activities and detail the approach to addressing them.

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Assess Stage

9 — Collect, Analyze and Review Fall Data

Engage in a formal review process with your evaluation team during the winter.

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10 — Action Plan Check-in

Based on review of key data points such as quality assessment observations or survey completion, plan program adjustments.

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Review Stage

11 — Final Analysis, Review, and Reporting

Communicate results to internal and external stakeholders, inform improvement, and identify promising aspects of the program.

Page 19

12 — Complete the Annual Action Plan

Examine progress made toward current year improvement areas and identify further areas of improvement for the next year.

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Texas ACE Local Evaluation Requirements

Select an Independent Evaluator

- **Grantees are required to select an independent evaluator**. A program evaluator is someone who has formal training in research and/or evaluation and has experience in conducting program evaluation. Independent evaluators are individuals or organizations with no personal or financial stake in your Texas ACE program or the outcome of the evaluation. Some school districts operate an internal program evaluation office. Grantees may use either their organization's internal evaluation office or a contracted external entity. An internal evaluator must not be involved in the implementation or delivery of the program.
- When selecting a local evaluator, programs must follow local procurement procedures and grant-related requirements. Conducting a thorough identification and interview process can help identify a high-quality independent evaluator.

Resources to assist with the selection process (e.g., interview questions, roles/responsibilities, example contract template) may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Submit a Center-level Logic Model (Due: Annually-Fall)

- A logic model is a visual representation of the program, depicting key components and relationships among needs, program goals, inputs (resources), outputs (activities and implementation fidelity), and expected outcomes. A logic model includes the theory of change behind the program and is the foundation of program planning, evaluation, program management, continuous improvement, and communications. Centers have flexibility to select which logic model framework best represents their program, but centers are **required to submit an updated center-level logic model by the end of the fall semester each year**. Recommended best practices for logic model development are included within this guide.

A logic model template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Submit an Executive Summary to TEA (Due: Annually-July 31)

- Federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) statute requires that programs undergo evaluation to assess progress toward providing high-quality opportunities for academic enrichment and overall student success. **TEA requires that grantees conduct local evaluation at the center level and submit either a Grantee-level Executive Summary or Center-level Executive Summaries to TEA on an annual basis**. While centers have flexibility to decide the content of this summary, required elements to be included within the summary are included within the review section of this document (page 19).

Post an Annual Evaluation Report

- **Grantees are required to complete a comprehensive annual evaluation report**. While this report is not submitted directly to TEA, **the report is to be posted on the grantee's website** to assist stakeholders' understanding of results associated with the program. As such, it is recommended that centers create annual reports that effectively communicate information to diverse groups. While centers have flexibility to decide what goes into this annual report, recommended components are included within the review section of this document (page 19).

Local Evaluation Framework

In keeping with the core purpose and principles of meaningful evaluation, a Local Evaluation Framework grounded in an **overall evaluation and continuous improvement** cycle is recommended. Central to this framework is the establishment of a local evaluation team to facilitate this process and implement various evaluation tasks. Although not required, centers are encouraged to identify a team.

Keys to Building an Effective Local Evaluation Team

Membership: Membership may include the program director, key center staff, community partners, and the independent evaluator. It may also be useful to engage other key stakeholders, such as parents, students, or other volunteers who can offer a more holistic understanding of the program and stakeholder needs. It is crucial that a couple of frontline staff such as youth workers or teachers are included in some way to help strengthen the validity of assessment results and provide a greater likelihood of successful implementation of action plans.

Leadership: It is helpful to designate a leader to facilitate the process. This requires someone who has enough time to manage working with all the stakeholders and ensure everything is done in a timely matter. It does not necessarily need to be a program administrator and could be anyone on the evaluation team who has the capacity to serve as facilitator. It may also be the independent evaluator or another external stakeholder who takes on this role.

Meetings: It is important to create a dedicated meeting schedule, aligned with key evaluation check-points, in the beginning of the year to set a plan for convening regularly throughout the year.

Roles/Responsibilities: Clarifying roles and responsibilities of all team members will help to ensure participants understand their unique contributions. As grantees are required to select an independent evaluator, it is important to outline responsibilities within the evaluator agreement, if an external contractor is selected, as well as identify responsibilities of all staff and other stakeholders (e.g., community partners, volunteers) involved on the team. Suggested roles and responsibilities follow.

Recommended Roles/Responsibilities *(Align with unique center needs and evaluation expectations)*	**Independent Evaluator**	**Project Director**	**Center Staff**	**Other Stakeholders**
Oversee and coordinate overall grant and center evaluation.		✓		
Assist in building the skills, knowledge, and abilities of center staff and stakeholders.	✓	✓		
Participate fully in the development of the logic model and overall process and outcome evaluation planning and implementation.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct on-site quality observations.	✓		✓	
Document process and outcome results to guide decision-making.	✓			
Participate in action planning to improve operations and quality by identifying improvement needs and challenges.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implement action steps identified within the action plan.		✓	✓	✓
Collect process and outcome data and share with the evaluator.		✓	✓	
Conduct quantitative and qualitative data analysis and assist centers in understanding results.	✓			
Produce annual local program evaluation reports for public posting, including a summary of results for submission to TEA.	✓			
Inform, review, approve, and disseminate local annual evaluation reports and program summaries.		✓	✓	✓

Overview of the Continuous Improvement Cycle

A continuous improvement cycle involves the *ongoing* collection and *use* of information to *inform* program operations and delivery. There are several different approaches to conducting continuous improvement. The recommended process described in this guide involves three interrelated stages (Develop-Assess-Review). This approach to continuous improvement accounts for centers operating at different levels of implementation. For example, centers operating in their first year of programming or undergoing leadership, staffing, or organizational changes may find it helpful to put more emphasis on developing a logic model and evaluation plans. More established centers are able to draw on prior evaluation results and action plans to refine logic models and evaluation plans ensuring planned evaluation activities are relevant and meaningful to the center. Centers are encouraged to adapt the continuous improvement approach to fit the unique needs of their program. These stages are summarized below, followed by a more detailed description.

Develop Stage

The develop stage provides an opportunity to identify or further enhance programming to ensure intentional connections between program offerings and outcomes. Emphasis on evaluation planning reinforces stakeholders' ownership in the process and facilitates understanding of planned evaluation activities.

- For newer centers or those experiencing change, this stage focuses on creating a center-level logic model that depicts key relationships among needs, inputs, activities (outputs), and outcomes. This stage also focuses on developing process evaluation plans focusing on how the program is being implemented, and outcome evaluation plans examining changes that are expected to occur among participants being served.
- More established centers (operating for more than a year with stable leadership, staffing and organizational structures) focus on refining existing logic models and evaluation plans, while also examining action plans developed from the prior year review stage.

Assess Stage

The assess stage involves the collection and analysis of data from your process and outcome evaluation plans. This stage provides an opportunity to better understand program implementation and examine action plan progress.

