

Fort Worth After School
2007-08 Evaluation Report
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Executive Summary

Fort Worth After School (FWAS) operates at 74 Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) elementary (N=52), middle (N=17) and high school (N=5) sites. Program support is received through three main sources: FWISD and City of Fort Worth (FWISD/CFW: 45 sites) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC: 29 sites).

FWISD/CFW programs have operated for eight years and 21st CCLC programs for the past seven years. Programs at all sites make a significant impact on students. FWISD/CFW sites are open Monday through Thursday from the time school is dismissed until 6:00 p.m. Most 21st CCLC sites are open Monday through Friday before and after school, with some centers operating on Saturdays. TEA requires all 21st CCLC sites to operate at least 15 hours per week. In addition, all 21st CCLC sites offer a three to four week summer program. FWISD/CFW sites generally are limited to 50 children per day, while many 21st CCLC sites serve over 100 students per day. The 21st CCLC sites receive significantly more funding per site (approximately \$50,000 versus \$125,000 per year).

Between August 2007 and May 2008, 14,083 students enrolled at one of the FWAS sites. However, 2,552 of these students enrolled for four or less days in the program. Thus, the number of students with five or more days of attendance was 11,531 (3,878 FWISD/CFW; 7,653 21st CCLC). This was a 9.5% decrease from the 12,738 who attended five or more days the previous year. However, means of entering “participants” may have accounted for some of the decrease. Many of the 21st CCLC programs register students for special day-long events, thus skewing the registration. The 5+ day students are a better representation of students who actually participate in FWAS.

For students participating at least five days, participant breakdown by grade shows: 13.4% in grades PK-2, 31.8% in grades 3-5; 41.6% in grades 6-8; 13.1% in grades 9-12. Most of the students (79.8%) were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program; 65.8% were classified as at-risk, and 24.5% were classified as limited English proficiency.

Research Done Right: No matter what the question or quest, Manuel Jara Elementary students know how to find the right answers. Several projects throughout the year give students the tools they need to find the information they want. Countries Around the World was a social studies project where students selected a country from the globe and then used an atlas, library books, and the internet to gather information about their country. After the research, students created a power point presentation to share their country with other students. Another project involving research skills was “Education Rocks.” For this, students were assigned a college or university and were required to find specific information - history, geographic location, degree plans, and admission requirements. Their research projects were posted in the display case for their school sponsored college night. In “PAWS,” students were able to explore career options through the use of a software program that generated a profile of careers they might find interesting based on their answers to questions. One thing is for certain, when these students don’t know the answer to something, they have the skills to find it!

For students participating in the program at least five days, the average number of days students participated in the program decreases after elementary school. Students in grades PK-K averaged 94.2 days of participation, grades 1-3 88.1 days, and 4-5 85.7 days. After elementary school, students in grade 6 averaged 51.1 days, students in grades 7-8 averaged 38.8 days and high school students averaged 31.0 days.

Since the inception of the program, more than 38,101 students are in the database as registered during at least one program year. However, when the numbers are adjusted to include only students attending at least five days in any one year, the number of registrants drops by 5,466 to 32,635. On the other hand lack of firm registration and attendance numbers for year 1 at FWISD/CFW sites and for the 21st CCLC sites for years 2 and 3 might boost the bottom line by up to 3-5,000 additional registrants.

For all registrants since the inception of the program, 57.7% have attended for one year; 26.1% for two years; 11.4% for three years; and 4.9% for four or more years. (Of these students, 23 have participated 7 years in the program). The percentage of students attending multiple years has been increasing, suggesting better retention of students from year to year.

For the 2007-08 registrants who attended 5+ days, 41.9% participated only this year; 30.5% participated this year and one previous year; 19.6% participated this year and two previous years; and 8.1% participated this year and from three to seven additional years.

Parents of elementary students usually register their children with the intent that they will come to the program regularly. As students enter middle school they have much greater latitude in choosing whether or not they are going to participate. Thus, it is critical that programs for middle and high school students solicit student input about preferred activities and offer activities in a way that will help recruit students and maintain their involvement once they have signed up for the program.

