



QUALITY MATTERS

THE PILOT REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

United
Way



United Way of
Greater Kansas City

PREPARING OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE SUCCESS





United Way of
Greater Kansas City

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Please also note the acknowledgements inside the back cover for the many people who have helped to make Quality Matters, as well as this pilot report, possible.

Our Partners:



INTRODUCTION

Every community wants its young people entering adulthood with the skills and opportunities they need to succeed as adults. When young people are ready for college, work and life, the result is a solid, productive future for both families and their communities.

United Way of Greater Kansas City launched Quality Matters, a multi-year effort to champion quality out-of-school time opportunities that strengthen child and youth achievement, to help today's youth overcome barriers to success and to maximize long-lasting benefits for this region's children and youth.

United Way's Focus on Community Impact

For United Way, it is a priority that all children and youth attain their full potential. United Way's core business is community impact. To achieve greater impact, United Way continues its tradition of investing in partner agency programs that advance outcomes across the spectrum of child development from early childhood through to adulthood. Each day, these investments achieve results that make a difference in thousands of children's lives in every part of our region.

To advance the common good, we know we need to do more to address underlying human problems. At United Way, we are placing more emphasis on being a year-round, positive force in our region. Through multiple community initiatives, United Way works in historic partnership to advance quality early learning to ensure that young children arrive at school prepared to succeed.

In addition, United Way is identifying strategic opportunities to work together to expand community impact in new ways that advance systemic changes to achieve positive, long-lasting impact – impact that results in community change.

Out-of-School Time Quality Matters – United Way's Community Change Strategy

United Way launched Quality Matters to strengthen the opportunities that help children and youth in our region to navigate childhood's critical developmental transitions and to cultivate the skills they need for a productive adulthood.

Across the nation, the youth development and out-of-school time fields are focusing on quality – in new ways – by rallying around approaches that build both improvement and accountability.

In this region, United Way is committed to a multi-year effort to champion systemic changes that can strengthen and promote quality out-of-school time. For young children, focused planning has occurred for over a decade – resulting in many positive changes that are leading to high quality early learning opportunities.

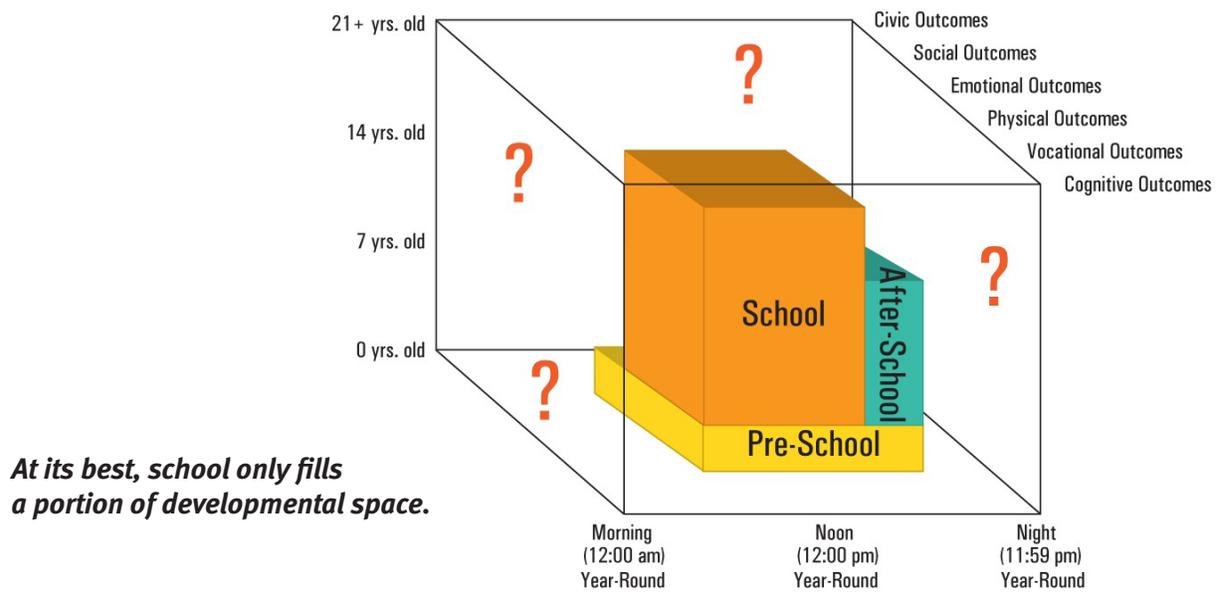
Quality Matters will leverage these same positive results for our region's school age youth – collaborative community planning that maximizes the effectiveness of resources invested in out-of-school time programs and system-wide quality advancement that helps this region's youth programs to have an even greater impact on youth outcomes.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Maximize the Milestone: Increasing the High School Graduation Rate

Getting a good education is universally accepted as the foundation for success as an adult. Children and youth spend only roughly 27% of their time in school. Students motivated and engaged in learning – both in school and in community settings are more likely to succeed. Research documents that quality out-of-school time opportunities are linked to on-time graduation.

Thinking Outside of the Box



High school graduation is a proven milestone with most jobs today requiring additional postsecondary skills training to meet the demands of the current workplace. Failure to graduate from high school is a benchmark for young people who are more likely to experience a host of negative life challenges from greater poverty to shorter life expectancy.

One out of every nine youth attending public and private high schools in the six-county Kansas City region does not graduate from high school on time.¹ A higher estimated one in five youth do not graduate from public high schools in the broader 15-county metropolitan area.²

Graduation rates vary across our region – whether by public or private high schools, by urban or suburban geography – the importance of achieving this milestone does not. Even one student moving from dropout status to graduate status results in benefits for the whole community.

National projections³ of the economic benefits of cutting the number of dropouts in half for the single Class of 2008 across Kansas City's 15-county metropolitan area include:

- Average annual earnings for these estimated 5,800 students would increase by as much as \$34 million, compared to likely earnings without a high school diploma.
- Increased earnings are estimated to allow for annual increases in spending (\$24 million), investing (\$8 million) and tax revenue (\$5 million).
- More than half (53%) would likely pursue some type of postsecondary education – increasing their human capital to succeed in today's workforce.
- Increased home sales of \$65 million over the value spent without a diploma.

Students from low-income families are six times more likely to not graduate than their peers from high-income families.⁴ In a related finding, graduation rates are lower in schools where significant percentages of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches (a proxy measure for poverty and low-income families).

Demonstrating a risk factor for maintaining and increasing this region's graduation rate, participation in the free and reduced school lunch program climbed over the past five years in every county – from a +6% increase in Jackson County, Missouri, to a +51% increase in Johnson County, Kansas.⁵

NON-SCHOOL HOURS – WHY THEY MATTER

Promoting Education Attainment Beyond the Classroom

Every day across our region, thousands of children and youth are engaged during non-school hours in activities that could and should be strengthening important social, academic and emotional outcomes for children and youth.

More and more children and youth participate in out-of-school time programming, in part because their parents are working. In this region, three out of four school age children live in households where all parents are in the labor force. Nationwide, approximately 6.5 million children participate in after-school programming; another 15.3 million would participate if a program were available. Nationally, 26% of children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school; in Missouri and Kansas, the percentage is even higher at 32% and 35%, respectively.⁶

Children and youth face many threats to their health, safety and social/emotional well-being if unsupervised during the out-of-school time hours, which include not just before- and after-school hours but also weekends, school holidays and the summer months.

Research has shown that children and youth face numerous risk factors during the after school hours, particularly when they spend that time unsupervised. During the period of 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm on school days, youth are more likely to commit crime, become victims of crime, experiment with drugs and alcohol or engage in sexual activity than in any other time period.⁷

The value of effective out-of school-time programming is also well documented. When children and youth have a safe, structured environment that involves them in meaningful and engaging activities during out-of-school hours, they reap multiple benefits, including improving young people’s attitudes toward school, positive social behaviors, school grades and achievement test scores. Research on quality programming also documents reduced problem behaviors from aggression and conduct problems to drug use.

Bottom line – quality out-of-school time experiences yield positive outcomes for young people across the developmental continuum – from personal and social to academic life.⁸ To leverage these positives, communities must develop systems to both assess and support programs so that more quality experiences are available for our children and youth.

Why Focus on Quality Improvement?

<i>It Matters</i>	<i>Research shows that improved youth outcomes requires program attendance and program quality.</i>
<i>It's Measureable</i>	<i>The core elements of program quality are definable, measurable and consistent across program settings.</i>
<i>It's Malleable</i>	<i>Programs can improve quality by engaging in evidenced-based assessment and improvement efforts.</i>
<i>It's Marketable</i>	<i>Decision-makers and providers will invest in improving quality if they believe that it matters, is measurable and is malleable given available resources.</i>

AN ESSAY: THE LEARNING OF EXECUTIVE THINKING SKILLS

By David Hansen, Ph.D., School of Education, University of Kansas

Many adults in the United States have a conception of adolescents (puberty through age 18) as “shortsighted; less capable than adults at regulating their thinking and behavior; bored, disengaged and alienated from society.” This stereotype, like all, is a distortion of the truth. The reality is that adolescents are experiencing dramatic physical, social, and brain restructuring. The physical is obvious to all: growth spurts, muscle development, sex organ maturation, etc. These physical changes not only signal to all (including parents and society) that the individual adolescent is becoming an adult, but also that we should begin to expect them to behave and think in more “adult-like” ways. The behavioral expectations of most parents and of society for adolescents is that they become more responsible and independent, such as getting a job, paying for their own entertainment, doing well in school without constant monitoring, cleaning up after themselves, the list goes on. But what about our expectations for their thinking? For most of us, these expectations turn to education.

Doing well in high school and then going to college comprise what most of us typically consider adolescents’ progress towards adult-like thinking. Formal education is vitally important, but it rarely teaches adolescents how to think in the “real-world.” By real-world thinking, I mean those things that characterize adults’ daily lives. For example, thinking that involves setting meaningful distant future plans, regulating current behavior to meet those plans, finding motivation to address the inevitable set-backs, adjusting or improvising when faced with a novel situation, all within a setting that involves other people who have their own agendas and objectives! Many have tried to provide labels for these types of skills, such as initiative, agency, teamwork, etc. What they all have in common is the use of the “executive” functions of the brain; Elkhonon Goldberg’s book,⁹ “The New Executive Brain,” provides an excellent exposition of these functions. I have recently begun referring to these abilities as executive thinking skills or competencies.