- All centers examine evaluation data to inform mid-year action plans with a goal of improving center operations and program delivery.
- More established centers also examine progress made on previously developed action plans.

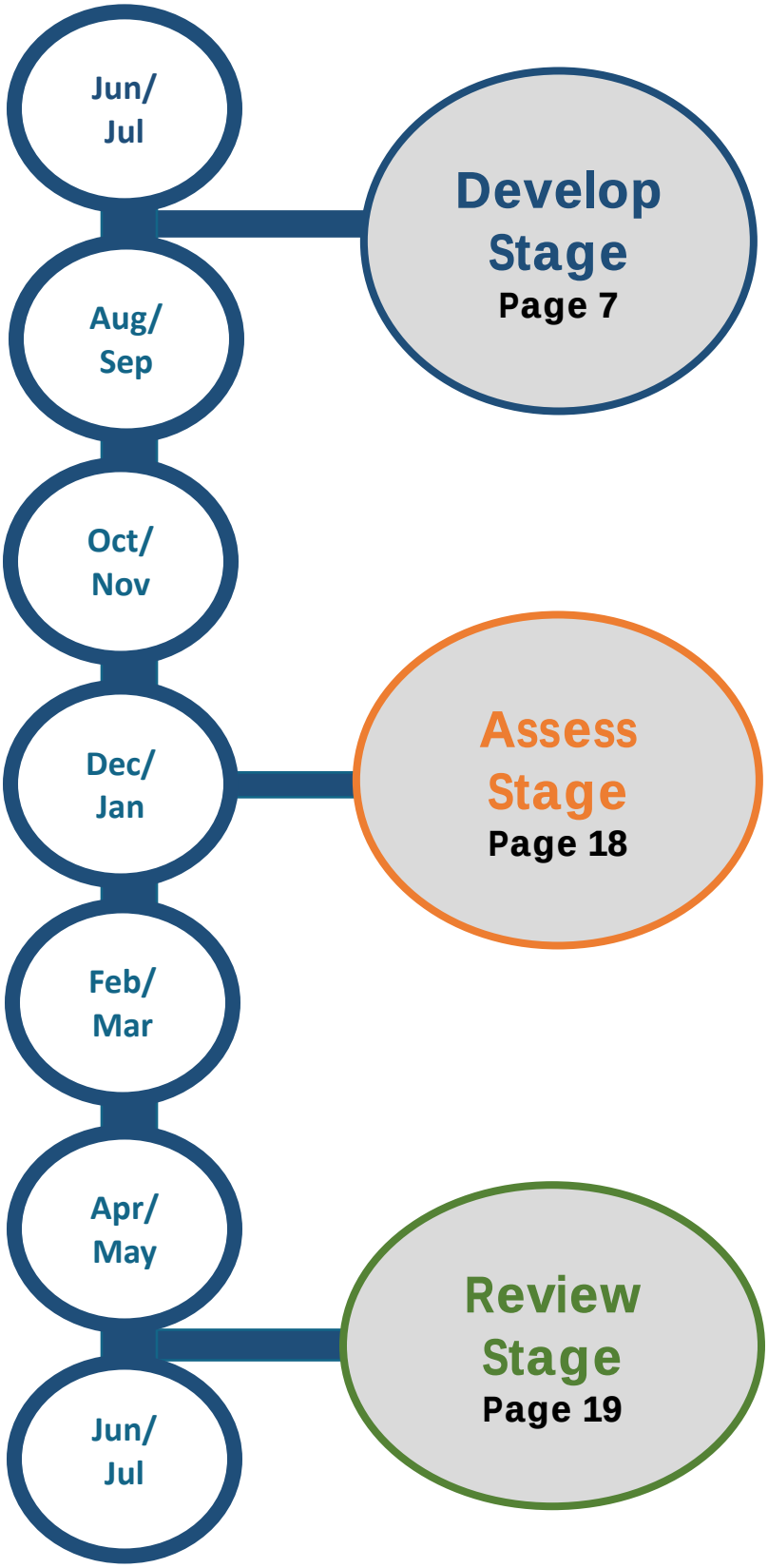
Review Stage

The review stage involves final analysis and reporting of all process and outcome evaluation data collected. This review includes identifying key findings, areas for improvement, and promising aspects of the program to continue and expand.

- Centers have an opportunity to reflect on program successes and challenges, while creating specific plans for improving programs and operations.
- Sustainability is informed through continued focus on improvement of implementation, while also documenting program achievement to celebrate and share with key stakeholders.

Recommended Timeline and Checklist
Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Cycle

While evaluation and continuous improvement is an ongoing process, the following recommended timeline is provided to assist grantees in understanding timing of key evaluation and improvement tasks. A detailed description of each task is included within each of the main improvement stage sections Develop-Assess-Review.



- ☐ **Identify Theory of Change (new/changing centers) or Review Theory of Change (established centers)**
- ☐ **Create Logic Model (new/changing centers) or Update Logic Model (established centers)**
- ☐ **Create Evaluation Plan (new/changing centers) or Update Evaluation Plan (established centers)**
- ☐ **Ensure Relevance of Action Plan (established centers)**
- ☐ **Collect, Analyze and Review Evaluation Data from Fall Semester (new/changing or established centers)**
- ☐ **Action Plan Check-In (established centers)**
- ☐ **Final Analysis, Review and Reporting on All Process and Outcome Data from Summer, Fall and Spring (new/changing or established centers)**
- ☐ **Complete the Annual Action Plan (new/changing or established centers)**

Develop Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ **Identify Theory of Change (new/changing centers) or Review Theory of Change (established centers)**
- ✓ **Create Logic Model (new/changing centers) or Update Logic Model (established centers)**
- ✓ **Create Evaluation Plan (new/changing centers) or Update Evaluation Plan (established centers)**
- ✓ **Ensure Relevance of Action Plan (established centers)**

Develop or further enhance programming to ensure intentional connections between program offerings and outcomes.

Identify and Review Theory of Change

A **Theory of Change** represents the relationship between planned activities and the intended outcomes your center is working to achieve. It addresses the question, *"How do we know the activities being implemented as part of our program will lead to the results we are wanting to achieve?"* By answering this question, an overall foundation for your center is created.

Example: The theory of change for Texas ACE holds that students in need, who spend 45 or more days in well-structured and aligned afterschool activities, taught by qualified personnel, focused on the four activity components will yield improvement in academic performance, attendance, behavior, and promotion and graduation rates of students.

When establishing your theory, it is helpful to draw on research and best practice from the out-of-school time field. Helpful resources include, but are not limited to, the Texas ACE website, Youth for Youth (Y4Y), National Afterschool Association, and/or National Summer Learning Association. Members of the evaluation team can be assigned to collect this information. Some of your activities may already have been established as evidence-based and having this evidence will give your program more confidence that the activities will lead to the results you are trying to achieve. In addition to examining current research, established programs may further enhance their theory of change by reviewing prior evaluation findings or anecdotal experience from implementation, as well.

