



**New York City Department of Youth
and Community Development
Adolescent Literacy Initiative**

Evaluation of Early Implementation

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Executive Summary

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE) estimate that a third to a half of young adolescents in grades 6-8 in New York City read and write below grade level. In the short term, poor literacy skills can prevent students from advancing to the next grade. More important, inadequate literacy skills make it difficult for these students to succeed in school. Moreover, the lack of success undermines their interest in staying in school. Not only do poor literacy skills limit students' opportunities for success in school, they also limit opportunities for good jobs and careers.

To help address the problem of poor literacy skills among young adolescents, DYCD established the Adolescent Literacy Initiative to “identify research-based program models appropriate for providing reading and writing instruction to an adolescent population.” To meet this goal, DYCD funded eight experienced providers to plan and implement 11 school-based, after-school adolescent literacy programs. Providers received three-year contracts, with the expectation that the 2006-2007 school year would be a start-up year and that providers would target services to sixth-graders who had scored at Level 2 (Basic) on the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment at the winter 2006 test point (the fifth-grade assessment for sixth-graders in 2006-2007). DYCD called on the providers to offer a mix of explicit literacy instruction and other activities that would foster the development of literacy skills. DYCD leaders reasoned that targeting sixth-graders would afford these youth sufficient time to improve their literacy skills during the middle-school years and to be ready for successful transition to high school.

Despite the fact that DYCD operates the largest municipally-funded out-of-school time initiative in the country and that organizations selected to provide adolescent literacy services have track records in operating out-of-school time programs, this initiative represented a venture into somewhat uncharted territory. The focus on improving the literacy skills of struggling young adolescent readers and providing explicit literacy instruction called for special capacity and skills as well as solid working relationships with both school leaders and instructional staff. Targeting struggling young adolescent readers made it critical to create program activities that were appealing, somehow different from school, and, at the same time, likely to result in improved literacy skills as measured by standardized assessments.

This report examines how programs funded under this initiative fared in their first year of providing these services.

Program Design and Organization

Approaches to literacy instruction. Consistent with DYCD’s expectations, the 11 programs funded under this initiative demonstrated a variety of approaches to helping young adolescents develop their literacy skills. All of them featured a substantial amount of explicit literacy instruction as a key component of their strategies. One way of characterizing the programs is to distinguish between those that were theme-based and those that adopted a more traditional approach to literacy instruction. The evaluation characterized six programs as theme-based. These programs provided literacy learning experiences grounded in the use of technology (one program), study of the urban environment (one program), and theater (four programs) to help participants develop their literacy skills. The traditional programs relied more on direct instructional techniques that often incorporated pre-packaged materials, although some of them also provided opportunities for participation in other literacy-related activities, such as project-based learning and clubs organized by program staff to complement more explicit literacy instruction.

Looking across instructional activities in all of the programs, several themes emerged in the evaluation findings:

- The content of the instructional activities was generally consistent with the programs’ overall approach to literacy instruction.
- A number of the programs, including the theme-based programs and several of the traditional programs, relied on project-based learning in a portion of program activities.
- Consistent with DYCD’s expectations, programs generally maintained very low staff-to-participant ratios in all or almost all instructional activities.
- Alignment and coordination of the programs’ literacy learning activities with ELA instruction in the host schools were uneven.

Working relationships with host schools. DYCD expected the providers to develop positive working relationships with the host schools and required that the providers and school principals sign linkage agreements that specified key elements of these relationships. The evaluation found that 10 of the 11 funded programs established generally positive working relationships with the host schools during the first year of operations. Five of these partnerships were especially supportive, as reflected by close collaboration between program and school staff in initial planning and ongoing operations. The remaining program struggled with a very weak, almost non-existent relationship with the host school throughout the start-up year.

Program staff. Consistent with the variation in program design, the evaluation found variation in program staffing, with staffing plans generally reflecting program designs and approaches to providing literacy-related activities and services. For example, programs that relied on drama and theater activities to provide literacy instruction hired staff with experience in theater. In addition, the evaluation found that there was considerable turnover in staff at the end of the first year of operations and that, in some cases, the providers took advantage of the attrition to recruit staff with somewhat different backgrounds. In particular, as they looked ahead to the second year of operations, they reported hiring staff with more classroom experience.

Professional development for program staff. Ten directors reported that they and their staff had participated in at least some professional development during the start-up year. For program directors and some staff, this included participation in DYCD-sponsored activities. Staff also participated in professional development organized by the provider organizations. Overall, the directors reported participating in professional development on assessing participant outcomes, and nine directors reported participating in activities focused on program operations and management. Other professional development topics mentioned by directors included integrating literacy learning into diverse content, literacy instruction and learning, maintaining healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practice, and family and community engagement. Directors' ratings of the professional development activities were mixed, with seven agreeing that the professional development was a good start. Two agreed that these activities served their purposes completely, and one reported that the professional development "did not provide sufficient information or guidance to enable us to follow up or to implement new strategies."

Recruitment, Contact Hours, and Program Attendance

Recruitment. Overall, the programs funded under this initiative served a total of 307 youth in 2006-2007. Just over half of the participants (55 percent) for whom 2006 ELA scores were available scored at ELA Level 2 in winter 2006, the year prior to program implementation. Twenty-eight percent scored at ELA Level 3 and 15 percent scored at ELA Level 1, with the remaining 3 percent scoring at ELA Level 4. Some programs were more successful than others in recruiting Level 2 participants, and all programs were generally successful at recruiting sixth-graders. Just over three-quarters (76 percent) of the program participants were sixth-graders, and 20 percent were seventh-graders. The remaining participants were either fifth-graders or eighth-graders. Twenty-two percent of the participants were classified as English language learners, with almost all of these participants concentrated in three programs.

Contact hours. The programs were generally up and running by November 2006, although program records indicate that enrollment of new participants continued into March 2007. Program activities typically continued until the end of the school year, resulting in approximately seven months of program activities and services. Based on program reports from this period, the total number of contact hours ranged from 105 to 433, with four programs reporting providing more than 215 hours of services, three reporting 150 to 175 hours of services, and four reporting 105 to 130 hours of services. The reported numbers of contact hours include all program service hours offered over the course of the program year, whether or not they were literacy-related. Data from site visits do, however, suggest that almost all of the contact hours were allocated to literacy-related activities, including explicit literacy instruction and project-based activities designed to foster the development of literacy skills and to foster interest in learning.