Adolescent Brain Restructuring: Second Critical Period of Human Development

Of all of the changes adolescents experience, including the physical changes, none are as profound as the restructuring of the brain’s functioning. What is provocative about these changes in the adolescent brain is not that they occur, but that they only emerge with the start of puberty (see endnote, L. Spear’s¹⁰ review article for technical review of these changes). Some researchers, including myself, refer to adolescence as the second critical period of human development, early childhood being the first critical period. More poignantly, however, it is this restructuring – interacting with experiences – that drives the development of executive thinking skills.

What type of experience is needed for adolescents to learn executive thinking skills? The obvious answer: experiences that require the use of executive thinking skills. Where in contemporary adolescents’ daily lives do these experiences occur? In its current state, formal educational settings struggle to provide such experiences. Outside of family life, there remain two typical places for such experiences: work and out-of-school youth programs. The research on adolescent part-time employment has yet to fully evaluate the contribution of work experiences to thinking but it could be an avenue for executive skill learning. Existing research evidence on youth programs suggests these programs could be a key setting for adolescents to learn executive thinking skills (see for example Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2003, Larson & Hansen, 2005, Larson & Angus, 2010). This research evidence suggests programs that provide opportunities to set goals, plan, partner with adults, etc. will have youth who develop executive thinking skills.

Where to from here? We know from research what makes for quality youth programs and we know that adolescents who participate in programs tend to display better developmental patterns than those who do not participate. But we are just now beginning to evaluate the linkages between adolescents in the programs and different facets of quality (e.g., a supportive environment). The sustained efforts of United Way of Greater Kansas City to improve out-of-school time quality for adolescents and children provides a great opportunity to use research to better understand how we can support adolescents' learning of executive thinking skills.



OVERVIEW OF QUALITY MATTERS – KC FACTS

Out-of-School Time Quality Matters – Project Launch and its Partners

In November 2009, United Way launched Quality Matters by engaging ten agencies and 24 of their sites throughout the five-county region to participate in a pilot project, using a proven improvement process called the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

The Weikart Center is a joint project of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment (Washington, DC). Both organizations are nationally recognized for championing research-based approaches for advancing program quality, youth worker professional development, and sustained commitment to improving the odds for today's children and youth.

United Way is pleased to acknowledge the other key anchor partners that are working with us to design and implement this important initiative. These technical assistance, research and system leaders include:

- The Francis Institute for Child and Youth Development of the Metropolitan Community Colleges – Penn Valley Campus, which is providing the coaching and technical assistance to providers,
- The Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri – Kansas City, which is providing trained external assessors,
- The Department of Psychology and Research in Education within the School of Education at the University of Kansas (KU-ED), which conducted a youth outcome research study for the pilot,
- The Partnership for Children, in collaboration with KU-ED is conducting a comprehensive regional landscape study of child and youth development programs, and
- COMBAT, the Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax for Jackson County in Missouri, has joined the effort this year as a key investor in youth development and other out-of-school time programming. COMBAT will be providing scholarships for its sites to participate in the YPQI process.

This region's out-of-school time organizations enthusiastically volunteered to participate in the pilot – demonstrating their commitment to quality programming that makes the maximum difference for today's children and youth. Those initial pilot pioneers include:

- Boys & Girls Clubs of GKC
- Grace United Community Ministries
- Guadalupe Center
- Local Investment Commission
- Operation Breakthrough
- Park Hill School District - School Age Care Program
- Swope Corridor Renaissance
- W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center
- Whatsoever Community Center
- YMCA of Greater Kansas City

The 24 sites involved in the pilot demonstrate the diversity of out-of-school time programs across our region – from large multi-site afterschool or community-based organizations to small, single-site community or faith-based organizations. Serving over 3,000 children and youth grades 5-12 in the five-county metropolitan area, the majority served by these sites qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Price School Lunch program, demonstrating the potential to address the risk factors associated with growing up in poverty or low-income households.

These are programs that foster sustained involvement by youth over a period of time – another hallmark of quality. Each pilot site offers programs that operate a minimum of three days per week and maintain activities for an ongoing period such as the school year or year-round. Some pilot programs feature an academic focus; the majority follows a broader youth personal and social development model.

Benefits of Being a Quality Matters Site

- Experience a validated, proven program improvement process.
- Target areas for program improvement that providers identify and receive collaborative support to address in these areas.
- Become proficient at using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) instrument, a valid and reliable tool that has received national recognition for its excellence.
- Receive training and guidance from Weikart Center staff on how to use data from the Youth PQA to develop a program improvement plan.
- Ready access to the support and guidance of regional professionals and experts in the field.
- Attain specialized training, peer coaching and staff development opportunities in target areas that providers identify.
- Opportunities for reflection and dialogue with colleagues, managers and partners about point of service program delivery: what works and what doesn't.
- Obtain professionally prepared documents on the specific site's program quality improvements that are based on empirical data and that can be used with funders, board members and others.
- Experience a new, deeper level of cross sector communication and supports at multiple system levels.
- Contribute to focusing local and national attention on the importance of out-of-school time.

Special thanks to the Chicago Program Improvement Pilot for identifying benefits above.

THE RESULTS



KEY PILOT RESULTS

By Leah Wallace, Samantha Sugar, Joe Bertoletti and Tom Akiva
The David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Introduction and Background

This section summarizes program quality and participant satisfaction data for the United Way of Greater Kansas City Quality Matters initiative. This pilot initiative included ten different organizations with 24 program sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The United Way of Greater Kansas City partnered with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, a division of the Forum for Youth Investment, to support implementation of the Quality Matters initiative.¹¹

Quality Matters is based on an experimentally validated, assessment-driven continuous improvement process. This validated process is designed to improve the quality of afterschool services by: (a) building managers' continuous quality improvement skills; (b) increasing the quality of instructional practices delivered in afterschool programs; and, ultimately, (c) increasing youths' engagement with program content and their skill-building opportunities.

The Youth Program Quality Intervention

The Youth Program Quality Intervention model defines instructional quality as a set of professional practices that, in combination, increase participating youths' access to positive developmental experiences. The components of instructional quality, summarized in Figure 1.1, emerge directly from developmental science and the ongoing research program around the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA),^{12,13} the standardized observational measure of instructional practice used in Quality Matters. The Youth PQA is composed of four domains that contain 18 scales (listed in Figure 1.1) and 60 observable items. Items are averaged together to produce a scale, these scales are then averaged together to produce domain scores.

Figure 1.1. - Pyramid of Instructional Quality



The model of instructional quality described in Figure 1.1 is focused on two primary areas of child development and learning. First, higher scores at higher domains of the quality pyramid are associated with higher levels of youth engagement in program-specific content (youth self-reports of belonging, interest, challenge and learning) while very low levels of quality are associated with youth disinterest. Second, programs that deliver high quality instruction provide youth with opportunities to practice emerging social and emotional skills (efficacy, communication, empathy, problem solving) that support success in adolescence and early adulthood.

The Youth Program Quality Intervention follows the Assess-Plan-Improve sequence depicted below (Figure 1.2) to help program staff focus on and improve the instructional quality they provide for youth. While the YPQI is designed to produce change at both the policy and the organizational settings, the ultimate goal is to improve quality in the instructional setting—the quality of experiences to which youth have access. **The YPQI is currently being implemented for quality improvement and staff development initiatives in state and local education and human services agencies and community based settings in over 20 states.**

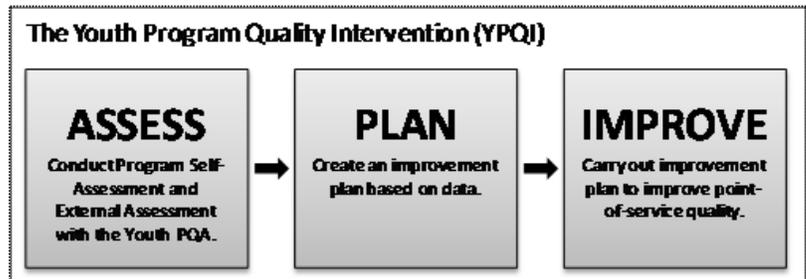


Figure 1.2 Youth Program Quality Intervention

Fidelity to a Validated Quality Improvement Model

In a recent randomized field trial funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, the *Youth Program Quality Intervention* model produced positive and sustained effects on both managers’ continuous improvement behaviors and staff members’ instructional quality. *Notably, these effects were strongest in sites that implemented all elements of the YPQI sequence.* Figure 1.3 describes elements, dates and details for Quality Matters and compares its core elements to the elements of the recently validated *Youth Program Quality Intervention*.¹⁴ The Quality Matters initiative was highly aligned with the YPQI.

Figure 1.3 - Alignment between YPQI & Quality Matters Project

Element	YPQI	KC QM	Notes
Quality Matters			
Baseline Program External Assessment	X	X	January and February of 2010
Baseline Self-Assessment		X	January and February of 2010
Action Planning	X	X	Planning with Data Workshop March 2010
Youth Work Methods Trainings	X	X	Youth Work Methods workshops facilitated by Francis Institute coaches, spring of 2010.
Coaching for Managers to Implement Continuous Quality Improvement	X	X	One-on-One Coaching provided by the Francis Institute
Coaching for Staff on Quality Instruction	X		Managers receive coaching workshop and support front-line staff through strengths-based feedback
Post-Initiative External Assessment	X	X	Summer of 2010

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Findings

The key findings below are described in detail throughout the remainder of the report.

- **Overall instructional quality improved during the Quality Matters initiative.** On average, quality ratings by endorsed observers increased over the course of the initiative in three of the four domains (Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement).
- **A majority of pilot sites also increased instructional quality during the Quality Matters initiative, sometimes substantially.** 15 out of 20 sites improved their instructional quality over the course of the initiative. In fact, quality rating scores for eight (8) pilot sites moved from below to above the “Low (Youth) Engagement” threshold during the initiative (see Figure 2.3).
- **Not all sites, however, improved.** Three (3) sites actually experienced a decrease in quality. This variation is typical in YPQI-based pilots and, as discussed below, may be the result of uneven participation in or incomplete understanding of the continuous improvement process and sequence.
- **Managers found the process effective and worthwhile.** Pilot site managers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the Quality Matters process.
- **Managers did not always understand their role and expectations in the Quality Matters initiative and there was uneven participation by site staff.** Survey data indicates that direct staff involvement in the process varied as did full understanding of roles and expectations of the process. The Quality Matters project was a pilot initiative that took place over a short time frame, with approximately six months separating pre- and post- assessments. This may be the source of the variance in quality improvement, staff involvement and understanding of the process. As the system matures, we anticipate this variation to decrease.