Questions to Consider

- → *How do we know selected activities will lead to the results we are trying to achieve?*
- → *How well are activities aligned with the school day (e.g., shared ownership and understanding of identified student needs, considered an asset to regular school day program, two-way communication/learning between regular day and ACE)?*
- → *What are the unique needs of our participants or community that must be taken into account in our overall program design? (Note: Draw on established needs from your Texas ACE approved application and review to ensure alignment with your program design.)*

Best Practice

- *Assemble your evaluation team to review research and discuss the theory of change.*
- *Make sure you understand the unique needs of your community and participants so you can align activities to these needs.*
- *Align your center's theory of change with the school improvement focus and strategies.*

Create or Update the Logic Model

A logic model is a visual representation of a program, depicting key components and relationships among needs, program goals, inputs (resources), outputs (activities and implementation fidelity), and expected outcomes. A logic model illustrates the Theory of Change behind the program and is the foundation of program planning, evaluation, and program management. It is also an essential communication tool to assist stakeholders in understanding how needs, activities, and outcomes are connected.

You should expect that each center's logic model will be different because everything flows from the students and families you serve and their unique needs. As needs vary, resources and activities also differ to best serve participants. Additionally, each center's unique school partnerships call for distinct instructional strategies. Each of these unique components should be considered in your logic model.

Centers are required to submit an updated center-level logic model by the end of the fall semester each year. There are several logic model formats to choose from that depict the program goals and outcomes. A sample version is provided below. Grantees should feel free to adapt the format to best meet the needs of their center(s).

A logic model template is provided in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

Best Practice

- *Fully engage your evaluation team in the development of the logic model.*
- *Develop a shared understanding of key evaluation terms (inputs, outputs, and outcomes).*
- *Align out-of-school time programming with school improvement plans.*
- *Align family programming with specific needs and desired outcomes.*
- *Use numbering within the logic model to align specific goals, outputs, and outcomes.*
- *A function model is a more detailed approach to describing relationships between program activities and outcomes. Programs may benefit from using this approach to enhance the logic model.*

Logic Model				
Needs	**Center Goals**	**Implementation (Process Evaluation)**		**Outcomes (Outcome Evaluation)**
		Inputs (Resources/Assets)	**Outputs (Activities Provided and Implementation Fidelity)**	
Underlying problem to be addressed	*Broad statement indicating desired direction of change*	*Materials, human resources, or assets being put into (invested in) the program*	*Activities conducted to reach intended participants and the extent to which these activities are implemented as designed, expose participants to recommended dosages (e.g., program attendance), delivered with quality, and engage participants*	*Conditions that we expect to change as a result of what we are doing (attitudes, knowledge, behaviors)*

Considerations When Creating or Updating the Logic Model

Needs

Various data sources (school- and community-related data, school improvement plans, student data) can be used to triangulate the needs of youth and families in your program. You may need to collect additional information through focus groups or surveys. Key questions include:

- → *What are the underlying issues impacting youth and families in our center?*
- → *How do we know these are the needs we should be focusing on?*
- → *What are the root causes?*

Center Goals

Center goals are broad statements indicating a desired direction of change. For example, increase academic performance, reduce behavior issues, or increase family engagement. Based on the needs identified for your center, the key question is:

- → *What areas do we want to impact with our program?*

Inputs (Resources)

Inputs refer to materials or human resources being put into or invested into the program (e.g., program assets, funding, staffing, specific curriculum, training). Key questions include:

- → *What resources do we need to invest into the program to fully address the identified needs and realize our goals?*
- → *Are these the right resources to implement the program? How do we know?*

Outputs

Outputs involve activities conducted to reach your intended participants, the product of these activities, and the extent to which these activities are implemented with fidelity. Typically, there are four approaches to examining fidelity of implementation that should be considered.

(1) Adherence refers to the extent to which program components are being implemented as designed. This is largely dependent on core implementation characteristics associated with the program. → For example, as outlined within the Texas ACE application, all activities must be intentionally developed using a comprehensive and coordinated planning tool such as the "Texas ACE Activity/Unit and Lesson Plan Worksheet." To measure adherence, the evaluation would examine whether or not the program addressed the core components as outlined within the activity/unit and lesson plan tool.	***Examples of methods*** *may include a lesson plan checklist and/or an observation tool that assesses if components were taught.*
(2) Exposure refers to how much of the program participants received. Exposure can include the number of sessions or contacts, attendance, or the frequency and duration of sessions.	***Examples of methods*** *may include participant attendance records and/or observations of session length.*

Outputs (cont.)

(3) Quality refers to the way the program is being designed and delivered to participants. This may include overall program design features (e.g., policies and procedures), staff characteristics (e.g., training received, knowledge of content, expertise in delivery) or other program attributes (e.g., environment, peer-to-peer interactions, voice in programming). Two approaches to examining quality include:

- ***Organizational assessment tools*** *allow centers to examine structural components of programs which are useful in informing how programs operate.*
- ***Direct point-of-service (observation-based) assessment tools*** *are used to directly observe the afterschool environment where students and staff interact in program delivery.*

Examples of methods *may include organizational and direct point-of-service assessment tools. Procedures for selecting these measures are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.*

(4) Participant engagement refers to how participants respond to the programming being provided. This may include their level of interest in a particular activity, the extent to which they believe it to be relevant and useful, or actual involvement in activities.

Examples of methods *may include surveys, focus groups, program observations, and/or attendance.*

Outcomes

While outputs describe how programming is implemented, outcomes represent conditions expected to change as a result of center programming. These often include changes in attitudes, knowledge, and/or behaviors.

The SMART framework is a common approach to creating outcomes and other goals/plans/objectives in an actionable way. This approach recommends creating outcomes that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time based. Key questions to ensure your outcomes are SMART include:

- **Specific:** *Does the outcome include a direction and/or magnitude of change?*
- **Measurable:** *Can evidence be gathered to support attainment of the outcome?*
- **Attainable:** *Is the outcome logically tied to the need and activity being offered, and can it reasonably be accomplished?*
- **Relevant:** *Will the outcome yield actionable and meaningful information?*
- **Time Based:** *Does the outcome include a specified time period to be accomplished?*

Create or Update the Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan clearly communicates how the program will be evaluated, including key evaluation questions and methods used to collect, analyze, and report on program implementation and outcomes. Ideally, the evaluation plan should align with the logic model. Generally, there are two types of evaluation.

Process Evaluation → **focuses on how the program is being implemented, which allows practitioners to make changes in programming over the course of the year.**

Outcome Evaluation → **examines changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in order to understand the extent to which the program is bringing about changes.**

A recommended approach to crafting both a process and outcome evaluation plan follows.

Creating or Updating a Process Evaluation Plan

Process evaluation examines how a program is being implemented. It is useful in understanding the extent to which activities are delivered with fidelity to the planned program design. Once activities are intentionally selected based on a theory of change, process evaluation is employed to examine the actual implementation of the activities. This helps in understanding if you are doing what you said you would do, what types of adjustments are needed, and any barriers that may exist within implementation.