Program attendance. The evaluation examined two dimensions of attendance: frequency and duration. Sixty-eight percent of participants attended 100 or fewer hours of program activities, and 38 percent attended fewer than 50 hours of program activities. At the other end of the spectrum, 15 percent of participants attended more than 200 hours of program activities, and 11 percent attended more than 300 hours. Looking across individual programs, the median hours of attendance ranged from a high of 332 hours to a low of 24 hours. Eight programs had medians of 66 or fewer hours.

Focusing on the duration of participation, more than half of participants in seven programs attended five or six months, with one program retaining all of its participants for six months. The remaining programs retained the majority of participants for four months or less. Two programs achieved relatively high median hours of attendance while holding on to participants for long periods of time.

An Early Look at Participant Outcomes

The evaluation looked at two outcome indicators: scores on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment and results from the Readers' Self Perception Scale (RSPS). The analyses of these indicators are based on incomplete data, and they do not compare the results achieved by program participants with matched samples of other youth who did not participate in the programs. Thus, the key findings from these analyses, which follow here, are suggestive and not definitive.

- Among participants who completed the DIBELS testing cycle (N=105 out of 307), Oral Reading Fluency scores on the narrative portion of the DIBELS improved.

- Although their scores on the narrative portion of the DIBELS improved, participant gains generally did not outpace the gains normally expected for youth at their grade level, and some participants continued to fall behind.
- On the expository portion of the DIBELS, participants' mean correct words-per-minute score declined by 8.4 words per minute between the first and third administrations.
- Among participants who completed the RSPS at both administrations (N=116), the evaluation found statistically significant increases in the mean score on two of the four RSPS scales: Observational Comparison and Social Feedback.

As called for in the evaluation design, the evaluation also examined changes in participants' ELA scores between the 2006 and 2007 test points. However, because the 2007 ELA assessment was administered only six weeks into the program year, these scores are not good indicators of program outcomes or effectiveness in the first year of implementation. The results of the analyses of ELA scores are presented in Appendix A.

Concluding Observations and Recommendations for Continued Development of the Adolescent Literacy Initiative

The start-up year of DYCD's Adolescent Literacy Initiative was marked by some promising successes. Consistent with DYCD's ambitions for the initiative, the 11 funded programs implemented varied approaches to helping struggling adolescent readers improve their literacy skills. In addition, several programs found effective ways of "holding" participants over five or six months of program operations, thereby increasing the likelihood that these youth could benefit from the programs' literacy learning activities and services.

Programs also faced significant challenges. One challenge was establishing supportive working relationships with the host schools. All but one of the programs managed to establish such a relationship, and some were especially successful. These positive relationships were marked by ongoing and frequent communications between program directors and principals and less often with other school staff. Hiring teachers from the host schools also appeared to contribute to these working relationships, but doing so did not guarantee that the relationships would be strong.

Despite the successes of some programs, attracting and retaining participants proved to be a challenge. Some programs had to identify and recruit participants without much help from the host schools. Second, although early program efforts to help participants prepare for the ELA assessment attracted

some youth, interest sometimes waned after the test in mid-January. Project-based learning activities and the promise of opportunities to participate in supplementary recreational activities helped to attract and hold some participants, but the participation patterns suggest that this attraction was not strong for other youth.

The evaluation found that program directors and staff brought varied experiences to the programs and that staffing patterns were generally consistent with programs' overall approach to literacy instruction. At the same time, the fact that many programs took advantage of staff turnover at the end of the program year to hire staff with more classroom experience suggests that program directors came to view such experience as an asset.

In terms of literacy learning outcomes, it is too soon to judge the programs. Program directors and staff point to various products developed by participants as indicators of literacy learning, although these accounts are anecdotal. Participants in several of the traditional programs achieved positive results on the DIBELS, although the paucity of complete data on reading fluency in other programs, especially the theme-based programs, makes any conclusions about the effectiveness of particular configurations of program activities and services speculative and of limited use in program planning, at least in the short term.

Following these conclusions, the evaluation team offers the following recommendations for subsequent development of DYCD's adolescent literacy initiative.

Recommendation 1: Program providers and directors should continue working to forge strong working relationships with host schools, with special attention to forging channels of communications, including regular meetings for identifying and recruiting participants and reaching agreement about the alignment and coordination of after-school literacy activities with school-based ELA programs.

Recommendation 2: With encouragement and support from DYCD, programs should identify and track participant attainment of program-specific literacy outcomes (e.g., writing poems, short stories, and newsletters; applying computer skills to literacy learning tasks) in addition to monitoring participants' performance on formal assessments.

Recommendation 3: DYCD should work with provider organizations to ensure that each program funded under this initiative is included in DYCD Online, the agency's comprehensive management information system.

Recommendation 4: DYCD and program providers should continue to ensure that frontline staff and program directors have adequate professional development opportunities.

1. Overview of the Development of the Adolescent Literacy Initiative

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE) estimate that a third to a half of young adolescents in grades 6-8 in New York City read and write below grade level. In the short term, poor literacy skills can prevent these students from advancing to the next grade. More important, inadequate literacy skills make it difficult for these students to succeed in school. Moreover, the lack of success undermines their interest in staying in school. Over the longer term, poor literacy skills limit students' opportunities for good jobs and careers.

To begin to address this problem, DYCD launched the Adolescent Literacy Initiative in summer 2006 and asked Policy Studies Associates to evaluate the first year of implementation.¹ This section of the evaluation report provides a brief overview of the development of DYCD's Adolescent Literacy Initiative and its goals as part of a strategy to reduce the problems associated with limited literacy skills among young adolescents. Subsequent sections describe the plans for the evaluation and present findings about (1) program design and organization; (2) recruitment of participants, contact hours, and program attendance; and (3) early indicators of program success. The last section offers concluding observations and recommendations for how DYCD and the programs can work together to strengthen adolescent literacy services.