Programming is offered through several different models. Schools operate approximately 60% of the FWISD/CFW sites themselves, with the rest using a Community Based Organization (CBO) to direct their programs. CBOs include City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services, Camp Fire, Clayton Y.E.S!, Communities in Schools, Knowledge Learning Corporation, and the YMCA. Each 21st CCLC site has a cooperating CBO. At these sites, an academic liaison employed by the school and the site supervisor employed by the CBO work together to recruit students and staff for the program and develop programming.

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement, comprehensive evaluations have been conducted since the inception of FWAS. Evaluations have been designed to gain a better understanding of the need for the program, quality of program implementation, student satisfaction, and program impacts. For 2007-2008, data were collected via surveys, program observations, an attendance database, and academic and school attendance data available through FWISD Accountability and Data Quality.

Program Need

There is a strong need for the program. Student responses to a survey two years ago of middle and high school students at the participating schools indicated that a high percentage of students' time was spent watching TV (often alone), talking on the phone and/or hanging out with friends (e.g., talking, watching TV, or at the mall). While "down time" for young people is important, it can have negative developmental consequences if young people are not also involved to some degree in more constructive, adult-facilitated programs.

FWAS appears to play an important compensatory function for students who have few resources for positive involvements after school in their neighborhoods. In our 2008 survey, 11.1% of parents indicated that children would be home alone without supervision if their child was not in the program. Another 12.0% of children would be with other children, but without an adult present. These two situations leave children without adult supervision during the after-school hours.

Student survey results also reveal that the more children agree that there is nothing to do in their neighborhood, the more they indicate that if they were home they would be getting into trouble. In addition, the more children fear hanging out in their neighborhood, the more they see being in the after-school program as better than other things they could be doing. Data from parents confirm these relationships. Thus, the after-school program can provide children with a place to go after school that is more secure and provides a more positive environment than just hanging out in their neighborhood or being alone at home unsupervised. FWAS sites provide opportunities for children to participate in meaningful activities in a safe environment, while also providing tutoring and enrichment activities that have the potential to teach activity skills, increase school engagement, and improve school attendance and academic performance.

Program Outcomes

Approximately 90% of children who attended FWAS in both 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 had school attendance of 90+%. In comparison, students who only attended one of the two school years (years 7 or 8) had a lower percentage of students attending school 90+% of the time (Year 7 only, 84.0% with 90+% school attendance; Year 8, 87.3%). For those students who were not enrolled in FWAS during years 7 and 8, but had attended FWAS sometime in the previous six years, only 77.1% had school attendance of 90+%.

Further analyses of the data found greater differences between those not attending the program and those attending one or more of the last two years for students in grades 7-8 and grades 9-12. These results suggest some advantage in involving children in the after-school program, and if involved, involving them on a continuing basis. Greater attention to attracting and retaining children after sixth grade seems warranted.

Not surprisingly, the more a child attends school, the more days he/she attends FWAS. As the percentage of school days attended goes up, average days attending FWAS increases. For example, for students who attend school 84.9% of the time or less, average days attending the after-school program is 43.1%. But for those students who attend school 95%+ of the time, average days attending FWAS is 73.6%. Getting some of these low school-attending students interested in FWAS might have the potential of increasing school attendance.

A significant positive relationship emerged between the number of days students attended the after-school program and passing the math portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS). For math:

- Students who did not meet the standard averaged 50.3 days of program attendance.

- Students who met the standard averaged 61.7 days.
- Students who met the standard at the commended level averaged 72.3 days.

World Stage: If ‘the world’ is a stage, then Eastern Hills Elementary has raised the curtain on a daily basis. Centering after school program activities on Fine Arts, the site exposes students to a variety of performance and visual arts. Giving the activities ‘catchy’ names like Scottie Steppers, Confetti (visual arts), Keys of E (music keyboards), and Chatter Box (drama), the site staff have made an effort to invite and engage students in a creative way. The students are taught by teachers and professional artists and provide students with fine arts skills, self-confidence, coordination, and team work.

There are three major student productions each year. The original productions are written by the Site Supervisor, with input from the students, and cover a variety of subjects. The productions are very well organized and include costumes, lighting, live music and sets. Students perform all of the roles of production including performers, technicians, stage hands, and set building. Each production includes evening performances filled to capacity with parents and community members who attend to support the students and school. The group has also been invited to perform in events throughout Fort Worth community. Broadway here they come!