To examine fidelity, centers are encouraged to create a process evaluation plan based on the four questions below. This plan draws from the implementation section of the logic model. Suggested measures and procedures for collecting implementation information follow to illustrate strategies for addressing each.

- **Adherence:** *Is the program being implemented as designed?*
- **Exposure:** *To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?*
- **Quality:** *Is the program being delivered in a high-quality way?*
- **Engagement:** *How are participants responding to the program?*

Best Practice

- *Use a combination of both organizational and point-of-service quality assessments.*
- *Train the independent evaluator and program staff in conducting point-of-service quality assessments.*
- *Use both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a deeper understanding of your program.*
- *Select the most meaningful process measures for your program… you don't have to measure everything!*
- *When assigning data collection roles, find ways to engage other center staff or partners and not place everything on the Site Coordinator.*
- *Align process measures with Texas 21st Student Tracking System Reports.*

Process Evaluation Questions	Suggested Measures	Suggested Procedures
① **Adherence**: ***Is the program being implemented as designed?***	→ Lesson plan review	Review lesson plans to ensure alignment with the purpose of the activity and curriculum.
	→ Lesson plan checklist	Create a checklist of core components within the lesson plan and have instructors turn the checklist in at regular intervals.
	→ Observation tool	Create a tool outlining core lesson components and conduct an observation at selected times during the activity cycle.
② **Exposure**: ***To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?***	→ Activity schedule review	Review the activity schedule to ensure activity is scheduled for the recommended frequency.
	→ Participant attendance records	Examine participant attendance records comparing actual attendance with recommended attendance.
	→ Observations of session length	Conduct observations to validate activities are being implemented as scheduled.
③ **Quality**: ***Is the program being delivered in a high-quality way?***	→ Staff qualifications review	Review staffing levels by program activity to assess alignment with staff qualifications.
	→ Point-of-Service Assessment: e.g., Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA), NIOST's Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT-O) → Organizational Quality Assessment: e.g., NYSAN's Quality Self-Assessment Tool, PQA Form B, APT-Q	Procedures for selecting point-of-service and/or organizational assessments are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.
④ **Engagement**: ***How are participants responding to the program?***	→ Participant surveys	Administer participant engagement surveys midway through the year to obtain perceptions of the program.
	→ Participant focus groups	Identify specific target populations of participants and conduct small group discussions to gauge perceptions. A focus group protocol jointly created with your evaluation team is recommended.
	→ Point-of-Service Assessments (participant engagement scales)	Conduct observations using a point-of-service assessment tool that includes some measure of participant engagement. Procedures for selecting point-of-service and/or organizational assessments are included in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

A written process evaluation plan helps to communicate to all stakeholders the type of information that will be collected, when it will be collected, and who is responsible. Centers are encouraged to create tailored process evaluation plans aligned to their unique needs. A recommended format for documenting this plan follows, along with an example.

 *A process evaluation template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.*

Process Evaluation Plan			
Process Question	**Process Measure**	**Data Collection Method and Timeline**	**Responsible Party**
Identify the implementation questions of interest to your program. This may be drawn from the porcess questions described above and/or additional questions determined to be useful to your program.	*Decide what will be reviewed to determine progress (e.g., materials, specific percentages or numbers). Measures should be directly aligned with the activity or program attribute being assessed.*	*Specify how your process measures will be collected, including the type of measure and the timeline with which it will be administered.*	*Identify specific individuals who are responsible for data collection and make sure they are adequately trained.*

EXAMPLE			
Process Evaluation Plan			
Process Question	**Process Measure**	**Data Collection Method and Timeline**	**Responsible Party**
(1) <u>Adherence</u>: ***Is the program being implemented as designed?***	**1a.** Reading and math activities are delivered as proposed within the activity plan.	**1a.** Reading and math activities will be observed four times each semester.	**1a.** School day curriculum specialist
(2) <u>Exposure</u>: ***To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?***	**2a.** % of students attending 45 or more days in programming during fall, spring and summer.	**2a.** Daily attendance records; Each month, the percent of students attending programming will be reviewed.	**2a.** Independent evaluator and site coordinator
(3) <u>Quality</u>: ***Is the program being delivered in a high- quality manner?***	**3a.** Average subscale scores on the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) >= 3.0. **3b.** % of quality indicators for each subscale of the NYSAN falling within the satisfactory or excellent.	**3a.** Formal program observation will be conducted 2 times a year using the YPQA. **3b.** During the spring of each year, NYSAN organizational quality assessment will be reviewed and scored.	**3a.** Independent evaluator and/or designated center staff **3b.** Evaluation team
(4) <u>Engagement</u>: ***How are participants responding to the program?***	**4a.** % of students and parents reporting satisfaction with center activities during the fall and spring of each year.	**4a.** Stakeholder Survey administered during the fall and spring of each year to youth and families.	**4a.** Center staff, site coordinator, and independent evaluator

Creating or Updating an Outcome Evaluation Plan

Outcome evaluation examines changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in order to understand the extent to which the program is bringing about desired changes. While short-term outcomes can be examined throughout the year, outcome evaluation is usually a summative approach which occurs at the end of the year.

Drawing from the **SMART** outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Based) identified within the logic model, create an outcome evaluation plan that documents: *What data will be collected? Who will data be collected from? How and when will it be collected? How will information be analyzed and reported?*

Components of An Outcome Evaluation Plan

Performance Measure	→ Represents what you will be using to measure your outcome (indicator of change).
Participants	→ Identify who data will be collected from (e.g., grade levels, gender, groups participating at differing rates).
Data Source	→ List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, focus group protocols) and the time period the data covers. When identifying the data source(s), describe how the data source adequately represents the area being studied. For surveys, this may include specific information about reliability and validity of the tools. In other cases, this may be an explanation of why the specific source was selected. In all cases, it is critical to ensure clear alignment between the actual outcome and the data source being used. Your logic model should be revisited and used as a reference for this reflection. It is also important to consider the timing of data availability in your planning. Finally, when selecting a data source, examine the quality of data being collected.
Data Collection Procedures	→ List procedures for collecting data. This includes detailing who is responsible, what is being collected, when it is being collected, and strategies to ensure data quality.
Data Analysis and Reporting	→ Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question, as well as who is responsible.

Best Practice

- *Select outcomes that are most meaningful to your program.*
- *Make sure the center has capacity to implement the evaluation plan.*
- *Documenting the outcome evaluation plan helps to communicate to stakeholders the type of information being reviewed as part of the evaluation, which builds ownership in the evaluation process.*
- *Understand the quality of data being used in your analysis. Identify strategies to address issues in subsequent years.*

While establishing your evaluation plan, consider the following reflection questions:

(1) *Ultimately, will the plan address targeted outcomes? If not, what refinements need to be made?*

(2) *What are the limitations?* Limitations include important considerations to interpreting evaluation findings (e.g., data quality and collection issues such as errors or missing information).