In summer 2006, DYCD awarded three-year contracts to eight experienced providers to plan and implement 11 school-based adolescent literacy after-school programs.² Together, these programs provided literacy-related services to just over 300 middle-school students during the start-up year.

As described in DYCD's Request for Proposals (RFP), the agency's goal in establishing the initiative was to "identify research-based program models appropriate for providing reading and writing instruction to an adolescent population." The expectation was that the 2006-2007 school year would be a start-up year and that providers would target services to sixth-graders who, as fifth-graders (in 2005-2006), had scored at Level 2 (Basic) on the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment at the January 2006 test point. Drawing on recommendations in *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (2004), a report to the Carnegie Corporation prepared by literacy researchers Gina Biancarosa and Catherine Snow, as well as other sources, DYCD called on the providers to offer a mix of explicit literacy

¹ The formal title of this initiative is the Adolescent Literacy Services Program, although it is generally referred to as the Adolescent Literacy Initiative.

² One provider was awarded contracts to operate three separate programs and a second provider received two contracts.

instruction and other activities to foster the development of literacy skills.³ Providers were required to offer a minimum of five hours per week of explicit literacy instruction, including three and a half hours of reading instruction and one and a half hours of writing instruction. In addition, they were expected to rely on individual or small-group instructional strategies that included no more than five participants per group. DYCD also required providers to:

- Establish formal linkage agreements to ensure collaboration with host schools in order to assess student learning needs and to plan services to complement and extend, but not replicate, school instructional activities
- Involve parents in program planning and in assessing student progress
- Implement strategies to assist student progression to more challenging learning tasks associated with success in high school, where youth are presumed to have the literacy skills necessary to read, comprehend, and communicate about more complex instructional content
- Incorporate a minimum of 12 hours of professional development for instructional staff into program activities each year and convene regular meetings in which program staff can share information and instructional strategies
- Participate in regular meetings with DYCD to learn about best practices and to address issues related to providing high-quality literacy services

The goals for the initiative as well as the requirements and expectations for providers were ambitious. They were also somewhat unique in after-school programming and practices. Many after-school programs, including many of those supported under DYCD's Out-of-School Time Program for Youth, include components that focus on developing literacy skills. Uniquely, this initiative focused on literacy instruction as the core after-school service, with the expectation, described in the RFP, that these programs would foster improvement of participants' literacy skills as reflected in improved scores on standardized assessments.

This report examines how programs funded under this initiative fared in their first year of implementation.

³ Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C.E. (2006) *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (Second edition). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. Dr. Biancarosa also served as a consultant to the initiative and provided training and technical assistance to the funded programs.

2. Evaluation Design

This section describes the overall approach to the evaluation, including the theory of change and research questions that guided the evaluation and the evaluation's data collection activities.

Theory of Change

As noted above, DYCD's plans for the initiative drew heavily on *Reading Next*, which spells out key organizational and instructional elements of effective adolescent literacy programs. These elements, which are derived from research findings about effective practices in reading instruction, are reflected in the theory of change developed to guide the evaluation.⁴ (See Exhibit 1.)

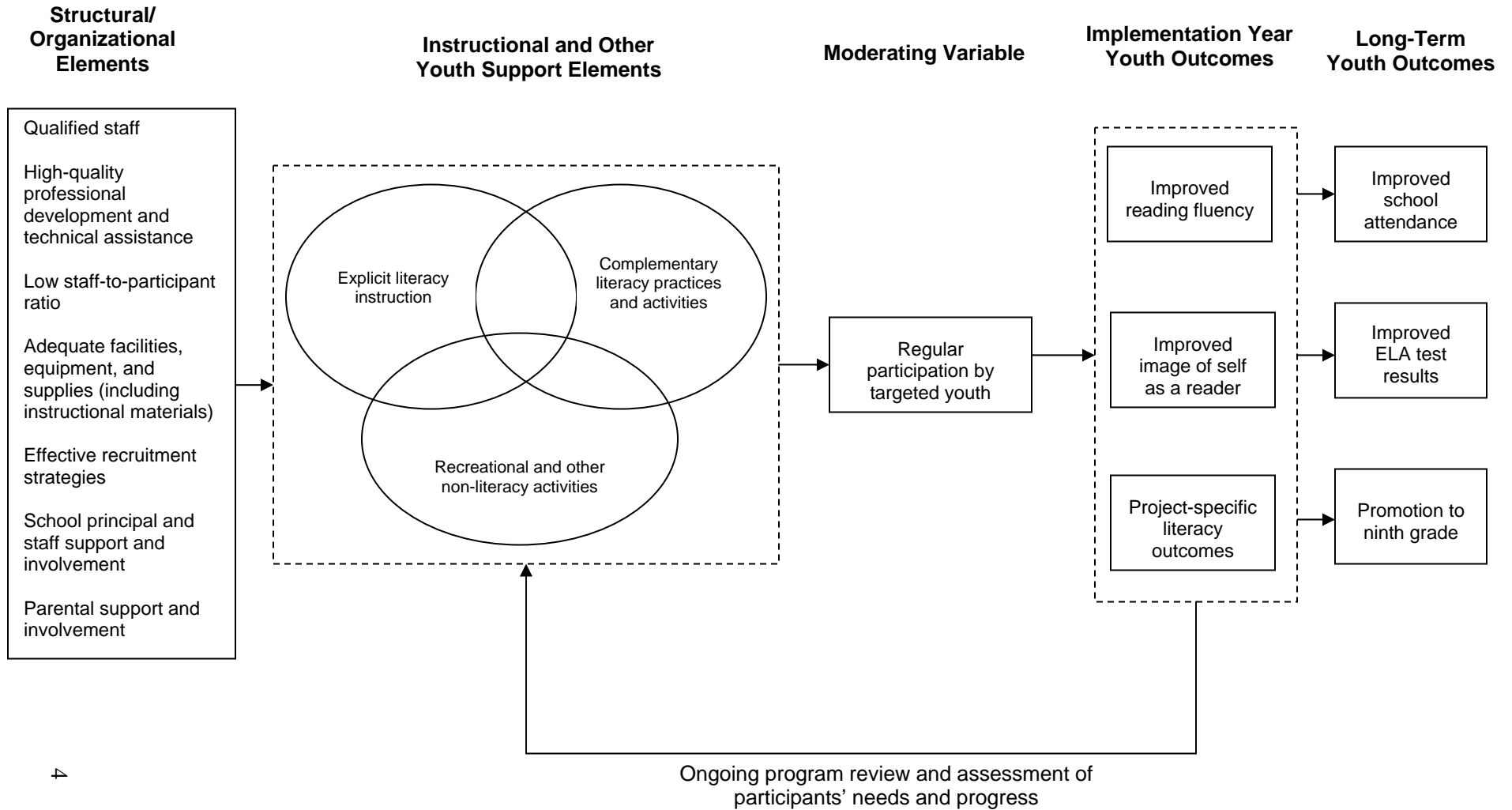
Beginning on the left side of the exhibit, the theory of change posits seven structural/organizational elements needed to ensure program effectiveness. The DYCD request for proposals required bidders to explain their plans for integrating each of these elements into their programs. The second column of the exhibit, "Instructional and Other Youth Support Elements," indicates that each program's portfolio of services should include a mix of explicit literacy instruction and other literacy-focused activities (e.g., theater, extensive computer use, community ethnography), and some non-literacy activities (e.g., sports, games, clubs).