Key Recommendations

For investments to improve the front-line afterschool workforce – Identify and strengthen direct staff members’ instructional skills in strategic and/or low performing areas.

Instructional quality ratings improved substantially over the course of the initiative. Several areas of instructional practice, however, were still relatively infrequent in Kansas City afterschool settings (see table 2.1). Workforce development is recommended in the following areas:¹⁵

- **Cooperative learning:** Providing young people an opportunity to participate in and lead small groups has a positive impact on classroom climate, self-esteem among students, internal locus of control, and time on task. Students in cooperative teams are more active, self-directing, and expressive, all of which may be associated with achievement gains.
- **Planning and reflection:** The skills of making plans for the future and learning from the past can help youth succeed in school and in life. These skills are tied into what brain scientists call executive functions, and play an important role in directing attention to tasks and decision making that connects with consequences.
- **Leadership and communication skill building:** All youth have the potential to be leaders and to use their words and ideas to shape their reality. Providing youth with opportunities to lead, to mentor other youth, and to make presentations can make the youth program a context in which leadership and communication skills can emerge.

For investments in afterschool management skills – Continue to invest in site managers’ critical role in expanding and sustaining quality gains.

An afterschool manager’s ability to enact continuous quality improvement (CQI) is an important factor in the successful delivery of high quality instruction at an afterschool site. In Quality Matters, some managers demonstrated acquisition of these CQI skills by implementing the pilot at high fidelity with corresponding improvements in the quality of instruction. Others were less clear on their roles and responsibilities, and fidelity to the model appeared to decrease as evidenced by decreased numbers of staff involved in the planning and improvement phases. Keep at it! These skills take time to develop. In addition, as afterschool managers move to more senior positions, or into new education and human services field positions, these CQI skills will serve the community well. For the next round of assessment, we recommend that additional supports be put in place to help site managers engage their staff in CQI and support staff growth using strengths based feedback.

For the expansion of continuous quality improvement – Build on the momentum and expand the Quality Matters initiative.

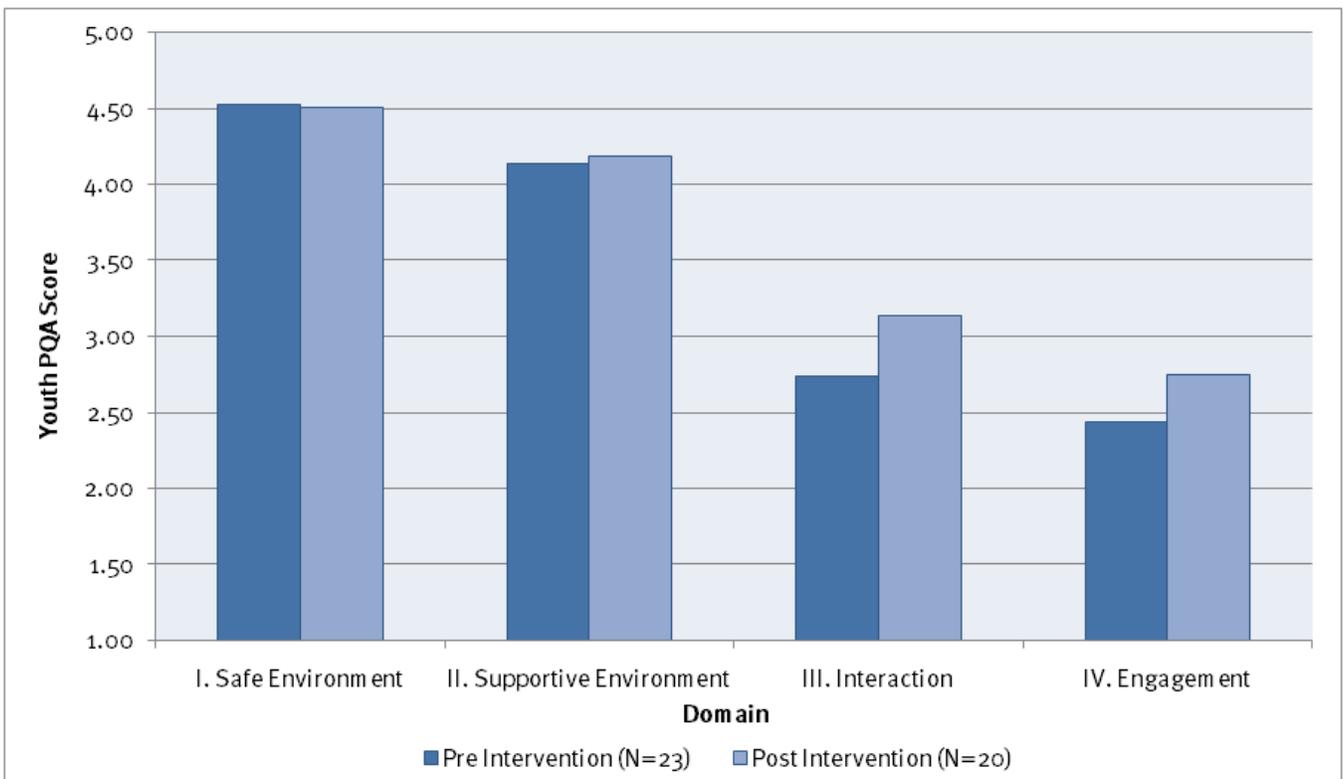
The pilot group demonstrated that out-of-school time sites can intentionally raise instructional quality, and the developmental experiences available to participating youth. These same managers overwhelmingly supported the efficacy of the project – endorsing Quality Matters as being helpful and worthwhile. Build on this good will by using the pilot group managers as ambassadors and peer mentors in building a quality culture in more of Kansas City’s out-of-school time organizations. The Weikart Center also recommends that sites embed this process into their policy and procedures, while simultaneously working to encourage other funding and accountability systems across the city to adopt continuous quality improvement.

INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Quality improved in three Youth PQA domains.

Figure 2.1 presents pre- and post-intervention scores for each of the Youth PQA’s four dimensions: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction and Engagement. Overall, sites in the Quality Matters pilot made the biggest quality improvements in the Interaction and Engagement domains. Measured quality in the Safe and Supportive Environment domains was high at baseline and post-intervention (although performance on the Safe Environment domain declined slightly during the evaluation period). This pattern of findings mirrors that of other YPQI-based quality improvement initiatives.¹⁶

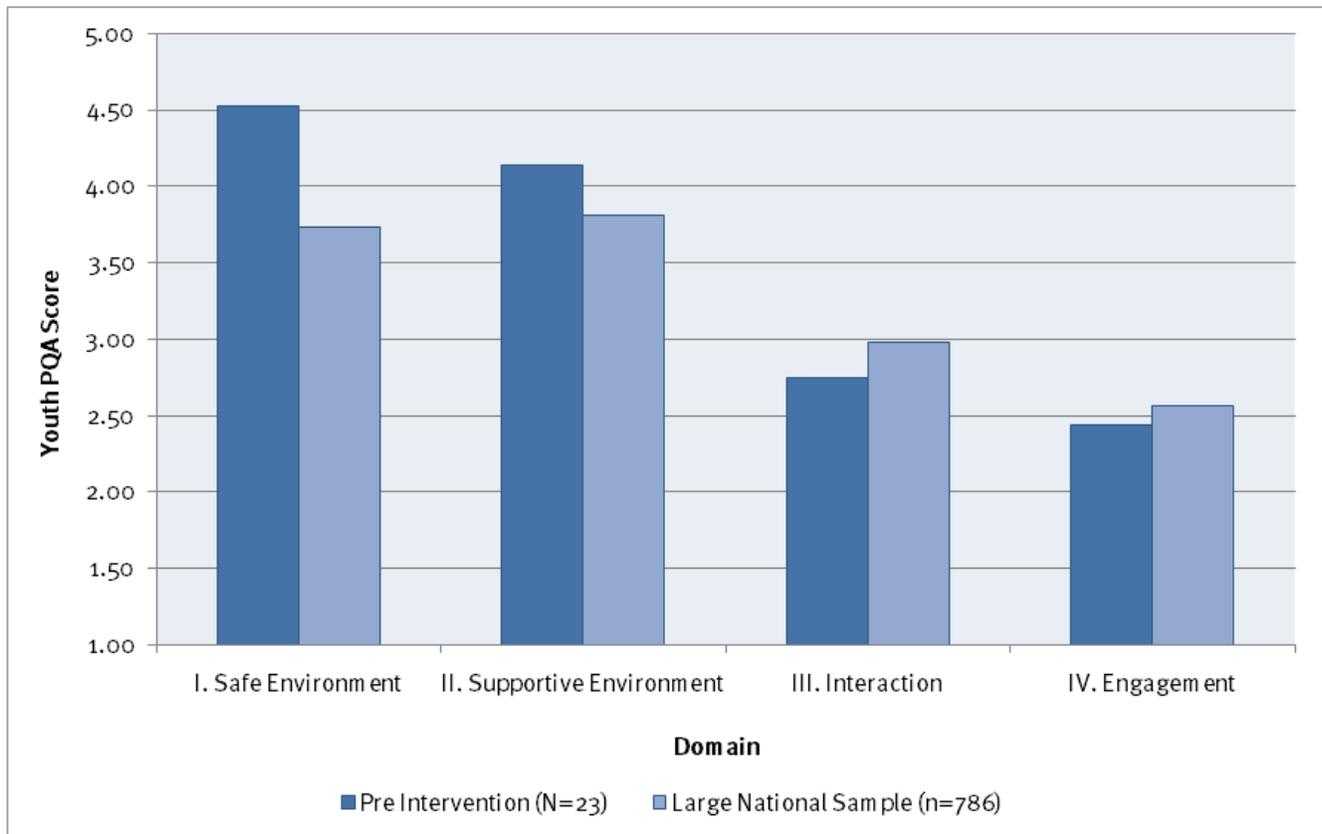
Figure 2.1 – Youth PQA External Assessment Scores – Pre and Post



Overall baseline program quality compares favorably to a large national sample

Figure 2.2 compares Quality Matters baseline quality scores to a large national sample of baseline scores from the Weikart Center’s national database of 786 offerings. Notably, at baseline Kansas City sites scored consistently higher than the comparison sample in the Safe and Supportive Environment domains. However, Kansas City sites score slightly lower in the Interaction and Engagement domains. Detailed scores can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 2.2 Quality Matters and Norm Scores from the Weikart Center’s National Database of Quality Ratings