(3) *What are potential barriers to implementing this plan and what can be done in advance to address these?*

A written outcome evaluation plan helps to communicate to all stakeholders the type of information that will be collected, when and how it will be collected, who is responsible, and how it will be analyzed and reported. Centers are encouraged to create tailored outcome evaluation plans aligned to their unique needs. Plans would include a combination of locally derived outcomes based on focus areas and needs identified by centers (e.g., family engagement, student engagement, social and emotional development), as well as plans to address state outcomes identified within respective cycle grant applications (e.g., school day attendance, core course grades, mandatory discipline referrals). A recommended format for documenting this plan follows, along with an example.

 *An outcome evaluation template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.*

Outcome Evaluation Plan					
Outcome	**Performance Measure**	**Participants**	**Data Source**	**Procedures**	**Data Analysis and Reporting**
Specify your SMART outcome from the Logic Model.	*Represents what you will be using to measure your outcome (indicator of change).*	*Identify who data will be collected from (e.g., grade levels, gender, groups participating at differing rates).*	*List the source of data (e.g., survey tools, assessments, focus group protocols) and the time period the data covers.*	*List procedures for collecting data. This includes detailing who is responsible, what is being collected, and when it is being collected.*	*Specify upfront how data will be analyzed and reported to examine the evaluation question, as well as who is responsible.*

EXAMPLE					
Outcome Evaluation Plan					
Outcome	**Performance Measure**	**Participants**	**Data Source**	**Procedures**	**Data Analysis and Reporting**
(1) By the end of the school year, 90% of regularly attending youth will be absent for 10% or less of enrolled days.	**1.** Percentage of youth attending ACE programming 45 days or more during the school year and summer of interest who were absent for 10% or less of school days enrolled.	1. All youth attending the ACE program who attend 45 or more days during the school year or summer.	1. School day attendance records entered into Texas ACE 21st Student Tracking System	Daily, Site Coordinators record Texas ACE attendance information at the beginning of the program; Daily, school staff record day school attendance.	Program and school day attendance will be merged; Youth attending 45 or more days in the program (summer and school year) and absent 10% or less based on school days enrolled will be tallied. A percent will be reported.

Create or Update the Action Plan

Action planning is the heart of the continuous improvement process. The action plan is a working document examined during each continuous improvement stage. The plan identifies key improvement areas determined from evaluation activities and details the approach to addressing them.

Centers in their first year of operation will likely wait to create an action plan until mid-year. However, it is important for these centers to understand what goes into the document to inform the process evaluation being developed. On the other hand, more established centers will be updating action plans based on evaluation results from prior years.

Recommended components of action plans include:

- Rationale for improvement
- General improvement strategies
- Specific action steps
- Person(s) responsible for tasks
- Measures to monitor progress
- Timeline with completion dates

Best Practice

- *Make one of your goals "low-hanging fruit," something that can be addressed more quickly and give the team a quick win.*
- *Explore resources that can help the center to successfully implement the action plan.*
- *Set aside time in the program to have ongoing conversations about the action plan and progress toward completion.*

Similar to creating outcomes, improvement strategies are recommended to be framed with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time based) criteria. A template and example for constructing an action plan follows.

An action plan template may be found in the Local Evaluation Toolkit.

TX ACE ACTION PLAN				
Program Name:				
Date Plan Created:				
What successes/assets can support this work?				
Improvement Area Identified		***Rationale/Finding that Showed this as an Improvement Need***		
Improvement Strategy	**Specific Attainable Action Steps**	**Responsible Person(s)**	**Progress Measures**	**Target Completion Date/Timeline**
What are possible barriers to success?		**What could be planned to address barriers?**		

EXAMPLE

TX ACE ACTION PLAN

Program Name	*ABC Youth Thrives*
Measure Used (e.g., YPQA, APT-O, Local Evaluation Plans, Student Attendance)	*Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)*
Date Plan Created	*August 15, 2018*

What successes/assets can support this work?	
High scores on supportive environment, we have good relationships with youth. *Many staff are teachers with a lot of experience in curriculum development.*	Project Director is invested in quality and wants to find resources. Site Coordinator is new to position and willing to try new things.

Improvement Area Identified	*Rationale/Finding that Showed this as an Improvement Need*
Increase youth opportunities for planning.	*PLANNING Scale- average score of 2.25*

Improvement Strategy	Specific, Attainable Action Steps	Responsible Person(s)	Progress Measures	Target Completion Date/Timeline
Provide staff resources on planning	1. *PD will explore Weikart Youth Work Methods on Planning & Reflection, budget feasibility, etc.*	*Maria (PD)*	• *Budget allocation for this project*	*By 12/1/18*
	2. *Training online or in person will be set up.*	*Joe (SC)*	• *Training dates set up*	*By 12/8/18*
	3. *Purchase guidebooks and distribute.*	*Joe*	• *Materials ordered*	*12/8-12/16*
	4. *Hold training*	*All Staff*	• *Training count*	*By 1/30/19*
	5. *In staff meeting, review and share favorites. Document list of favorites as we go.*	*Joe leads, All Staff shares, Julie documents*	• *Staff meeting count,* • *List of favorite activities*	*By 2/28/19*
Create new project-based learning activities	1. *Staff meeting to brainstorm project-based learning activities where youth have substantial planning.*	*Joe (SC)*	• *Staff meeting count* • *List of project-based activities*	*By 2/15/19*
	2. *Teams split into 2 groups to pick favorite and come up with plan for an activity to last a month.*	*Shakia & Antonio team leaders + all staff*	• *Two teams created* • *Project plan*	*By 2/29/19*
	3. *Develop curriculum for each month-long project. Include planning strategies from guidebook.*	*Shakia & Antonio team leaders + all staff*	• *Full curriculum with lesson plans and timeline created*	*By 3/17/19*
	4. *Implement project #1.*	*Team 1*	• *Weekly progress report*	*By 4/1/2019*
	5. *Implement project #2.*	*Team 2*	• *Weekly progress report*	*By 5/1/2019*

What are possible barriers to success?	What could be planned to address barriers?
• *Budget approval when already spent a lot on training at the beginning of the year.* • *Staff willingness to participate in additional training, when time is limited.*	• *Reallocation of funds from next year to support more training this year.* • *Have one staff preview materials and report back on what they learned.*

Assess Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ **Collect, Analyze and Review Evaluation Data from Fall Semester (new/changing or established centers)**
- ✓ **Action Plan Check-In (established centers)**

Collect and analyze data to assess program implementation and drive program improvement strategies through the use of an action planning process.

Collect, Analyze, and Review Evaluation Data from Fall Semester & Action Plan Check-In

As outlined in your evaluation plans, process and outcome (as available from the fall semester and relevant) performance measures will be collected, analyzed, and reviewed by your evaluation team to address progress toward implementation and outcomes. Some data may be collected and reviewed weekly, monthly, or at the end of the semester. While information may be available at different times, a formal review process is recommended with your evaluation team during the winter. This will allow adjustments to be made prior to spring semester programming. Ideally, the timing of this meeting corresponds with key data collection plans, such as quality assessment observations or survey completion.