As with most out-of-school time programs, a challenge that these programs face is ensuring that youth participate frequently and for sufficiently long periods of time to attain the intended benefits of the program. Thus, the theory of change posits that attainment of intended program outcomes will be shaped by the level of participation (the moderating variable included in the third column of the model).

As depicted in the fourth column, "Implementation Year Youth Outcomes," the design for the first year of the initiative includes two main literacy outcomes: (1) improved reading fluency, as measured by improved scores on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and (2) improved image of self as a reader, as reflected in changes in scores on the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS). DYCD chose these two assessments because the instruments are (1) relatively easy to administer, (2) do not require much time, and (3) measure key factors that contribute to reading comprehension. These assessments have the added advantage of having national norms that can be used in gauging participants' progress compared with other youth. Following training by the initiative's consultant, program staff were expected to administer the

⁴ This theory of change was developed to depict a full multi-year cycle of program maturation and outcomes. Thus, the outcomes depicted in the last column on the right side of the model should be viewed as the foci of longer-term implementation.

Exhibit 1 DYCD Adolescent Literacy Initiative Theory of Change



DIBELS three times during the first year of operation. They were expected to administer the RSPS twice during the same period. In addition, as the theory of change suggests, programs could identify and track other program-specific youth outcomes. Finally, as the arrow across the bottom of the model indicates, the initiative assumes that individual programs will continuously track youth progress and outcomes and will use the results to modify activities and services to ensure positive results.

The last column in the exhibit suggests that discernible changes in school attendance, ELA scores, and rates of promotion to the ninth grade will occur as the programs mature in successive years of operation.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the first year of the initiative was designed to address the following four questions to test the theory of change and the assumptions on which it rests:

1. Do the literacy-learning experiences provided to program participants meet reasonable expectations for quality, given the supplementary, voluntary nature of the programs? As noted above, DYCD's RFP specified that providers were to provide a minimum of five hours per week of literacy-related activities and services, with at least 3.5 hours devoted to instruction in reading and 1.5 hours devoted to instruction in writing. Programs were also required to provide explicit literacy instruction, complemented by other activities that reflected each program's approach. Understanding that the intended participants needed individualized instruction, DYCD expected programs to organize instructional activities to provide a 1:5 instructor-to-participant ratio and to maintain program enrollments of 25 youths. This evaluation concentrated on (1) describing the characteristics of providers' portfolios of literacy activities and services and (2) ascertaining whether any particular configurations showed more promise than others in improving participant literacy skills as measured by the program's two primary outcome indicators.

2. Do individual programs attract and retain intended participants at levels that permit sufficient program exposure to improve their literacy skills? This question has three parts: Do programs attract and retain middle school students (mainly sixth-graders in the start-up year) whose literacy skills are at Level 2 (i.e., below the level considered proficient for their grade but not at the very lowest level)? Do programs promote levels of participation that appear sufficient to offer promise of success in achieving significant improvement in one or more literacy skill areas? Do scores on the initiative's assessments suggest that participants' literacy skills are improving?

3. Which program components or configurations of components offer the greatest promise of effectiveness in improving participants' literacy skills?

The initiative affords providers flexibility in the design of individual programs. Therefore, as noted above, an important task of the evaluation was to document the site-level similarities and differences in design and student participation, in order to identify the program components that are most and least closely associated with instructional coherence and high student participation.

4. What forms of technical assistance and professional development are necessary to support and enhance program quality?

Plans for the initiative included technical assistance and professional development for program directors and staff. In the first year, program directors were expected to frequently review progress and to work together on solutions to common concerns (e.g., increasing recruitment and retention, building solid partnerships with school staff, assessing participants' literacy outcomes). In addition, the DYCD RFP required that program staff participate in at least 12 hours of professional development in each program year.

Data Collection

To address the four research questions, the evaluation team collected data on program implementation, youth participation, and the youth outcomes specified by DYCD. Specifically, data collection included the following:

1. Survey of adolescent literacy program directors. The evaluation team surveyed the program directors working on site in each of the 11 adolescent literacy programs. (The print version of the online survey instrument is included in Appendix B.) This survey included questions on program goals and activities, working relationships with school leaders and staff, recruitment, program staff qualifications, and training and professional development available from DYCD and other providers. The survey was administered in March 2007. It should be noted that shortly after survey administration, three of the adolescent literacy programs made significant changes in their services and schedules. These changes, which also resulted in changes in participants, were not captured in the survey results.

2. Site visits and follow-up telephone interviews. Depending on the number of participants enrolled in the program, one or two members of the evaluation team visited each program site in April or May 2007. Site visits included semi-structured interviews with program directors, program staff, and principals and teachers in the partner schools. The site visitors also attempted to interview participants and their parents, although scheduling problems interfered with these plans in seven sites. Site visits also included structured observations of literacy-related activities and services.