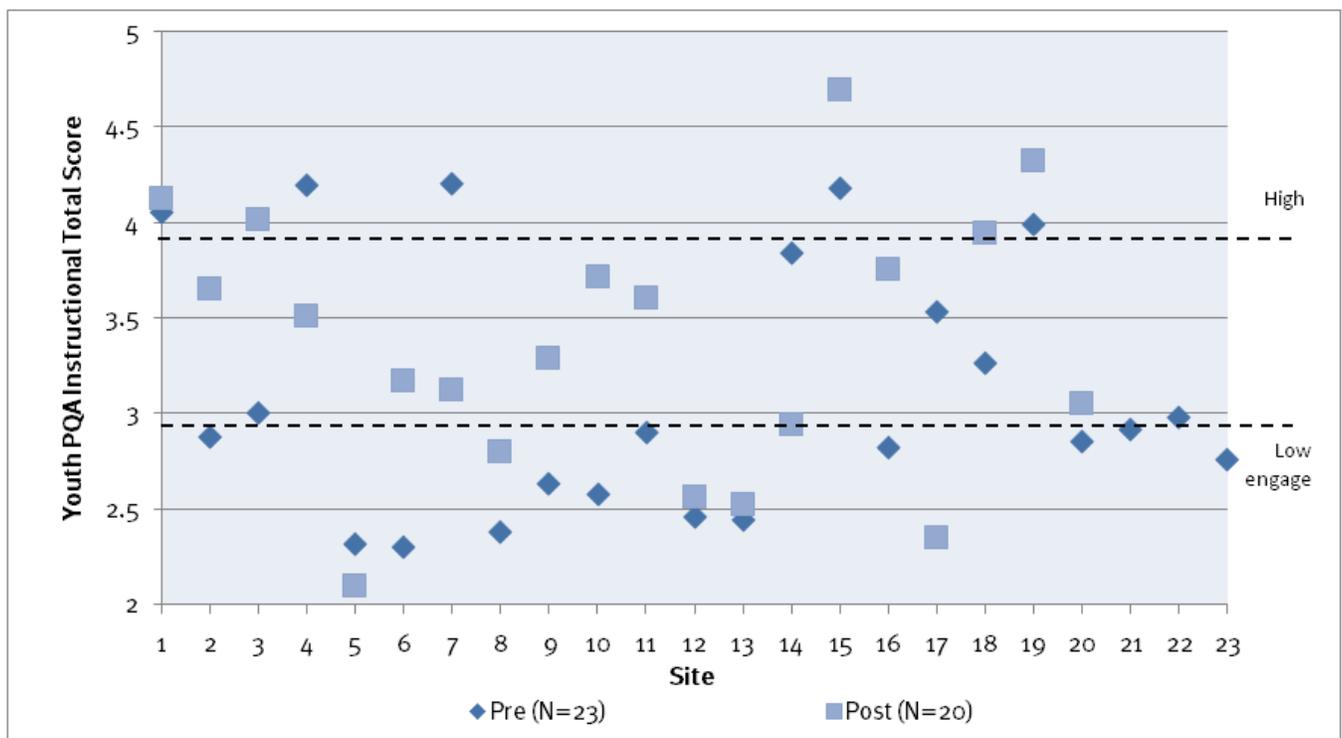
Overall instructional quality improved in 15 of 20 participating youth programs between pre- and post-intervention assessment periods. However, the scale of improvement varied substantially between sites.

Figure 2.3 presents pre- and post-intervention Instructional Total Scores for each participating site. The data reveal that quality levels improved in 15 of 20 sites (no post-intervention data was available for 3 sites).¹⁷ In fact, eight sites improved enough to move above the “Low Engagement” threshold.

Analysis of data from similar quality improvement systems indicates that Instructional Practices Total Scores below the “Low Engagement” threshold are associated with little to no youth sense of belonging, interest or challenge. Conversely, Total Scores above the high threshold are positively associated with youth reports of engagement as interest, challenge and belonging. As sites move out of the “Low Engagement” score profile and toward “High Engagement,” participating youth are less likely to express disinterest in the activities offered.

The current findings suggest that Quality Matters is helping to move sites out of the “Low Engagement” threshold.

Figure 2.3 - Instructional Practices Total Scores at Baseline and Post-intervention Compared to Thresholds of Instructional Quality Associated with Youth Engagement in Prior Research.

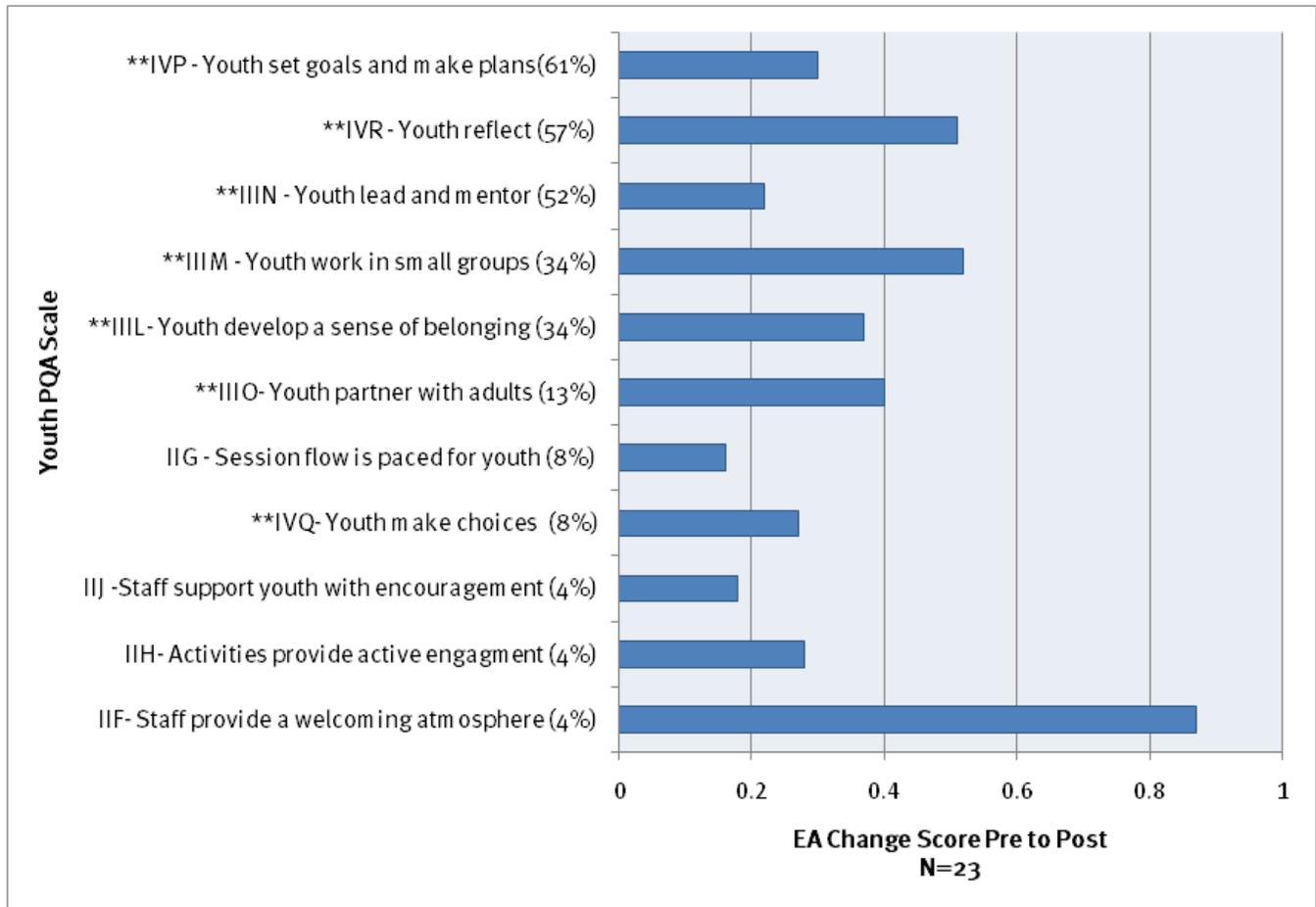


Note. For a description of “Instructional Total Score”, please see the Notes on Measures section in Appendix A.

Measured Improvements in Instructional Quality Correspond With Intentional Improvement Efforts

Sites enrolled in the Quality Matters pilot project used self- and externally collection instructional quality data to specify improvement priorities and action plans. Figure 2.4 summarizes the most common scales that sites selected for improvement and depicts the magnitude of improvements realized in those goal areas. All but one of the selected scales showed improvement from the baseline to post-intervention assessment periods and the scales selected by more than 25% of sites showed the most dramatic improvements. Notably, many pilot sites chose to work on the Interaction and Engagement domains and made gains in these areas.

Figure 2.4 – Quality Improvement Plan Issue Area Selection and Youth PQA Change Scores



The incidence of high quality instructional practices increased during the intervention period.

During pre-intervention data collection, external raters identified 14 practices that scored a “1” on the Youth PQA in half or more of the observed offerings. Scoring a “1” on the Youth PQA means that particular practice was not observed at all during the offering. As depicted in Table 2.1, use of 11 of the 14 practices was found to have increased at post-intervention data collection. The observed use of the other 3 practices remained low at the post-intervention data collection period.

Table 2.1 – Youth PQA Low Scoring Items – External Assessment Pre and Post

		Percent of offerings scoring a 1		
#	Item	Pre N=36	Post N=42	Change
1	IIIM2. Two or more ways to form small groups	81.8	42.5	-39.3
2	IVR3. Youth make presentations to the whole group	77.8	52.4	-25.4
3	IVP1. Youth make plans for projects/activities	75.0	56.1	-18.9
4	IIIM3. Each group has a purpose	69.7	47.5	-22.2
5	IVP2. Two or more planning strategies are used	66.7	63.4	-3.3
6	IIIN3. Youth lead a group	55.6	41.5	-14.1
7	IIIM1. Activities carried out in three different groupings	54.5	47.5	-7.0
8	IIIO1. Staff share control of the activities with youth	52.8	31.0	-21.8
9	IIIL4. Activities publicly acknowledge achievements of youth	47.2	39.0	-8.2
10	IIIN1. Youth practice group-process skills	47.2	36.6	-10.6
11	IIIN2. Youth mentor individuals	47.2	48.8	1.6
12	IVQ2. Youth make open-ended process choices	44.4	35.7	-8.7
13	IVR1. Youth reflect on what they are doing	44.4	50.0	5.6
14	IVR2. Youth reflect in two or more ways	44.4	47.6	3.2

** Change scores reflect the change in percentage of offerings where a practice WAS NOT present, i.e., negative change indicates an increase in the practice across all settings.*

High Scoring Items: Prevalence of Quality Instructional Practices.