The list of questions from the process evaluation plan would be reviewed and discussed during this stage. New improvement strategies can be identified based on available findings. For established centers, progress toward your action plan should be reviewed and adjustments made.

Example of Potential Questions to Examine:

- → *Is the program being implemented as designed?*
- → *To what extent are participants receiving the recommended amount of exposure to the program?*
- → *Is the program being delivered in a high-quality way?*
- → *How are participants responding to the program?*
- → *Are we making progress toward our action plan? Have key action plan benchmarks been achieved? What adjustments in our plan do we need to make?*
- → *Overall, what is going well with the program? What areas need improvement? How do we know this?*

Best Practice

- *Make data collection a normal part of the program's work, including in staff roles and discussing regularly at staff meetings.*
- *Plan dedicated time for the evaluation team to get together specifically to review data, ideally on a frequent basis.*
- *Make comparisons (as relevant) to prior years to track trends.*

Review Stage

Focus Areas:

- ✓ **Final Analysis, Review, and Reporting on All Process and Outcome Data from Summer, Fall and Spring (new/changing or established centers)**
- ✓ **Complete the Annual Action Plan (new/changing or established centers)**

Review and reflect on program successes and challenges, to create targeted plans for improving programs and operations.

Final Analysis, Review, and Reporting

The overall purpose of your final analysis, review and reporting is to communicate results to internal and external stakeholders, to inform improvement, and to identify promising aspects of the program to continue and further enhance.

Reporting Tips:

- → Reporting formats should succinctly present information in a way that is meaningful to your target audience (e.g., school and program staff, community partners, youth and families). Customize reporting formats to address the needs of your program.
- → Emphasis should be placed on communicating evaluation results in a manner that is meaningful to stakeholders. This includes concise reports that use a variety of data visualization strategies. In addition to the required Grantee- or Center-level Executive Summary and the Annual Evaluation Report, other report layouts may be useful for communicating information (e.g., one-page fact sheets, highlight documents, PowerPoint slides).

  ✕ *Data visualization resources are provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.*

Best Practice

- *Visualize your data with user-friendly charts, graphs, and infographics.*
- *Conduct a stakeholder analysis to determine who should receive information, and brainstorm with your evaluation team the best communication strategies for these target audiences.*
- *Share reports with interested internal and external stakeholders (staff, funders, partners, parents, etc.) to highlight the work being done and create a foundation for sustainability.*

- Grantees are required to **submit either a Grantee-level Executive Summary or Center-level Executive Summaries to TEA by July 31** and **post the full evaluation report** to their public website, annually.
- While centers have flexibility to decide the content of this summary, **required elements to be included within the summary are provided in the section below**.
- In collaboration with the project director, center staff, and stakeholders, **the local evaluator is responsible for producing annual local program evaluation reports for public posting, including the Executive Summary (Grantee or Center level) for submission to TEA**.

Complete Annual Action Plan

At this point in the continuous improvement process, centers benefit from reviewing all process and outcome evaluation data (as available), examining progress made toward current year improvement areas, comparing current findings to results from prior years, and identifying further areas of improvement for the next year. These improvement strategies should be documented within the action plan and shared with internal and external stakeholders to clearly communicate improvement strategies. Guidance for developing the action plan was provided earlier (page 16). While the end of the school year offers a good opportunity for this type of reflection, it will also be important to review and update the action plan during the subsequent Develop Stage. This further review ensures improvement strategies identified at year end are still relevant given any planned adjustments for next school year. The annual action plan then becomes a living document that can be used and updated all year long to support improvement efforts.

Executive Summary: Required Elements

Grantees are required to submit an Executive Summary to TEA *either* at the Grantee or Center level. Required elements (noted by letters A through E) and recommended content (noted by supporting text and bullets).

Grantee-Level Executive Summary Required Elements and Recommended Content
Overall Purpose: The executive summary succinctly highlights the most important process and outcome evaluation findings and presents key information about the grant and the centers being served. The summary should also include common strengths, recommendations, and next steps across all centers served. The summary may also include any unique center attributes deemed important for understanding successes or areas for improvement. An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone.
A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps
Share common accomplishments and areas for improvement for the overall grant. • Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include common recommended next steps centers will be engaging in to address areas for improvement based on action plans developed for your center(s). Unique center successes or next steps may also be highlighted within this section.
B. Brief Grantee and Center Overview
Convey the overall context and focus of your grant. • Include a brief summary of the centers being served by your grant (e.g., names, relevant demographics). • Include any unique attributes associated with your grant (e.g., specialized population, specific program focus such as STEM).
C. Implementation
Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings. • Include relevant process evaluation results across your centers, such as: (a) # students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (b) overall quality, and (c) participant responsiveness. • Where possible (and as applicable), include prior year results related to center attendance to report on trends.
D. Local Needs and Outcomes
Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs. • Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to your locally derived outcomes.
E. State Outcomes *(by Major Texas ACE Goal/Objective Areas)*
Display and briefly summarize progress towards major program outcomes required by the state as documented within the respective cycle grant application. • Organize the section by major Texas ACE goal/objective areas as relevant to your center and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE Grant Cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement to the next grade level. Note: Reference the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle. • Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available).

Center-level Executive Summary
Required Elements and Recommended Content
(recommend up to 3 pages)

Overall Purpose: The executive summary succinctly highlights the most important process and outcome evaluation findings and presents key information about the grant and the centers being served. The summary should also include common strengths, recommendations, and next steps across all centers served. The summary may also include any unique center attributes deemed important for understanding successes or areas for improvement. An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone.

A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps

Share key accomplishments and areas for improvement.

- Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include recommended next steps your center will be engaging in to address areas for improvement.

B. Brief Center Overview

Convey the overall context and focus of your center.

- Include a brief summary of your center (e.g., location, center demographics, program schedule, program offerings).
- Include any unique center attributes (e.g., specialized population served, specific program focus such as STEM).

C. Implementation

Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings.

- Include process evaluation results, such as: (a) # students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (b) overall quality, and (c) participant responsiveness.
- Where possible (and as applicable), include prior year results for center attendance to report trends.

D. Local Needs and Outcomes

Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs.

- Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to your locally derived outcomes.

E. State Outcomes *(by Major Texas ACE Goal/Objective Areas)*

Display and briefly summarize progress towards major program outcomes as documented within the respective cycle grant application.

- Organize the section by major Texas ACE goal/objective areas as relevant to your center and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE Grant Cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement to the next grade level. Note: Reference the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle.
- Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available).