As a follow-up to the spring site visits and the review of DYCD records and program materials discussed below, the evaluation team conducted telephone interviews with 10 of the 11 program directors in late September and early October 2007. These interviews, which were not included in the original evaluation design, focused on what program directors saw as key accomplishments in the first year, challenges and lessons learned, and changes in program design and goals for the second year of operations.

3. Review of DYCD records and program materials. DYCD required programs to provide monthly reports on enrollment and participation. In addition, programs provided the results from three administrations of the DIBELS (in fall, winter, and spring) and two administrations of the RSPS (in fall and spring). DYCD also made the providers' proposals for support, submitted in response to DYCD's RFP, available to the evaluation team.

4. Analysis of New York City Department of Education (DOE) student data. Upon receipt of formal approval from the Proposal Review Committee of DOE's Office of Accountability and Assessment, the evaluation team requested and received (1) basic demographic information, (2) ELA scores from the 2006 and 2007 tests, and (3) school attendance data for all program participants. In analyses, participant data from DYCD were matched with the DOE data to permit analysis of changes in ELA scores, although as noted above, these analyses were not a focus of the evaluation.

Because the primary focus of the evaluation was early implementation of the adolescent literacy programs, the design did not include selection of comparison groups of students to assess program effectiveness as reflected in changes in DIBELS and RSPS scores across treatment and comparison groups.

3. Program Design and Organization

Despite the fact that DYCD operates the largest municipally-funded out-of-school initiative in the county and that organizations selected to provide adolescent literacy services have track records in operating out-of-school time programs, this initiative represented a venture into somewhat uncharted territory. The focus on improving the literacy skills of struggling middle school readers and providing explicit literacy instruction called for special capacity and skills as well as solid working relationships with both school leaders and instructional staff. Targeting struggling young adolescent readers made it critical to create program activities that were appealing, somehow different from school, and, at the same time, likely to result in improved literacy skills as measured by standardized assessments.

This section of the evaluation report presents findings about the programs' approaches to literacy instruction, relationships with host schools, staffing, and professional development for frontline staff and program directors.

Program Approaches to Literacy Instruction

Consistent with DYCD's expectations, the 11 programs funded under this initiative demonstrated varied approaches to helping young adolescents develop their literacy skills. Moreover, all of them featured a substantial amount of explicit literacy instruction as a key component of their strategies. A review of providers' proposals and data from the site visits suggests that one way of characterizing the programs is to distinguish between those that were theme-based and those that adopted a more traditional approach to literacy instruction.

Six of the funded programs were theme-based and provided literacy learning experiences grounded in the use of technology (Technology Corner), study of the urban environment (Urban Vistas), and theater (Theater in Schools 1, Theater in Schools 2, Theater in Schools 3, and Reader's Theater).⁵ The following two profiles provide an overview of literacy learning approaches used by two of the theme-based programs, Technology Corner and Urban Vistas.

Technology Corner relied on a sophisticated software package, created from open-source software by the program provider, to immerse participants in varied literacy learning activities aimed at developing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills and at helping them understand the everyday need for literacy skills. The program year began with instruction in word-processing and other computer skills in tandem with instruction in basic literacy skills. Participants spent the school year

⁵ Under the terms of the confidentiality agreement approved by the DOE as a condition for data collection, this report does not identify host schools by name. To further protect confidentiality, the report uses pseudonyms to label the individual programs.

working on a project that culminated in the development of a website. Along the way, daily program activities included reviewing print materials related to the project, writing and revising popular music, interacting with other participants, and, finally, posting reviews on the website. Program staff used the interactive software to create lessons, review and provide feedback on participant work, and communicate among themselves about plans for learning activities and participants' progress. According to the program director, literacy learning activities in the second year will take participants outside the program's computer lab to collect information for a project focused on life in their community.

Urban Vistas helped participants develop their literacy skills while learning about their community. Beginning in early spring, participants read *Seed Folks* by Paul Fleishman. The book, which contains realistic and mature themes, describes the creation of a garden on an abandoned plot by 13 inner-city neighbors from various ethnic backgrounds and with different personal histories. The book provides rich descriptions of each of the characters and details how they came to know each other around the garden plot, which is a metaphor for a community. In addition to reading the book, Urban Vistas participants worked together to plant and tend their own urban garden, took field trips into the surrounding community, and developed their own characters as inspired by their reading. In addition to reading, program activities included instruction and practice in the steps in writing as participants developed their characters. Together, the Paul Fleishman book and the group's own garden provided much of the glue that held program activities together over time.

Other programs (Literacy Lab, Community Readers, Afternoon Literacy, Reading Buddies, and Literacy Partners) adopted more traditional approaches to literacy instruction and the development of literacy skills. These programs relied more on packaged materials and highly structured instructional activities than did the theme-based programs. In addition, as the second of the following two profiles illustrates, some also provided opportunities for participation in other kinds of literacy-related activities, including clubs organized by program staff to complement more explicit literacy instruction.

Community Readers specifically targeted English language learners (ELL) and recent immigrants. Frontline program staff, all of whom were ELL teachers in the host school, assigned participants to small groups based on their English skills. Instructional activities, portions of which were conducted in Spanish, relied on workbooks and on hand-held video game devices to provide basic literacy instruction, with mini-lessons focusing on grammar and reading comprehension. Literacy programming was bracketed two days a week by wrap-around programming that included sports and arts activities.

Reading Buddies combined highly structured instruction with electives to help participants improve their reading, writing, and organizational skills. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, program staff used two packaged programs, REWARDS and Learning 100, to provide highly structured literacy learning activities tailored for individual participants. On Wednesdays and Fridays, youth participated in electives that they selected when they enrolled. With extensive direction and supervision from program staff, these activities afforded opportunities for participants to apply their developing literacy skills to real-world tasks. In 2006-2007, electives included literacy-related activities such as work on a school newsletter and a comic strip.