Table 2.2 presents High Scoring items at Post-Intervention. These are YPQA items where at least 50% of offerings scored a “5”, indicating that the practice is present at a high level. Items in the Safe Environment domain were removed to give greater emphasis to staff practices. This table represents programming elements that Kansas City Quality Matters pilot sites can be said to excel in.

Table 2.2- Youth PQA High Scoring Items- External Assessment Post

#	YPQA Item	Percent of offerings scoring a 5
		Post N=42
1	IIG2. Materials/supplies are ready	92.9
2	IIG4. Staff explain activities clearly	90.5
3	IIF2. Staff use warm tone/respectful language	85.7
4	IIG3. There are enough materials/supplies	85.7
5	IJJ1. Staff are actively involved with youth	85.7
6	IIF3. Staff smile/make eye contact	83.3
7	IIH1. Youth engage with materials/ideas with guided practice	81.0
8	IIG1. Session starts/ends within 10 minutes of scheduled time	76.2
9	Ili2. Youth receive support despite imperfect results	69.0
10	IIF1. Youth are greeted within 15 minutes	59.5
11	Ili1. Youth are encourage to try out new skills	59.5
12	IVR4. Staff get feedback on activities	54.8
13	IIH3. Youth talk about what they are doing	54.8
14	IIIL2. Youth exhibit inclusive relationships	54.8
15	IIH2. Activities will lead to tangible products	52.4
16	IJJ3. Staff make frequent use of open-ended questions	52.4

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS

Site managers are highly satisfied with the process, although levels of participation and direct-staff engagement varied.

Table 2.3 summarizes findings from a survey of managers who participated in the Quality Matters project. 100% of managers reported that the process helped them learn important new skills and produced visible site-level improvements and benefits. Perhaps more importantly, managers reported that participation was “worth the time and effort,” with 9 of 14 managers providing highest possible level of agreement.

Table 2.3 – Manager Perceptions on the Quality Improvement Process

(N=14)	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much
Learn anything important	0.0%	36%	64%
Acquire new skills	0.0%	50%	50%
See improvements in the program	0.0%	50%	50%
Site benefit	0.0%	36%	64%
Improve as a manager	0.0%	43%	57%
Worth time and effort	0.0%	36%	64%
Opportunity to interact with staff from other orgs	0.0%	21%	79%

When asked what additional resources sites would need to their improvement goals, greater engagement by direct staff and more resources to support that engagement was consistently mentioned. Table 2.4 shows the opened-ended responses.

Table 2.4- Open-Ended Responses: What additional resources did you need to accomplish the goals outlined in your improvement plan?

What additional resources did you need to accomplish the goals outlined in your improvement plan?
Funding was needed to pay staff to attend trainings. At the suggestion of the coach, I bought a couple of books in addition to the trainings.
More staffing and more club member consistent participation.
Materials, more staff, additional classroom modeling/support for activities
The students, coach from Francis Center, Principal
Funding
Materials for monitoring & tracking
School materials/staff participation/student participation
Materials, more staff

Table 2.5 illustrates key findings around manager and staff engagement in the Quality Matters project.

A substantial minority of respondents indicated that direct staff was less than fully involved in the process. The reported number of staff involved in the assessment process ranged from 2 to 7, while the reported number of staff involved in creating an improvement plan ranged from 1 to 7 staff members. Furthermore, many survey respondents were also not fully aware of the expectations and obligations of the project before it began, with only 36% reporting that felt at least “somewhat” aware of expectations. This may be due to the nature of a pilot project. As one respondent said, “being new to all this, we learned as we went”.

Table 2.5- Engagement in Quality Matters Project

	(N=14)
Percent answering “yes” to: Did you use the Online YPQA Intro (free course) or the YPQA Crash Course powerpoint to introduce your staff to the YPQA?	29%
Percent selecting “direct staff” in response to: Who was involved in creating the improvement plan for your site?	53%
Percent answering “yes” to: Before the pilot project began, do you feel that you were fully informed of your expectations and obligations as a participant?	28%
Average number of staff involved in YPQA assessment process	3.23
Average number of staff involved in YPQA involved in improvement planning process	3.91
Average number of staff attending Youth Work Methods Trainings	2.84



YOUTH OUTCOMES: INITIAL FINDINGS

By David Hansen, Ph.D., School of Education, University of Kansas

The department of Psychology and Research in Education (PRE) within the School of Education at the University of Kansas is a key anchor partner in Quality Matters. In particular, Dr. David Hansen and his research team designed and carried out youth outcomes research for this project. Youth surveys were conducted at all participating pilot sites. Below is Dr. Hansen's description of the initial findings from this groundbreaking research.

University of Kansas's School of Education – Description of Initial Findings

The aim of the youth outcomes study was to evaluate the statistical associations between what youth reported and what the YPQA observations found. Surprisingly few research studies consider how the quality of a program relates to what adolescent participants' experience; so these findings are a "first." This report gives the initial findings; more in-depth findings will follow in the coming months.

Procedures

Following the same data collection schedule as the external YPQA observations, youth participants in grades 5 and higher were asked to complete a survey instrument at the beginning of the intervention (Time 1) and then again at the end of the intervention (Time 2). The same survey was used at both time points. Youth participation in the survey portion of this study was voluntary, which follows established guidelines for the ethical treatment of human participants. The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence (HSCL) reviewed the study to ensure it complied with Federal mandates regarding research and approved the procedures and instruments. Consent to participate was attained from the program, parents and youth. The survey contained measures of constructs relevant to participation in youth programs that have been used in other studies; all measures have strong reliability and validity. The findings reported here come from Time 1. Findings on the full data (Time 1 and 2) are forthcoming.

Youth Participants

The sample consisted of 334 youth enrolled in the 24 programs. The mean age for participants was 12.6 (sd = 1.97). In this sample there were 174 males and 154 females, with six participants choosing not to respond to the question on gender. Approximately 84% of the sample reported being in fifth (n = 64), sixth (n = 102), seventh (n = 63) and eighth grades (n = 45). The other 16% were in ninth to twelfth grade. Eight did not respond to this item. The ethnic composition of the sample was: 41.6 % Black, 10.5% white, 12.9% Hispanic, 1.8% Indian natives, 6.6% other, and 12.3% reported multiple ethnicities; 14.4% failed to respond, which we attribute to these items appearing last on the survey.

On the Measures

A goal in selecting measures for this study was to find scales that would be sensitive (show correlations) to the YPQA observational instrument and address areas that the programs were intentionally trying to affect.

Youth Experience Survey (YES), 3.0.

The Youth Experiences Survey, 3.0 (YES), used in this research, was designed to obtain reports on developmental experiences hypothesized to occur in organized activities at the high school age level (Hansen & Larson, 2005; Hansen et al., 2003). It focuses on domains of socioemotional development that, first, have been discussed in the literature and, second, involve processes in which youth are active and conscious agents of their own development (and that thus should be more accessible to youth's self-report). The YES inventories experiences in domains of personal and interpersonal development. There are six developmental domains covered by the YES, but for this study we chose to focus on five of the six because they had the most relevance to the study aims. The domains with their scales names are: *Identity Work*—identity exploration (3 items) and identity reflection (4 items); *Initiative*—goal setting (4), effort (3), problem-solving (3), and time management (5); *Emotion Regulation* (5); *Interpersonal Relationships*—diverse peer relationships (4), and prosocial norms (4); *Teamwork*—group processes (6), feedback (3), and leading (3). Cronbach's reliability alphas (.700 or higher is considered reliable) ranged between .84 and .95. The stem for each question was, "In your program, how much have you..." A sample item from the prosocial norms scale is, "In your program how much have you, *helped others* (like volunteering, serving food, picking up trash)?" Youth rated each item of the YES using a 4-point gradient from 1 = 'not at all' to 4 = 'yes, definitely.' A mean score is computed with a higher score indicating a higher rate of experience.
<http://www.youthdev.illinois.edu/yesinstrument.htm>

Engagement with Challenge

Engagement with challenge contains six items, three that assess engagement with challenge and three that assess non-engagement with challenge. Items focus on youths' motivation to take on challenges that arise in a program. Sample items include, "There are always things I'm trying to work on and achieve in this program" and "I feel challenged in a good way in this program." Students' indicated their agreement to each item on a six-point scale from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 6 = "strongly agree". A higher mean score indicates higher engagement with challenge; a high score on non-engagement indicates greater non-engagement.

Personal Achievement Goal-Orientations

To measure goal-orientations, the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales –PALS (Carol Midgley et al., 2000) was used.¹⁸ Three subscales from the Personal Achievement Goal-orientations section were included: mastery goal-orientation, performance-approach goal-orientation and performance-avoidance goal-orientation. All items on the scale were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 to 5. Participants were asked to indicate how true each statement was for them. A score of 1 meant 'not at all true' and a score of 5 meant 'very true'. Therefore, higher mean scores indicate that youth lean greater toward that particular goal-orientation. The mastery goal-orientation sub-scale ($\alpha = .886$, $M = 4.1$) was comprised of 5 items such as, 'one of my goals is to master a lot of skills this year'. The performance-approach sub-scale ($\alpha = .817$, $M = 2.4$) had 5 items such as, 'one of my goals is to show others that I'm good at my class work'. Lastly, the performance-avoidance sub-scale ($\alpha = .854$, $M = 3.2$) had 4 items such as, 'one of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work'.

YOUTH OUTCOMES: INITIAL FINDINGS (CONT'D)

On the Results

The findings reported below come from the Teamwork, Initiative, Interpersonal Relationships, Engagement with Challenge, and Achievement Goal-Orientation. Tables 1-5, as found in Appendix B, present the correlations between the YPQA mean scores and a program-aggregated mean score of youth participants' scales (one mean from all students in each program). Correlations run between -1.0 and 1.0, with an absolute value of 1.0 indicating a perfect correlation between two variables; that is, for each unit increase in one variable there a one unit increase in the other. Correlations reflect the magnitude of an association between two mean scores, such as between a mean for a particular YPQA scale and a youth-reported mean for a scale; the higher the absolute value the stronger the association. A positive correlation indicates that a higher score on one variable is associated with a higher score on the other variable; a negative score indicates that a higher score on one variable is associated with a lower score on the other. Each correlation is tested for statistical significance, which is a function of the magnitude of the correlation and sample size; smaller samples sizes require larger correlations for statistical significance. In the tables, an asterisk indicates there is a statistically significant correlation between the two variables indicated. Correlations without an asterisk should not be interpreted.