Annual Evaluation Report

While a required Executive Summary (Grantee or Center-level) is to be submitted to TEA, a center-level one-page fact sheet, executive summary and report is the recommended reporting format for the annual evaluation report. This approach allows information specific to the center to be shared with relevant stakeholders versus an aggregated report that may over- or under-estimate specific center findings. With this said, grantee needs and capacity should ultimately guide the best approach to reporting. For example, some grantees may find it more useful to create an aggregated report and include specific center-level reports as appendices versus creating individual center-level reports. Grantees have flexibility to create documents most useful for communicating results to both internal and external stakeholders. A recommended format for a Center-Level Annual Evaluation Report follows.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Center-Level
Annual Evaluation Report: Recommended Content</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Overall Purpose: The annual evaluation report includes all local program evaluation information to support program improvement and sustainability. The document includes center background information, the most recent logic model and evaluation plans, and summarizes findings for all local and state goal areas. The report concludes with a summary of key accomplishments, recommendations, and next steps developed by the evaluation team.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">I. One Page Fact Sheet</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Create a one-page fact sheet that communicates selected main ideas in an easy and understandable format. Include some of the main findings and basic program information that you want your audience to know. Utilize a variety of data visualization strategies to quickly and succinctly communicate information.</td><td>Data visualization resources are provided in the Evaluation Toolkit.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">II. Center-level Executive Summary (recommend up to 3 pages)
Note: An effective summary visually displays the most relevant and actionable information and can stand alone</th></tr>
<tr><td>A. Overall Strengths and Next Steps</td><td colspan="2">Share key accomplishments and areas for improvement.
• Include a reflection statement regarding your overall strengths and accomplishments this year. Also, include recommended next steps your center will be engaging in to address areas for improvement.</td></tr>
<tr><td>B. Brief Center Overview</td><td colspan="2">Convey the overall context and focus of your center.
• Include a brief summary of your center (e.g., location, center demographics, program schedule, program offerings).
• Include any unique center attributes (e.g., specialized population served, specific program focus such as STEM).</td></tr>
<tr><td>C. Implementation</td><td colspan="2">Report on implementation to help frame highlighted findings.
• Include process evaluation results, such as: (a) # students and adults served overall and regularly (45 or more days), (b) overall quality, and (c) participant responsiveness.
• Where possible (and as applicable), include prior year results for center attendance to report trends.</td></tr>
<tr><td>D. Local Needs and Outcomes</td><td colspan="2">Display and summarize progress toward major outcomes addressing local needs.
• Present key quantitative and qualitative data (as available) related to your locally derived outcomes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>E. State Outcomes (by Major Texas ACE Goal/Objective Areas)</td><td colspan="2">Display and briefly summarize progress towards major program outcomes as documented within the respective cycle grant application.
• Organize the section by major Texas ACE goal/objective areas as relevant to your center and the specific requirements outlined within your Texas ACE Grant Cycle, such as school day attendance, core course grades, and on-time advancement to the next grade level. Note: Reference the program guidelines for your specific grant cycle.
• Present key quantitative and qualitative data for each area (as available).</td></tr>
</table>

III. Summary of Strengths, Recommendations and Next Steps ***(recommend up to 2 pages)***	
A. Summary	• Summarize major accomplishments for the year, recommendations, and planned action steps based on information from the action plan, as determined by the evaluation team.
IV. Program Overview ***(recommend up to 2 pages)***	
A. Theory of Change	• Include a summary of your program and the theory of change identified through planning.
B. Logic Model	• Include the program logic model being used during this reporting period.
V. Process (Implementation) Evaluation Plan and Results ***(recommend up to 5 pages)***	
A. Process Evaluation Plan	• Include the process evaluation plan being used for this reporting period. Note: Depending on plan length, centers may want to provide a brief summary and include the full plan in an appendix.
B. Process Evaluation Results	• Include relevant process evaluation results from surveys, quality assessments, focus groups, and other methods used to collect information. • Where possible (and as applicable), include prior year results to report on trends.
VI. Outcome Evaluation Plan and Results ***(recommend up to 5 pages)***	
A. Outcome Evaluation Plan	• Include the outcome evaluation plan being used for this reporting period. Note: Depending on plan length, centers may want to provide a brief summary and include the full plan in an appendix.
B. Outcome Evaluation Results	• Include local and state outcome results as aligned with the evaluation plan. • Where possible (and as applicable), include prior year results to report on trends.
VII. Appendix	
Include any additional information deemed relevant to the report. In some cases, centers may want to include evaluation plans within the appendix versus displaying them in the full report.	

Local Evaluation Toolkit

Texas ACE Local Evaluation Toolkit: TEMPLATES
(A RESOURCE SUPPORTING THE USE OF THE TEXAS ACE LOCAL EVALUATION GUIDE)

Purpose: This document is the Word version of templates from the Texas ACE Local Evaluation Toolkit with editable resources to use in your local evaluation.

Resource 2.	**Sample Texas ACE Local Evaluator Agreement Template**
Resource 4.	**Logic Model Template**
Resource 6.	**Process Evaluation Plan Template**
Resource 7.	**Outcome Evaluation Plan Template**
Resource 8.	**Texas ACE Action Plan Template**

Resource 2. Sample Texas ACE Local Evaluator Agreement Template[39]

The sample local evaluator template aligns with pages 3 and 4 of the Local Evaluation Guide. ***While some grantees may have their own contract agreements to draw from, others may find the template useful in constructing agreements for evaluation services.***[40] *It may also be useful when deciding on roles and responsibilities for internal evaluators. When using the template below, text in red should be customized to meet specific grant needs and the level of evaluation service purchased based on the local evaluator cost guidelines outlined for your grant cycle. Items in red are suggestions and should not to be included in the final document. Also, the included content is based on inclusion of all required and recommended evaluation activities outlined within the Local Evaluation Guide.*

Local Evaluator Service Agreement between
[Texas ACE Grantee (Grantee)]* and *[Evaluator/Agency Name]

Charge
The local evaluator, *[Evaluator/Agency Name]*, has been engaged by the *[Texas ACE Grantee (Grantee)]* to evaluate the implementation of the Texas ACE (aka 21st Century Community Learning Centers/21st CCLC) grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Contact Information
[Evaluator/Agency Name] can be contacted at *[address, phone, fax, email]*.
[Evaluation contact name] will be the evaluation contact for the program. *[Grantee]* can be contacted at *[address, phone, fax, email]. [Grantee contact name]* will be the grantee contact for the program.

Audiences
The primary audiences for this evaluation will be:
[List audiences with which the evaluator and/or Grantee will share evaluation data, i.e. school districts, TEA, potential new funders, parents/students/community]

[39] Adapted with permission from Michigan Department of Education.
[40] All contracted services paid with federal 21st CCLC funds must comply with the procurement standards and other relevant requirements in the General and Fiscal Guidelines.

Reporting and Dissemination
The evaluator will be responsible for collaborating with the Project Director and center staff to plan the evaluation, draft, and edit evaluation reports as outlined in the Evaluation Activities below. The *[Grantee]* will be responsible for completing reporting requirements indicated by TEA, with evaluator support. It is understood that the evaluation report will be as concise as possible, but additional information can be provided by the evaluator upon request. Required and recommended reporting guidance is provided in the Local Evaluation Guide.