Because the evaluation team's observations of instructional activities provided a snapshot of the programs' approaches to literacy instruction at isolated points in time, the evaluation's on-site observations do not provide a comprehensive review of the programs' approaches to literacy instruction. However, using the observational data to look across the instructional activities in the programs, several themes emerged.

The content of the instructional activities was generally consistent with the programs' overall approach to literacy instruction. Thus, as the foregoing examples illustrate, the theme-based programs consistently used theme-related content to help participants improve their literacy skills. The more traditional programs typically relied on off-the-shelf materials and direct instruction to foster the development of basic literacy skills.

Several programs, including the theme-based programs and some of the traditional programs, employed project-based learning in some program activities. One example was the development of a website by participants in the Technology Corner program. Other examples included writing and publishing comic books and a school newsletter by participants in Reading Buddies, and the preparation and production of short dramatic presentations by participants in Reader's Theater and the three Theater in Schools programs. Staff in Literacy Partners organized clubs focused on literacy-related activities that they thought would be appealing to participants and would extend their literacy learning.

These activities consistently offered participants opportunities to enhance and apply literacy skills in real-life settings and in appealing activities. Program staff concluded that these activities helped engage participants in literacy learning and were, more generally, part of the programs' holding power. Program staff also concluded that completion of these projects left participants with a sense of pride and accomplishment, an outcome that can be very important to young adolescents who have not experienced much success in school. In follow-up interviews, several program directors pointed to the preparation of the various products as key accomplishments of their program and suggested that these products were indicators of increased literacy skills.

Some project staff noted that uneven attendance made it difficult to sustain project-based learning activities over time. Indeed, at the time of the spring site visits, some had concluded that they needed to shorten the duration of the project-based teaching and learning activities to ensure that participants could complete projects. One project director, looking ahead to the second year of operations, noted:

One thing we have learned in terms of designing curriculum and different projects is that what works best is to have short lessons and projects, things that students can start and finish in one day. This also lets us add variation to our programming. Changing formats and offering variety are important.

Several other project directors noted that they planned to shorten the duration of individual project-based activities in the second year and also to introduce more options to participants.

Programs were generally able to maintain low staff-to-participant ratios in all or almost all instructional activities. Typically, the ratio of staff to participants was between 1-to-5 and 1-to-7, with even lower ratios in some programs. These patterns meant that staff could tailor instruction to individual participants and that they could monitor learning gains as well as problems.

A final and somewhat tentative observation is that alignment and coordination of programs' literacy learning activities with ELA instruction in the host schools were uneven. Programs did not have clear standards or expectations for how their approaches to literacy instruction were to be aligned or coordinated with ELA instruction in the host schools. On the plus side, many, if not all, of the programs' literacy-related activities had the potential to enrich and extend the curriculum in ways that young adolescents who are struggling readers could find appealing and that could, in fact, improve their literacy skills. Alternatively, it is possible that the lack of explicit connection to the regular instructional programs meant that participants experienced classroom learning and program learning as separate and unrelated and did not understand that the skills that they were developing in the after-school programs might transfer easily into their school experiences. A third possibility is that the literacy knowledge and skills developed in the after-school programs did not, in fact, transfer easily into learning activities that took place in the regular school day.

The evaluation did not conduct a detailed analysis of the substantive alignment and coordination between the adolescent literacy programs and ELA instruction in the host schools. However, as the following discussions of working relationships between the programs and the host schools and staffing changes at the end of the start-up year suggest, alignment and coordination are areas in which more review and discussion may be warranted.

Working Relationships with Host Schools

One of the keys to the success of any school-based out-of-school time program is the working relationship between the program director and frontline staff and the principal and staff in the host school. Committed and involved school principals and staff can, among other things, contribute to recruitment and retention of participants, ensure the availability of adequate facilities for program activities and operations, provide information on student learning needs and progress, communicate about instructional programs and curricula, recruit parents as partners in their children's learning, and contribute to program planning and design. In turn, program staff can learn from the information provided by school staff and communicate about program activities and participant progress.

Based on interview data and survey results, the evaluation found that 10 of the 11 funded programs established generally positive working relationships with the host schools during the first year of operations. Five of these partnerships were especially supportive, as reflected by close collaboration between program staff and school leaders and teachers in initial planning and ongoing operations. The remaining program struggled with a very weak, almost non-existent relationship with the host school throughout the start-up year.

Positive working relationships began early, during the planning stages. As one principal explained:

We sat three times to discuss the vision, mission, and purpose of the program. I talked about why I wanted this [adolescent literacy program] ... and what would we want to accomplish in the end. We also involved the sixth-grade teachers and the literacy coach in the planning. So [the provider] wrote the grant [application] and we said let's give it a whirl.

In addition, positive working relationships include frequent communications. Program directors and principals who had established especially strong working relationships reported meeting frequently, sometimes as often as every day or two or three times a week, to discuss program-related matters. Overall, in response to a survey item about how often they discuss various topics with principals and other school staff, program directors typically reported that they did so as needed, although several reported discussing these issues at least two or three times a month.

Even when they worked together well, program directors and principals acknowledged that these sessions were not always productive and that it was difficult to sustain the communications over time. As one principal said:

We need to meet more formally with the program director and staff. We need to establish a meeting schedule and keep to it. The time is there, but we need to block it out and really do it. I should have taken it on and

established formal meetings, but I let the ball drop. We had done that [established a regular meeting schedule] but we haven't kept to it and the teachers aren't available during the day at that time that we could meet. We just let other things get in the way of our meetings.

This principal vowed to do better as the program moved into the second year.

In two of the program sites, the working relationships between the programs and the host schools benefitted from the fact that the adolescent literacy program director held other assignments in the host school. In one case, the program director directed several after-school programs in the school, as well as the DYCD-funded adolescent literacy program, and, by virtue of her position, was a member of the School Leadership Team. This program director described her omnibus responsibilities and their payoff as follows:

I work closely with the principal. It's hard to define what I do because I do different things all of the time.... I do a lot of coordinating of events, and I am part of the school's advisory board, and we do fund raising and partnership creation, and we work hard to bring others into the school. This is a very supportive place. I work with the principal and teachers on a wide variety of things, and anytime I need help with anything, I get it. Anytime I need equipment, I get it.