Developmental Experiences

Tables 1 thru 3 display the correlations between the YPQA scale (leftmost columns) and the particular youth-reported experiences. Focusing on teamwork experiences in Table 1, we see a moderately strong correlation between some of the YPQA scales and group process, feedback, and leading experiences. Note for example the strong correlation between the YPQA 'opportunities to partner with adults' and students' reports of feedback experiences in the program, $r = .658$. This correlation indicates that higher YPQA scores for partnering with adults were strongly associated with higher student feedback experiences. The overall pattern in Table 1 suggests that higher scores on the YPQA sense of belonging, set goals and make plans, and make choices based on interest's scales—i.e., higher quality on these scales—can promote youths' experiences of group processes. A similar interpretation can be applied to all correlations in the tables with an asterisk after them. The correlations are similar in magnitude for initiative experiences (Table 2), but the pattern of associations is slightly different; initiative experiences are most strongly associated with the YPQA scales of 'opportunities for youth to act as a group facilitator and mentor' and 'opportunities to partner with adults.' It is interesting to also note that youths' reports of problem-solving experiences seemed to be facilitated by YPQA 'partnering with adults' and 'opportunities to make choices and plans.' The correlations in Table 3 indicate a slightly different pattern. It would appear that YPQA 'opportunities to partner with adults' encourages higher rates of diverse peer relationship and prosocial norms experiences. For diverse peer relationships, it could be that a good portion of the mean score for this item is attributable to opportunities to develop positive relationships with adults.

Engagement with Challenge

Table 4 displays the correlations between the YPQA scales and youths' reports of how engaged with the challenges of the program they are. Two patterns are worth noting. First, there are no significant correlations between non-engaged and the YPQA scales, which is very encouraging as we would expect such a pattern. We suspect some of this is due to the fact that youth who are not engaged attend programs elsewhere or drop out (self-selection). Second, engagement with challenge is significantly associated with three of the four scales that represent the 'Engagement construct' of the YPQA! This is not only good evidence of the validity of both instruments, but suggests that efforts to create a high quality engaging environment (as defined in the YPQA scales) could promote youths' engagement with challenges, which is thought to be an indicator of positive development.

Achievement Goal-Orientation

Table 5 displays the results correlating students' achievement goal-orientations with the YPQA scores. The pattern is clear; there is only one significant correlation. While this may seem disappointing at first—goal-orientation is a predictor of academic achievement—there may be good explanations for the lack of findings. First, there may not be a direct relationship between achievement orientation and YPQA quality. Second, youths' experiences in the program (i.e., teamwork) may moderate the association between YPQA quality and achievement. That is, it may take the developmental experiences to change achievement goal-orientations. This is a hypothesis that will be tested in the future.

Conclusions

The pattern of findings is encouraging and exciting! Few studies have found such strong associations. That said, we need to proceed with caution. Correlations are not causations; we cannot draw causal conclusions. Yet the pattern of findings does strongly suggest the environment, as measured by the YPQA, exerts some influence on what you experience in the program. Future research will address how these program quality features shape youth experience.



NEXT STEPS

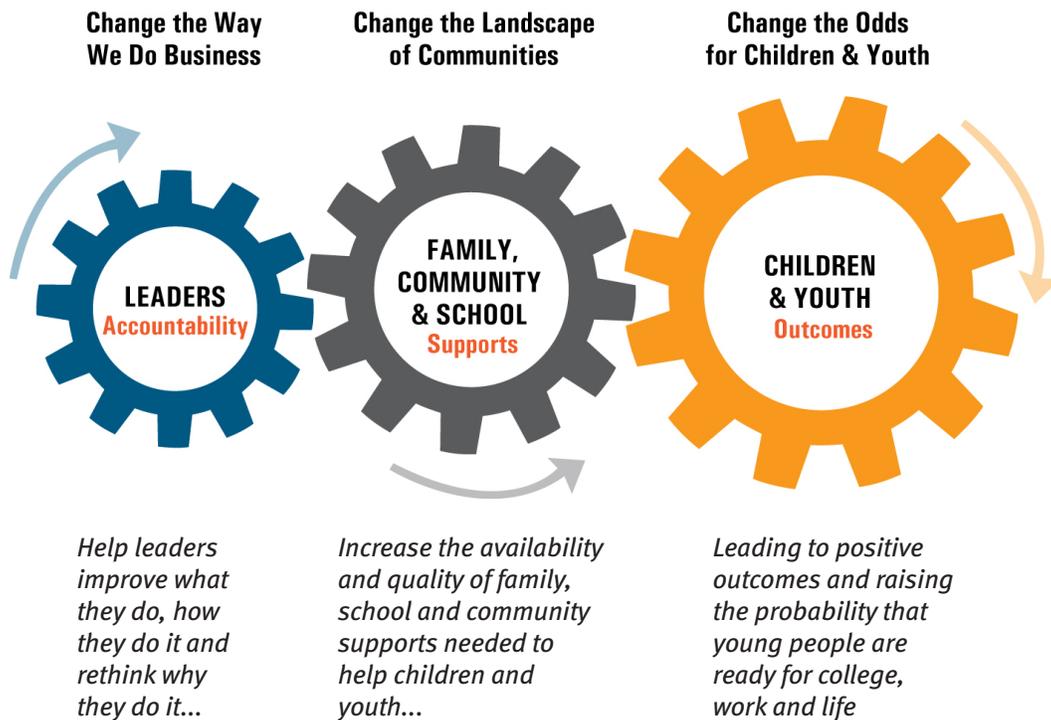
Changing the Odds for This Region's Children and Youth

United Way invites the community to join us in making it a priority that all children and youth attain their full potential. To change the odds for this region's children and youth – especially those who face social or economic disadvantages – leadership is needed to step up in new ways, examining new approaches. It may take time, but we know that data-driven decision-making and partnerships built on shared goal-setting and strategy implementation can strengthen systems and neighborhoods for children and youth – not just programs. *This means changing the way we do business as leaders, whether we are on the front lines or in the board room.*¹⁹

To expand the project for the 2010-11 school year, United Way plans to at least double the number of sites participating in the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Improvement process – a key underlying tool to build continuous quality improvement. In addition, the expansion will include sites that serve young school age children, grades kindergarten through fourth.

Moving forward, United Way is committed to making Quality Matters a multi-year effort that champions quality out-of-school time experiences and develops strong community leadership on youth development. By working in partnership with stakeholders, United Way expects to build upon the current evidenced-based approaches in place, learn from working in partnership, and integrate new strategies that will leverage even greater results for this region's children and youth into the future.

What's Needed?



JOIN US IN PREPARING CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE

Give.

Make your gift count! Direct your United Way gift to systemic change. Contact us about making a special gift or to scholarship out-of-school time programs that want to engage in Quality Matters to build continuous quality improvement.

For more information, please contact Katherine Rivard at katherinerivard@uwgkc.org or (816) 559-4631.

Advocate.

Sign up for United Way's e-newsletter to stay informed on United Way of Greater Kansas City's children and youth efforts in our community. Then, help spread the word and help us ensure that more young people are ready for college, work and life.

To sign-up for United Way's e-newsletter, please visit www.unitedwaygkc.org.

Volunteer.

Find ways to lend your talents! Contact United Way's Volunteer Center to volunteer at any of the sites participating in Quality Matters. Creating opportunities for youth to have positive interactions and engagement with adults is one of the more important indicators of quality.

To volunteer, please visit www.unitedwaygkc.org/volunteer or e-mail Shelly Bolling-Strickland at shellystrickland@uwgkc.org.

**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED™**



THE APPENDIX



APPENDIX A

Demographic Snapshot: Children, Youth and Their Families

Kansas City Six-County Region - Cass, Clay, Jackson and Platte Counties in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas.

Children and Their Families ²⁰

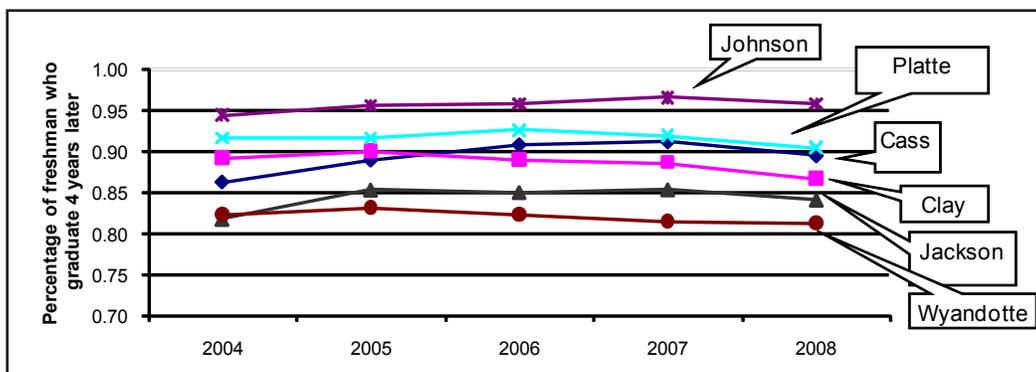
- The region is home to nearly 500,000 children and youth under 18. 35,000 young children are enrolled in nursery school; 150,500 are enrolled in K-5; 70,500 in grades 6-8 and 100,500 grades 9-12.
- For children under age 6, 69% live in households where all parents are in the labor force. For older children, ages 6-17, 75% live in households where all parents work.
- Nearly 30% of the region's children live in a single parent family - that's more than 117,000 children. The number of children living in single parent families is increasing at a faster rate. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of children in the region went up 5%, compared to an increase of 14.5% for children living in single parent families.
- Of the 25,000 women who gave birth in 2008, 15% had less than a high school education.

