Summary Report

Dallas Afterschool's 2014-15 Student Outcomes Project

Dallas Afterschool and the After the Bell Alliance are committed to ongoing evaluation and monitoring to support Out of School Time (OST) programming. Determining what quality programming consists of involves clearly defining what the features of the programming are, and then rigorously examining whether those features consistently lead to desired student outcomes. The 2014-15 evaluation by CORE examines the relationship between the programming provided by Dallas Afterschool members participating in the Student Outcomes Project (SOP) and student outcomes. This summary is accompanied by a comprehensive Technical Report.

Measures

Both program level and student level data were collected and organized into information about impact on students. Data about the functioning of each site is represented by the Afterschool Quality Advancement (AQuA) Tool. Program intervention data is represented by logs of both coaching and training that DAS provides to sites. Additional measures used were student demographic information, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment-mini (DESSA-mini) for socio-emotional learning (SEL) competencies, student academic achievement scores, a SEL questionnaire completed by DAS staff, and geographic program data.

Study Sample

Program data from 105 sites were collected during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 periods. Location data was also gathered by DAS for 97 of these 105 sites. And 22 program sites make up DAS's Student Outcomes Project (SOP) sample. Student data was collected from a total of 587 student; of these, we were able to obtain DISD data from 336 students.

Methods

In order to understand what the impact on student outcomes may be, as well as to better understand what aspects of programming may have contributed to impact, CORE asked and answered key questions about attendance at afterschool sites, the quality of afterschool programming, and students' social, emotional and academic outcomes.

Results

How well does AQuA measure program quality?
Answer: Very well

Internal consistency, factor analyses and principal component analyses indicates that each of the 10 components of AquA are measuring distinct aspects of afterschool quality and that each of the 10 components is necessary for gaining a full picture of what quality looks like in afterschool. A single AQuA score, made up of 10 elements, is a good measure of quality. DAS could drop some items within each component without harming its overall psychometric validity for research purposes.

Are DAS's efforts to increase quality afterschool working?
Answer: Yes – on some elements of AQuA more than others.

The coaching and training aspects of DAS's quality initiatives do impact AQuA meaningfully, and there are some key instances where this is happening. Analyses of change in AQuA scores over time were conducted. Different elements of AQuA improved as a result of training, while other elements improved as a result of coaching, and still others improved as a result of the combination of training and coaching. Overall, a trend emerged in the findings; DAS sites that had a higher AQuA score in 2013-14 gained more as a result of training and/or coaching by the end of 2014-15. This indicates that there is a base level of capacity that sites should have that allows DAS quality initiative work to have the best possible traction for growth.

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Is there a relationship between student attendance at SOP sites and outcomes like social-emotional learning and academic achievement?
Answer: No. By itself, attendance at afterschool does not tell us much.

A series of regressions that took account of type and level of SEL programming being provided shows that attendance at a SOP site alone is not a good indicator of students' social & emotional skill set, as measured by the DESSA. An additional set of regressions that took account of students' previous academic performance as well as the school they attended shows that attendance alone is not a good predictor of academic outcomes like STAAR or ITBS/Lagramos. In line with many other OST studies, findings were unequivocal; they were either non-significant, were inconsistent across different grade levels, had a low effect size (indicating a relatively weak magnitude of strength), or were in an unexpected direction, where more program attendance was associated with worse outcomes. Fortunately, DAS collects much more than attendance data allowing additional analyses to be conducted.

What is the impact of afterschool on student social & emotional outcomes?
Answer: Its hard to tell- results are inconclusive.

In a series of regression analyses CORE examined the role of afterschool participation on social-emotional skills, as measured by the DESSA. First, CORE found no meaningful differences in DESSA scores by site. We developed models that looked at: the level of SEL implementation being provided in the site, AQuA scores, attendance rates at sites, and that took account of students' previous (time1) DESSA scores. Across the models, findings were inconclusive. Neither time2 (2014-15) DESSA scores, nor the change in DESSA scores from time1 to time2 were sufficiently explained by any of the factors we examined nor any of the models we ran. One AQuA element, Linkage to School Day, was associated with increased DESSA scores while others were associated with declines. Collecting additional data points for DESSA over time, validation work to ensure that DESSA is a robust measure of SEL, and strengthening the implementation of SEL programming are all warranted.

Additionally, CORE examined the relationship between DESSA and academic outcomes. Ample research has pointed to the inter-related nature of social, emotional and academic skills. While the correlational relationships that CORE tested were not robust, some meaningful patterns emerged. Specifically, when we controlled for previous academic performance, we saw

1) first grade students whose DESSA scores got better over time also had higher ITBS Math scores, and 2) third grade students whose DESSA scores got better over time also had higher STAAR reading scores. These analyses do not tell us whether change in DESSA caused the academic outcome, per se, only that the increases were related to one another. Additionally, CORE's other findings point to an inverse relationship, where increases in DESSA were not significantly related to academic outcomes at all or were related to lower academic scores. Taken together, this points to the potential for SEL programming to support academic outcomes, as well as to the need for additional SEL data collection, related to programming, processes and to outcomes.

Is there a positive impact of afterschool on student academic outcomes?
Answer: Yes, for math only.

It is extremely difficult to establish linkages between out of school programming and in-school academic achievement given the range of factors that impact eventual achievement scores. DAS's careful data collection allows for some uniquely rigorous analyses to be run. First, CORE looked within SOP sites at the relationship between afterschool quality and outcomes. Here, CORE controlled for previous academic performance as well as AQuA scores at the site students attended. First and second graders who attended sites with higher overall AQuA scores had significantly higher Logramos scores than students in sites with lower AQuA scores.

Second, we looked at SOP students compared to students who were not (to our knowledge) enrolled in DAS programming. In order to do so, CORE developed a data sharing agreement with DallasISD and accessed two years of student data for both SOP students and a comparison group. CORE identified a comparison sample of DISD students using a Propensity Score Matching technique. We matched students on: the school they attended (SEI score), their ethnicity, and their previous academic performance. In general, SOP students had higher average ITBS/Logramos and STAAR scores on both reading and math than the comparison group of DallasISD students. However, across multiple analyses, there was little to no statistical significance, meaning that the differences between SOP and comparison students could be due to something other than DAS programs. .

When 2013-14 academic performance was taken into account, two groups of SOP students out-performed non-DAS students in Math. They were 1st graders in

2014-15 (ITBS Math) and 5th graders in 2014-15 (STAAR Math.) The only significant finding related to reading was a negative one, where SOP 4th graders performed worse on 2014-15 STAAR reading than a non-SOP sample when 2013-14 scores were taken into account. Math performance may be more malleable and responsive to homework help and other tutoring that most afterschool sites provide. Reading challenges, especially in later elementary grades, may reflect substantive delays that require more skillful or intensive interventions on the part of program staff. Understanding the programming that is taking place within each site related to these outcomes is an important next step.

Summary

DAS is a leader in supporting afterschool programming and using evaluation data to drive practices and understand impact. Findings pointing to the efficacy of coaching and training for increasing AQuA scores is extremely encouraging, and some bright spots related to student outcomes point to impactful programming taking place across the DAS network of providers. As the evaluation partnership between DAS and CORE continues, additional examination of the kinds of programming being provided (whether academic and/or social-emotional), additional data points on social-emotional learning in particular, and a larger sample size overall will all strengthen the conclusions that can be drawn.