At the other end of the spectrum, the principal of the host school where there was no relationship with the program complained about the lack of communication and, not surprisingly, reported knowing almost nothing about the program. Staff from the provider organization and program staff tried without success to contact the principal throughout the year. The net result was that the program operated in almost complete isolation in the school, as staff struggled with problems such as not having a key to the room assigned to the program and a lack of adequate maintenance of the program space. In the fall follow-up interview, a program manager in the provider organization reported that program staff were observing in classrooms and meeting with teachers to learn more about ELA instruction and to try to forge a stronger relationship with school staff. Year 2 program activities were not yet underway at the time of follow-up interview so it was not possible to determine whether or how the interactions with school staff would pay off.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, there does not appear to be a clearly defined formula for supportive working relationships between adolescent literacy programs and the host schools. Indeed, where the relationships are the strongest, they look quite fluid, with program directors taking on many tasks and responsibilities. Adolescent literacy programs can and do operate with less-than-ideal relationships, but program operations and activities clearly proceed more smoothly when relationships are strong.

Program Staff

Based on the directors' survey and the site visits, the evaluation found considerable variation in program staffing, with staff configurations and experience generally reflecting the program's design and approach to providing literacy-related activities and services. In addition, as the report discusses in more detail below, the evaluation found that there was considerable turnover in staff at the end of the first year of operations and, that, in some cases, the changes in staffing reflected changes in the overall approach to program activities and services.

As a group, the 11 program directors who completed the surveys brought many types of experience to their roles. Ten had worked as classroom teachers, five reported two or more years of experience as a director of an after-school program, one had a year of experience, and five had no previous experience as a program director. All but one reported a year or more of experience as a staff member in an after-school program. Relatively few reported experience as administrators in schools, social service organizations, or recreation programs.

In terms of frontline staff, the programs that adopted a more traditional approach to literacy instruction also were more likely to hire teachers from the host schools to provide these services. Three of the theme-based programs (Urban Vistas, Technology Corner, and Reader's Theater) employed certified teachers, but many of the program activities were provided by other staff who were not certified teachers.⁶ Consistent with their overall approach to literacy instruction, all four theater-oriented programs employed staff who were actors or had other experience in theater. These staff, all of whom had college degrees, had some experience in working with youth in educational settings but relatively little experience in explicit literacy instruction in classroom settings. Technology Corner hired doctoral students to carry out most of its instructional activities, with the provider organization providing extensive training on the program model and hardware and software. Urban Vistas hired a certified ELA teacher from another state. The program director also reported that the program had tried very hard to hire an ELA teacher from the host school to work in the program, but for many reasons, none of the teachers was able to take the job.

Reading Buddies relied almost exclusively on college freshman and high school seniors to provide literacy instruction, oversee participants' work on their projects, and serve as role models for younger youth. In this case, the tutors worked under the close supervision of the program director, who was always present on site and who provided extensive training and support to the tutors through the course of the year. The three Theater in Schools programs also included tutoring as part of their program designs, but the work of the tutors

⁶ The DYCD RFP did not require that frontline staff be certified teachers; it did, however, require that directors and key staff have three years of successful experience in providing adolescent literacy services during the past five years.

was not closely tied to the theater focus of the program and, at the time of the site visits, the tutoring activities had either ceased or become completely disconnected from the central literacy activities of the program. (Subsequently, the tutoring component was dropped entirely as these three programs moved into their second year of operation.)

Program directors' survey responses suggest that a majority did not see staffing issues as challenges to implementing high-quality programming. Among those who did report such challenges, five reported that hiring qualified staff was a "minor challenge." Five reported that finding "volunteers with the time and expertise needed to help our program" was a major or minor challenge, and four reported that being able "to afford to offer competitive salaries necessary to hire qualified staff" was either a major or minor challenge. On a second salary-related issue, three directors reported that being able to "afford to offer potential staff enough hours of paid employment" was a major challenge.

As they looked ahead to the second year of program operation, directors of seven programs reported replacing all or almost all of the frontline staff. Although these directors did not indicate why staff left, several said that they took advantage of the departures to hire staff with somewhat different skill sets. One program director explained his hiring decisions this way:

We have all new staff this year [2007-2008]. I felt that our [previous] staff was highly motivated and had interesting ideas, but they hadn't really worked with students in school settings. They struggled with classroom management even though class size was small. That was their biggest struggle coming into a school. This time, I really looked for people who had an understanding of classroom management and their roles and responsibilities for effective classroom management.

During the site visit, the principal of one of the schools that hosted a theater program offered the following observations about the program staff:

As drama teachers, [the staff] are highly qualified.... But it's my responsibility to bring them closer to understanding how to connect the academics for the kids with drama.... Had I been involved in hiring, I would have seen that they needed support, and I would have organized professional development workshops before they started working with children.... I have also seen that neither the drama teachers nor the regular teachers understand adolescent development, especially [the problems facing] struggling readers. The problem is that our literacy teacher understands literacy and the theater people understand theater, but everyone needs to be learning about working with teenagers.

Six months later and almost as if in direct response to the principal's concerns, the director described the program's new staff as follows:

Last year, it was difficult to get the teachers to learn about theater and artists to learn about literacy. This year our staff is a mix of licensed teachers, literacy experts, and teaching artists. I have one person who is a literacy and theater expert who serves as the bridge between these two worlds within the staff. We didn't have that last year. I have another person who is working on a master's degree in theater education and is focusing on getting a teaching certificate.

The other director of theater-related programs also reported hiring a completely new staff, including six actor-teachers, a floater actor-teacher, and an education specialist. In contrast to the first year of program operations, all of the actor-teachers slated to work in the second year have at least some classroom experience although none are certified teachers.

According to the directors of the remaining programs, staffing was relatively stable as the second year got underway. One director did, however, report that she was considering changes pending the results from early assessments of participant progress and her observation of how well the participants got along with the staff.