Education – High School Completion ^{21 22}

- One in nine, or roughly 2,500 students in the 6-county region who begin as public or private high school students as freshmen do not graduate. Over the past four years, this number has ranged from 2,100 to 2,500.
- While graduation rates remained relatively steady between 2004 and 2008, rates do vary by county. graduation rates have remained relatively steady. Rates have improved slightly in Cass, Jackson, and Johnson counties. In Clay, Platte and Wyandotte, rates declined by one or two percentage points.
- For adults age 25+, 10% have not completed high school and 26% have completed high school only. 34% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.
- For adults (age 25+) without a high school diploma, the poverty rate is 24% (27% for females, 21% for males). Demonstrating education attainment's link to poverty, adults with at least a high school diploma have a much lower poverty rate of 6%.
- Of all adults age 25+ with income below the poverty level, 3 in 10 have not completed high school.

Note: Sources include Kansas State Department of Education and Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. This data represents both public and private high school graduation rates and extends the trend lines found in the most recent Partnership for Children Report Card, published in 2006.

High School Completion



Economic Stability ²³

- Children and young adults are disproportionately poor. Ages 0-24 comprise 35% of the region's population and 50% of the poor.
- The poverty rate by age category exceeds the poverty rate for the total population at every age for children, youth and young adults.

Age	100% FPL	Poverty Rate	200% FPL	Poverty Rate
0-5	24,632	0.16	55,185	0.36
6-11	22,324	0.15	51,436	0.35
12-17	15,328	0.11	38,241	0.27
18-24	24,034	0.16	57,143	0.39
All ages	175,925	0.10	435,744	0.25

Note: The Federal Poverty Rate (FPL) is updated annually and computed by family size. For example, \$17,600 for a family of three in 2008 was the FPL. A 200% FPL income, one of the measures of low-income, would be \$35,200 for a family of three in 2008.

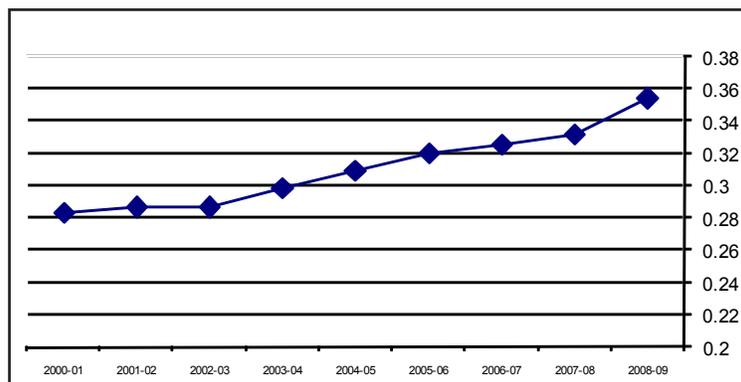
School Lunch ²⁴

- Nearly 100,000 grade school and high school students in the six counties participate in the National School Lunch Program. To be eligible, family income must be at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (\$33,873 for a family of three in 2008).
- Participation rate has climbed in every county, with Johnson County's rate increase of 50% rising the fastest.

Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meals

	Number of Students 2008-09 School Year	Participation Rate	5-Year Participation Rate Increase
Johnson	16,568	18.7%	50.7%
Wyandotte	20,334	72.9%	15.4%
Cass	5,442	30.3%	22.7%
Clay	10,615	28.8%	31.0%
Jackson	43,067	45.8%	6.4%
Platte	3,038	20.8%	26.1%
Total	99,064	35.4%	14.4%

**Free and Reduced School Lunch Program
Percentage of Students Participating**



APPENDIX B

Quality Matters Project Data Table & Notes on Measures and Methods

Descriptive Analyses for United Way of Greater Kansas City

	External Pre-test	External Post Test	Self Pre-test	External Percent Scoring "1" (pre)	External Percent Scoring "1" (Post)	Similar National Sample	# sites selecting as imp. area
	N=23	N=20	N=22	N=36 offerings	N=42 offerings	N=786 offerings	N=23
I. Safe Environment	4.40	4.48	4.41	NA	NA	3.73	NA
IA. Psychological/emotional safety promoted	4.47	4.58	4.37	NA	NA	3.66	NA
IA1. Emotional climate is positive	4.12	4.56	3.98	2.8	4.8	3.53	NA
IA2. No evidence of bias	4.81	4.61	4.76	2.8	7.1	3.80	NA
IB. Physical environment is safe/free of health hazards	4.77	4.70	4.45	NA	NA	3.98	NA
IB1. Program space is safe/free of health hazards	4.75	4.94	4.15	5.6	0.0	3.85	NA
IB2. Program space is clean/sanitary	4.56	4.75	4.35	0.0	0.0	3.77	NA
IB3. Ventilation/lighting are adequate	4.95	4.85	4.55	0.0	0.0	4.08	NA
IB4. Temperature is comfortable	4.80	4.27	4.75	2.8	7.1	3.99	NA
IC. Emergency procedures/supplies present	3.81	3.61	3.94	NA	NA	3.27	NA
IC1. Written emergency procedures in plain view	3.67	4.14	4.29	19.4	9.5	3.24	NA
IC2. Fire extinguisher is accessible/visible	4.19	4.08	3.14	5.6	0.0	3.11	NA
IC3. Complete first aid kit is accessible/visible	3.31	2.93	3.57	2.8	26.2	2.94	NA
IC4. Other appropriate safety/emergency equip	NA	NA	4.00			2.92	NA
IC5. All entrances supervised	4.12	3.44	4.29	27.8	19.0	3.43	NA
IC6. Access to outdoor space is supervised	3.80	4.30	4.71	36.4	25.0	3.29	NA
ID. Program space/furniture accommodate activities offered	4.72	4.82	4.61	NA	NA	3.96	NA
ID1. Space allows youth/adults to move freely	4.76	4.57	4.57	0.0	2.4	3.88	NA
ID2. Space is suitable for all activities offered	4.76	4.82	4.57	0.0	0.0	3.98	NA
ID3. Furniture is comfortable/sufficient	4.94	4.96	4.35	0.0	0.0	3.87	NA
ID4. Physical environment can be modified	4.56	4.94	4.90	2.9	2.4	3.90	NA
IE. Healthy food and drinks are provided	4.22	4.70	4.66	NA	NA	3.34	NA
IE1. Drinking water is accessible	4.27	4.56	4.41	0.0	0.0	3.51	NA
IE2. Food/drink plentiful and at appropriate times	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.0	0.0	3.34	NA
IE3. Food/drink are healthy	4.24	4.43	4.65	9.1	11.1	2.59	NA

	External Pre-test	External Post Test	Self Pre-test	External Percent Scoring "1" (pre)	External Percent Scoring "1" (Post)	Similar National Sample	# sites selecting as imp. area
	N=23	N=20	N=22	N=36 offerings	N=42 offerings	N=786 offerings	N=23
II. Supportive Environment	3.97	4.17	3.84	NA	NA	3.81	NA
IIF. Staff provide a welcoming atmosphere	3.67	4.54	4.54	NA	NA	4.29	1.0
IIF1. Youth are greeted within 15 minutes	2.37	4.42	4.11	36.7	13.8	3.59	NA
IIF2. Staff use warm tone/respectful language	4.35	4.62	4.71	5.6	2.4	4.57	NA
IIF3. Staff smile/make eye contact	4.09	4.66	4.79	5.6	2.4	4.55	NA
IIG. Session flow is planned, presented, paced for youth	4.38	4.54	4.38	NA	NA	4.38	1.0
IIG1. Session starts/ends within 10 minutes of scheduled time	4.13	4.46	4.25	8.3	9.5	4.50	NA
IIG2. Materials/supplies are ready	4.50	4.97	4.67	0.0	0.0	4.40	NA
IIG3. There are enough materials/supplies	4.96	4.91	4.76	0.0	0.0	4.50	NA
IIG4. Staff explain activities clearly	4.13	4.60	4.45	5.6	4.8	4.65	NA
IIG5. Appropriate amount of time for activities	4.49	4.09	4.14	8.3	11.9	4.34	NA
IIH. Activities support active engagement	3.62	3.90	3.20	NA	NA	3.69	1.0
IIH1. Youth engage with materials/ideas with guided practice	4.59	4.69	3.44	2.8	2.4	4.07	NA
IIH2. Activities will lead to tangible products	2.90	3.50	3.00	36.1	35.7	4.09	NA
IIH3. Youth talk about what they are doing	3.33	3.77	3.47	22.2	21.4	3.49	NA
IIH4. Activities balance concrete/abstract	3.66	3.66	2.89	8.3	9.5	3.60	NA
IIi. Staff support youth in building new skills	4.22	4.15	3.50	NA	NA	3.58	NA
IIi1. Youth are encourage to try out new skills	4.41	4.13	3.40	5.6	9.5	3.68	NA
IIi2. Youth receive support despite imperfect results	4.03	4.16	3.55	11.1	11.9	3.49	NA
IIJ. Staff support youth with encouragement	3.72	3.90	3.52	NA	NA	3.45	1.0
IIJ1. Staff are actively involved with youth	4.82	4.69	4.45	0.0	2.4	4.49	NA
IIJ2. Staff support contributions of youth	3.49	3.58	3.10	8.3	9.5	3.12	NA
IIJ3. Staff make frequent use of open-ended questions	2.85	3.43	3.02	33.3	31.0	2.75	NA
IIK. Staff use youth-centered approaches to reframe conflict	4.21	3.77	3.85	NA	NA	3.14	2.0
IIK1. Staff approach conflicts in a non-threatening manner	4.48	4.12	4.33	6.1	10.0	3.73	NA
IIK2. Staff seek input from youth	4.12	3.56	3.67	9.1	25.0	2.89	NA
IIK3. Staff encourage youth to examine actions/consequences	4.12	3.37	3.55	15.2	30.0	2.81	NA
IIK4. Staff follow-up with youth involved	4.12	4.02	3.60	12.1	10.0	3.13	NA