For Science,

- Students who did not meet the standard averaged 50.1 days.
- Students who met the standard averaged 55.0 days.
- Students who met the standard at the commended level averaged 73.9 days.

Students also reported important impacts as a result of their attending the program. Approximately 85.2% of middle and high school students indicated that as a result of being in the program, they better understood the importance of graduating from high school. In addition, for students from grades 3 to 12, 67.9% indicated that they liked school more; came to school more often (84.0%), and got better grades (84.2%). However, these results differed by school grade, with almost all outcome ratings falling from third to fifth grade, increasing for students in grade six and then falling again for students in grades 7 to 12. Results suggest a particular need to target seventh and eighth grade students for additional attention as they transition from middle to high school. These efforts would be similar to the attention paid to sixth grade students transitioning from elementary to middle school.

Parents of children in FWAS reported that since their children had been in the program they were doing better on their homework (3.36 on scale of 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree), looked forward to going to school (3.27), and were getting better grades in school (3.23). Parents of elementary school students in general reported more impact for their children than parents of middle and high school students.

Classroom teachers indicated that children, who at the beginning of the year were performing poorly in areas such as turning homework in on time, participating in class, and attending class, showed considerable improvement by the end of the year. For example, classroom teachers indicated that 67.9% of students not doing well in turning in their program on time at the

beginning of the year were doing better by the end of the year. This also applies for participating in class (67.4%); getting along with other students (65.5%) and the teacher (68.3%); and having satisfactory classroom performance (61.4%).

Program Quality and Satisfaction

Staff involved in the program continue to rate the program as a safe place for children to be and note the high quality of communication between staff and the site supervisors. Program participants viewed the program positively, giving high ratings to the quality of the program staff and the interactions between children and staff. In addition, principals at the program sites generally praised the program, while noting the need to continue focusing attention on enrichment activities that can contribute to achieving school objectives. Special mention was given to the need for science-based enrichment activities since science is now a critical component of the TAKS. Principals also recognized the need for children to be involved in sports, art, technology, and community service related activities, but indicate that more attention should be given to offering activities that can contribute to student learning.

Student ratings of the program were positive. Participants indicated that they liked the after-school activities (mean = 3.43, 1= strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree); got help with their homework (3.43); and liked the after-school teachers (3.34). Children were not bored during the program (1.97). However, students in grades 3-6 felt more positively than students in grades 7 to 8. As students enter high school, their program satisfaction ratings began to increase back to the grade 3-6 levels.

While efforts have been made to improve the variety of activities offered and means for responding to students' interests, additional efforts are warranted. Keeping children involved for a significant period of time is critical since there appears to be some relationship between how often children participate in the program and program outcomes. Presently middle school (especially grades 7 and 8) and high school students attend the programs fewer total days during the school year than do elementary school students. Lower attendance is in part due to competing demands on students' time, but there is a need for additional activities that engage student interest and have the potential to draw them away from just hanging out.

Programs are formally observed at least three times each year and rated on an observation form designed for the FWAS program. For 2007-2008, observers gave satisfactory marks to the degree of communication between school and program personnel, and to the degree of coordination of services with other after-school programs. Observers also noted the overall quality of the offered activities and reported that in most cases activities appeared to be developmentally appropriate and had the potential to teach new skills. However, there still needs to be more effort given to improving program intentionality (*i.e.*, program content and processes designed to accomplish specific goals, particularly in the area of recreation activities).

The Bottom Line

FWAS programs continue to have a significant impact in a number of areas considered crucial to the social and academic success of children. For all children the programs provide a safe place to be after-school, a place with more resources than are typically found in many of the communities in which children live, and alternatives to just hanging out or being involved in negative behaviors. Parents, principals, program staff and school teachers feel that program participants are benefiting academically through their participation. Data suggest connections between how often students attend FWAS and school attendance and performance on the TAKS, especially the math portion. The programs also appear to impact the social and activity skills of participants. To garner increased participation, there needs to be increased opportunities, particularly in secondary schools, for children to help shape program content. Efforts should be continued to formulate programming that can boost the number of days students attend the program, and increase school engagement and success. FWAS has made a strong commitment to continuous program improvement and monitoring; however, there still needs to be a stronger alignment of program content with curriculum standards. With a stable program that has been existence for eight years, there is a great opportunity to continue to build upon already successful program content and quality.