The evaluator will release the evaluation report to the *[Grantee]* with the understanding that the *[Grantee]* will submit the report to TEA by the due date and disseminate the report, along with any accompanying statement, to other key stakeholders. The evaluator will work with key *[Grantee]* members to help in the interpretation of data. The evaluator may be requested to assist in presenting findings and facilitating discussions with key stakeholders in understanding the report. In all cases, the evaluator will review data and reports with you *[Grantee]* prior to all dissemination of results. The grantee may choose to endorse or not endorse the report depending on their judgment of the quality and appropriateness of the report by inserting a statement at the beginning of the document or attaching a separate letter.

Evaluation Activities
Activities that are included in the evaluation include:

- Assist in building the skills, knowledge, and abilities of center staff and stakeholders in implementing center-level evaluation activities.
- Participate fully in the development and planning of a center-level logic model and overall process and outcome evaluation. This includes meeting with the Project Director to review TEA's evaluation requirements and creating a project plan and timeline for identifying evaluation methods and implementing the evaluation activities. Also, determine what additional data are going to be collected along with data collected through Tx21st and state-level evaluation made available to local evaluators, as applicable. This should include a review of the needs assessment used to inform the program.
- Participate fully in implementation of the evaluation plan and lead collection of data as specified in the plan on the agreed upon timeline.
- Conduct on-site quality observations. Quality assessment strategies and frequency of observation will be identified by the local evaluation team.
- Document process and outcome results to guide decision-making.
- Participate in action planning to improve operations and programming by identifying improvement needs and challenges.
- Conduct quantitative and qualitative data analysis and assist centers in understanding results.
- Produce an annual executive summary for submission to TEA and a local program evaluation report for public posting by the grantee. Required and recommended reporting guidance is provided in the Local Evaluation Guide.

Resources
It is expected that sufficient resources will be made available to the evaluator by the *[Grantee]* for this evaluation based on the allowable funding levels provided in the cycle grant application. The *[Grantee]* key staff and district staff will be available to collaborate with the evaluator to provide support for the evaluation. The *[Grantee]* may authorize the evaluator to request access to the System (TEA data tracking system), provided that the evaluator specifies how the data will be secured and used. The local evaluator will attend relevant conferences, meetings, and

conference calls in order to understand and collect data. If costs are incurred for conferences, the grantee will pay the additional costs (e.g., hotel, registration). The total cost of the evaluation of the *[number of program sites]* for the time period of August 1, *[year]* to July 31, *[year]* will be *[total amount of contract]*. Additional years of evaluation may be negotiated upon receipt of future funding and mutual consent. Payments will be made to the evaluator in the amount of *[list payment schedule – amount & dates],* [link payment increments to deliverables].

Grantee Evaluation Deliverables
The evaluation deliverables for *[school year]* include:

[Note: Customize the deliverables below to address your evaluation needs]

Deliverable	Due Date/Process
1. Participate on a local evaluation team and assist in informing action planning.	Beginning (August/September) Middle (December/January) End-of-Year (May/June)
2. Develop center-level logic model(s) in partnership with the local evaluation team.	Due annually at the end of the fall semester (TEA Requirement)
3. Complete and update process and outcome evaluation plans in partnership with the local evaluation team.	August/September Annually
4. Implement evaluation activities as outlined within the evaluation plans (e.g., quality assessment observations, surveys, focus groups).	Based on evaluation plans
5. Submit either a Grantee-level or Center-level Executive Summary to grantee for submission to TEA.	Evaluator to submit summary to grantee by: *[date]* Due annually on July 31 by grantee (TEA Requirement)
6. Submit an Annual Evaluation Report to the grantee.	Evaluator to submit report to grantee by: *[date]* Grantee to post report annually (TEA Requirement)

Evaluation Use
The evaluator will present the evaluation reports and findings in such a manner that *[Grantee]* members will understand and be able to use the data to inform decisions and program improvement. Presentation of findings may include but are not limited to:

- [One-on-one meetings with Project Director, Site Coordinators, school reps, etc.]
- [Group meetings with Site Coordinators, center staff, school staff, etc.]
- [Workshops designed to understand and use data resulting in action plans]
- [Site visits during program time]
- [Formal presentations to key stakeholder groups such as the advisory group, boards of education, community groups, etc.]

Access to Data and Rights of Human Subjects
It is understood that the *[Grantee]* will make available to the evaluator all data/reports required by the evaluator to fulfill contract requirements. The FERPA regulations allow local evaluators to have access to student data if the evaluation is designed to "conduct studies for, or on behalf of, educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of developing, validating, or administering

predictive tests, administering student aid programs, and improving instruction, if such studies are conducted in such a manner as will not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by persons other than representatives of such organizations and such information will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purpose for which it is conducted, and contractual partners with *[Name of District]* schools."

In the implementation of this evaluation, the evaluator will take every precaution to adhere to the three basic ethical principles that guide the rights of human subjects as derived from the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Evaluation data will be collected in a manner representing these principles, and evaluation reporting will be done with respect to human dignity, providing constructive feedback without bias. The evaluation will be conducted adhering to the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles (http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51), specifically "Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders."

Signatures

This evaluation agreement has been reviewed by both the *[Grantee Fiscal Agent]* and the local evaluator. The signatures and dates below signify that the agreement is satisfactory to all parties and that there are no conflicts of interest on behalf of the evaluator in conducting this evaluation.

_____ _____

[Evaluator Contact & Agency Name] Date

_____ _____

[Grantee Fiscal Agent & Agency Name] Date

Resource 4. Logic Model Template

*The logic model template aligns with guidance provided on **page 8 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. Please refer to the guide for a description of the concepts below. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in completing the logic model requirements for your grant evaluation.*

Logic Model				
Needs	Center Goals	Implementation (Process Evaluation)		Outcomes (Outcome Evaluation)
		Inputs (Resources/Assets)	Outputs (Activities Provided and Implementation Fidelity)	

Resource 6. Process Evaluation Plan Template

*The process evaluation template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 11 to 13 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your local process evaluation plan.*

Process Evaluation Plan			
Process Question	**Process Measure**	**Data Collection Method and Timeline**	**Responsible Party**

Resource 7. Outcome Evaluation Plan Template

*The outcome evaluation template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 14 to 15 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your local outcome evaluation plan.*

Outcome Evaluation Plan					
SMART Outcome	**Performance Measure**	**Participants**	**Data Source**	**Procedures**	**Data Analysis and Reporting**

Resource 8. Texas ACE Action Plan Template

*The Texas ACE Action Plan template aligns with guidance provided on **pages 16 to 17 of the Local Evaluation Guide**. You may find it helpful to use this template as is or modify it to assist in developing your action plan.*

TX ACE ACTION PLAN				
Program Name: **Date Plan Created:**				
What successes/assets can support this work?				
Improvement Area Identified		***Rationale / Finding that Showed this as an Improvement Need:***		
Improvement Strategy	**Specific Attainable Action Steps**	**Responsible Person(s)**	**Progress Measures**	**Target Completion Date/Timeline**
What are possible barriers to success?			**What could be planned to address barriers?**	

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MAKING RESEARCH **RELEVANT**

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LOCATIONS

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