	External Pre-test	External Post Test	Self Pre-test	External Percent Scoring "1" (pre)	External Percent Scoring "1" (Post)	Similar National Sample	# sites selecting as imp. area
	N=23	N=20	N=22	N=36 offerings	N=42 offerings	N=786 offerings	N=23
III. Interaction	2.68	3.06	3.21	NA	NA	2.98	NA
III.L. Youth develop sense of belonging	3.36	3.73	3.53	NA	NA	3.45	7.0
III.L1. Youth get to know each other	3.27	3.81	3.06	13.9	7.3	3.36	NA
III.L2. Youth exhibit inclusive relationships	4.09	4.14	3.85	8.3	2.4	3.64	NA
III.L3. Youth identify with the program offering	3.66	4.05	3.95	8.3	2.5	3.77	NA
III.L4. Activities publicly acknowledge achievements of youth	2.41	2.94	3.21	47.2	39.0	3.04	NA
IIIM. Youth participate in small groups	1.82	2.34	2.97	NA	NA	2.44	7.0
IIIM1. Activities carried out in three different groupings	2.14	2.13	2.91	54.5	47.5	2.55	NA
IIIM2. Two or more ways to form small groups	1.36	2.34	2.96	81.8	42.5	2.13	NA
IIIM3. Each group has a purpose	1.94	2.55	3.04	69.7	47.5	2.64	NA
IIIN. Youth act as facilitators/mentors	2.31	2.53	2.64	NA	NA	2.58	11.0
IIIN1. Youth practice group-process skills	2.51	2.97	2.84	47.2	36.6	3.19	NA
IIIN2. Youth mentor individuals	2.20	2.26	2.77	47.2	48.8	2.43	NA
IIIN3. Youth lead a group	2.21	2.36	2.32	55.6	41.5	2.09	NA
IIIO. Youth partner with adults	3.15	3.55	3.44	NA	NA	3.44	3.0
IIIO1. Staff share control of the activities with youth	2.60	3.22	2.80	52.8	31.0	3.33	NA
IIIO2. Staff provide explanation for expectations, guidelines, etc.	3.93	3.75	4.13	9.4	11.8	3.76	NA

	External Pre-test	External Post Test	Self Pre-test	External Percent Scoring "1" (pre)	External Percent Scoring "1" (Post)	Similar National Sample	# sites selecting as imp. area
	N=23	N=20	N=22	N=36 offerings	N=42 offerings	N=786 offerings	N=23
IV. Engagement	2.34	2.70	2.33	NA	NA	2.56	NA
IVP. Youth set goals and make plans	1.91	2.21	1.87	NA	NA	2.20	13.0
IVP1. Youth make plans for projects/ activities	1.85	2.31	1.67	75.0	56.1	2.33	NA
IVP2. Two or more planning strategies are used	1.97	2.11	2.07	66.7	63.4	1.91	NA
IVQ. Youth make choices	2.73	3.00	2.68	NA	NA	2.97	2.0
IVQ1. Youth make open-ended content choices	3.06	2.92	2.78	36.1	38.1	2.98	NA
IVQ2. Youth make open-ended process choices	2.40	3.08	2.46	44.4	35.7	2.99	NA
IVR. Youth have opportunities to reflect	2.37	2.88	2.53	NA	NA	2.49	12.0
IVR1. Youth reflect on what they are doing	3.00	2.78	2.72	44.4	50.0	2.39	NA
IVR2. Youth reflect in two or more ways	2.11	2.43	2.58	44.4	47.6	2.17	NA
IVR3. Youth make presentations to the whole group	1.40	2.55	1.44	77.8	52.4	2.46	NA
IVR4. Staff get feedback on activities	2.99	3.75	3.20	27.8	16.7	2.97	NA
INSTRUCTIONAL TOTAL SCORE	2.99	3.31	3.49	NA	NA	3.12	NA

Note. Scales are formed by meaning across all items within that scale. For example, Scale IVR is an average for items IVR1-4. Domains are formed by meaning across all scales within that domain. For example, IV. Engagement is an average of scales IVP, IVQ, and IVR. The instructional total score is formed by averaging the II. Supportive Environment Domain, the III. Interaction Domain, and the IV. Engagement Domain together. (The "instructional total score" is an average of the supportive environment, interaction, and engagement domains. While the safe environment domain is important, it is not necessarily a measure of staff practices).

Pre-intervention data was collected in the Spring of 2009, while post-intervention data was collected in the Spring of 2010. A total of 14 sites were present at pre-intervention data collection, and 12 sites remained for post-intervention data collection. In some cases, data is presented at the offering level (pre-intervention: 27; post-intervention 21). The national reference sample (N=366) is at the offering level and includes only sites that served a similar age group. A total of 11 Quality Enhancement Plans were collected covering all 14 sites (some sites had one overarching organization that submitted one improvement plan for all of its sites).

APPENDIX C

Youth Outcomes: Initial Findings

Tables 1-5 present the correlations between the YPQA mean scores and a program-aggregated mean scores of youth participants' scales (one mean from all students in each program). Findings reported in the youth outcome areas of Teamwork, Initiative, Interpersonal Relationships, Engagement with Challenge and Achievement Goal-Orientation.

Table 1. Correlation of PQA Scales and Youth-reported Teamwork Experiences
Teamwork Experiences: Program Aggregated (Mean) Youth Reported

PQA Scale	Group Processes	Feedback	Leading
<i>Youth have Opportunities to...</i>			
...Develop Sense of Belonging	.473*	.108	.414*
...Participate in Small Groups	-.243	-.264	.036
...Act as Group Facilitators & Mentors	.304	.331	.404*
...Partner with Adults	.145	.658***	.441*
...Set Goals and Make Plans	.540**	.399*	.373*
...Make Choices Based on Interests	.563**	.476*	.353
...Reflect	.326	.381*	.319
Note. one-tailed significance tests * p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001			

Table 2. Correlation of PQA Scales and Youth-reported Initiative Experiences

	Initiative Experiences: Program Aggregated (Mean) Youth Reported			
	Goal Setting	Effort	Problem Solving	Time Manage.
<i>Youth have Opportunities to...</i>				
...Develop Sense of Belonging	.302	.369*	.005	.238
...Participate in Small Groups	.096	.008	-.308	-.070
...Act as Group Facilitators & Mentors	.682***	.700***	.109	.505**
...Partner with Adults	.620**	.503**	.431*	.463*
...Set Goals and Make Plans	.213	.285	.255	.122
...Make Choices Based on Interests	.416*	.493**	.510**	.269
...Reflect	.345	.290	.324	-.118
Note. one-tailed significance tests * p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001				

Table 3. Correlation of PQA Scales and Youth-reported Interpersonal Relationship Experiences

PQA Scale	Interpersonal Experiences: Program Aggregated (Mean) Youth Reported	
	Diverse Peer Relationships	Prosocial Norms
<i>Youth have Opportunities to...</i>		
...Develop Sense of Belonging	.070	.105
...Participate in Small Groups	-.295	-.464*
...Act as Group Facilitators & Mentors	.258	.304
...Partner with Adults	.501**	.496**
...Set Goals and Make Plans	.293	.241
...Make Choices Based on Interests	.248	.250
...Reflect	.192	.013
Note. one-tailed significance tests * p < .05, ** p < .01		

Table 4. Correlation of PQA Scales and Youth-reported Engagement With Challenge

PQA Scale	Teamwork Experiences: Program Aggregated (Mean) Youth Reported	
	Engaged with Challenge	Non-Engaged
<i>Youth have Opportunities to...</i>		
...Develop Sense of Belonging	.101	.203
...Participate in Small Groups	-.188	-.271
...Act as Group Facilitators & Mentors	.305	.205
...Partner with Adults	.438*	.276
...Set Goals and Make Plans	.363*	.052
...Make Choices Based on Interests	.504**	-.204
...Reflect	.340	-.222
Note. one-tailed significance tests * p < .05, ** p < .01		

Table 5. Correlation of PQA Scales and Youth-reported Achievement Goal-Orientation

PQA Scale	Achievement Goal-orientation: Program Aggregated (Mean) Youth Reported	
	Mastery	Approach
<i>Youth have Opportunities to...</i>		
...Develop Sense of Belonging	-.014	-.149
...Participate in Small Groups	-.045	-.330
...Act as Group Facilitators & Mentors	.323	.221
...Partner with Adults	.349	.436*
...Set Goals and Make Plans	-.022	.221
...Make Choices Based on Interests	-.056	.194
...Reflect	-.051	.039
Note. one-tailed significance tests * $p < .05$		



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Overall rate for graduating seniors from both public and private high schools as a percentage of freshmen three years earlier. For more information, see Appendix A.
- ² Alliance for Excellent Education, “The Economic Benefits from Halving Kansas City’s Dropout Rate”, January 2010 (downloaded 8-7-10 at http://www.all4ed.org/files/KansasCityMO_leb.pdf)
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Alliance for Excellent Education, “The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools,” Issue Brief, August 2009.
- ⁵ See Appendix A for more information.
- ⁶ After School Alliance, “America After 3pm”, 2009
- ⁷ Newman, S.A.; Silverman, E.B.; Christeson, W.; & Rosenbaum, R.; Office of Policy and Planning of the City of New York, “Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York” 2002
- ⁸ Durlak, Joseph A.; Weissberg, Roger P.; “The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills”, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2007.
- ⁹ Goldberg, E. (2009). *The New Executive Brain: Frontal Lobes in a Complex World*. Oxford University Press.
- ¹⁰ Spear, L. P. (2000). The adolescent brain and age-related behavioral manifestations. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 24, 417-463.
- ¹¹ For more information about the Weikart Center see www.cypq.org.
- ¹² High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (2005). Youth PQA program quality assessment: Administration manual. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- ¹³ Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). Full findings from the Youth PQA validation study. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.
- ¹⁴ Smith, C., Lo, Y.-J., Sugar, S. A., Akiva, T., Frank, K. A., Devaney, T., et al. (in preparation). Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study. Ypsilanti, MI: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.
- ¹⁵ Please note that one of our consultants would be happy to conduct a follow-up call to make more detailed recommendations regarding general and specific professional development, resources and strategies.
- ¹⁶ A similar pattern of over pre-post change has occurred for quality improvement interventions in Palm Beach County (Sugar, S. A., Pearson, L., Devaney, T., & Smith, C., 2009), Rhode Island (Sugar, S. A., Pearson, L., & Smith, C., 2009), and Lansing Public Schools (Burkander, 2010).
- ¹⁷ Please see the Notes on Measures section in Appendix B for a description of the Instructional Total Score. These scores for individual sites must be treated with great caution and are not appropriate for higher stakes use. Despite, rigorous training for observers, the precision of quality ratings produced on the Youth PQA is affected by several sources of systematic error (i.e., days of observation, rater bias, interactions between rater bias and type of setting) and the reliability of a score for a single site is less trustworthy than a score for an overall sample of sites.
- ¹⁸ Midgley, C. et al. (2000). Manual for the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS). http://www.umich.edu/~pals/PALS%202000_V13Word97.pdf
- ¹⁹ Pittman, Karen, “Ready by 21: Powerful Solutions for Passionate Leaders”, Forum for Youth Investment, May 2008.
- ²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- ²¹ Kansas State Department of Education; Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
- ²² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- ²³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- ²⁴ Kansas State Department of Education; Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

**THANK YOU FOR
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