Staff turnover in after-school programs is not unusual, and the turnover observed in the adolescent literacy initiative does not appear to indicate tensions or turmoil within the programs. At the same time it is perhaps significant that directors of five of the programs, including the four theater-focused programs, used the opportunity to fill staff positions to recruit staff with more classroom experience. In two of the programs, these changes did not signal a shift in basic program philosophy, although they may have indicated a shift toward increased attention to explicit literacy instruction and the integration of more traditional approaches to these components of program activities and services. In the remaining three programs, the changes accompanied a more significant change in program strategy, as the provider organization assigned staff to work as partners with teachers in their classrooms during the regular school day. After noting that "we learned our lesson last year...after-school literacy programs don't work," the director of these programs explained the staff's new role and the program strategy this way:

We will be there as resources and do what needs to be done to teach the [ELA] standards. We will help the teachers unpack the standards, but we will not have a set program. Even though we will teach the standards, we will not help [students] get ready for the ELA test in January.

A serious downside of this arrangement is that it disregards a fundamental operational and instructional goal of after-school literacy programs: adding instructional time to help struggling adolescent readers catch up with their more successful peers.

Professional Development for Program Staff

In anticipation of the need for professional development to support program activities, DYCD required funded programs to ensure that staff participated in at least 12 hours of professional development each year. The agency also used regular meetings of the program directors as opportunities for professional development on adolescent literacy practices and assessment.

In survey responses, 10 directors reported that they and their staffs had participated in at least some professional development during the start-up year. Ten directors reported participating in professional development on assessing participant outcomes, and nine reported participating in activities focused on program operations and management.⁷ Other frequently mentioned professional development topics included integrating literacy learning into diverse content, literacy instruction and learning, maintaining healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practice, and family and community engagement. Directors also reported that staff participated in professional development on more of these topics than did the directors themselves. In terms of format, directors and staff typically participated in traditional workshops or meetings in which a substantial portion of the agenda included professional learning activities. Three directors reported participating in site-based technical assistance from DYCD or some other source.

Directors offered different overall ratings of the professional development in which they and their staffs participated. Seven considered the professional development to have been a good start. Two said that these activities served their purposes completely and one said that the professional development “did not provide sufficient information or guidance to enable us to follow up or to implement new strategies.”

During site visits, program staff shared examples of what they considered to have been useful professional development activities. Two examples in particular stand out. In one, the provider organization that operates the Technology Corner program provided extensive training to the program’s lead teacher and to the graduate student tutors who served as the program’s frontline staff. At the beginning of the program year, the lead teacher, who was a teacher in the host school, joined with lead teachers from other programs operated by the provider in four days of workshops to prepare them to use the program software and to understand the program’s approach to literacy instruction. In a fifth day of training, provider staff visited the teacher in her classroom to observe and provide feedback on instruction. During the program year, the teacher met weekly with the program director to review progress and to discuss problems and possible solutions. In addition, the teacher joined teachers from other program sites in three focus groups that provided opportunities for reflection on progress in

⁷ The evaluation data do not indicate the amount of time spent on these topics or organizations and individuals that were the sources of the professional development.

implementing the program model and ideas about how to cope with problems. The graduate student tutors also participated in four days of training at the beginning of the program year, and they met with the teacher and program director once a week to review progress and solve problems.

In the second example, the director of Reading Buddies organized an intensive two-week training session prior to beginning program operations, in order to familiarize the program's tutors with their responsibilities and the instructional programs and materials that they would use in their instructional activities. Tutors also learned how to develop lesson plans and basic classroom management strategies. In addition, the program director met with the tutors daily for a half hour before the program got underway. These sessions were opportunities to review lesson plans, to tailor activities to individual participant needs, and to address problems. The tutors reported that they felt confident about their work as a result of these sessions, and the principal of the host school also noted that the tutors were well prepared for their assignments.

What these two examples share in common is (1) the overall amount of training that staff received, amounts that were far in excess of the 12 hours expected by DYCD; (2) the focus on understanding program designs and the assumptions about literacy instruction on which they rest; and (3) sustained opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and collaborate on ways to improve it.

Staff in the Theater in Schools programs reported spending half a day a week in the provider's offices to plan upcoming activities; to review what had worked and what hadn't worked during the past week; to examine participants' work and progress; and to identify and solve problems. Staff in several other programs pointed to ongoing reviews of participant work samples as a way of monitoring progress and determining how to improve program activities. Finally, in the follow-up interviews, two program directors reported that part of the preparations for the second year of operations included program staff observing ELA instruction in the host schools. The purpose of these observations was to help staff determine ways that program activities might complement and extend the school-based instruction. In addition, these observations helped staff learn about potential participants' literacy learning needs.

Although program directors and staff tended to describe many of the activities discussed here as part of ongoing planning and quality assurance efforts, attending to problem solving and linking a review of participant work with program planning can also serve as valuable professional learning opportunities. Moreover, it is likely that the fact that at least some of these sessions were driven by staff questions and concerns meant that staff were more active participants in these sessions and gained more from them. An additional strength of these arrangements was that they were typically defined as part of staff's regular responsibilities and were part of the regular work schedule. Not only did this

make it easier for staff to participate, but it also conveyed a message about the importance of these activities.

Despite some promising efforts, program-based professional development was not always adequate. According to one program director:

We have staff meetings on Fridays, but there have been few training sessions and that is my fault. I feel like I should have done more formal trainings at the beginning of the year, so we could have focused on those things that would have gotten us started. We've had some trainings on program issues [assessment, discipline, etc.], on lesson plans, and ideas for the next week, but we haven't had specialized training for the staff in literacy instruction.

When asked about priorities for future professional development, most directors indicated that professional development related to literacy instruction, assessment of learning outcomes, family and community engagement, and recruitment and retention of program participants would be useful to them and their staffs.

4. Recruitment, Contact Hours, and Program Attendance

This section of the report presents the evaluation's findings about recruitment, the contact hours provided by programs, program attendance, and the factors that appear to affect program attendance.

Recruitment of Program Participants

As discussed earlier, DYCD's RFP required funded adolescent literacy programs to serve low-income students in public schools in grades 6-8 who read below grade level (ELA Level 2). DYCD also expected programs to recruit and provide literacy services to about 25 students, emphasizing services to sixth-graders in the first year of program operations. This approach to targeting participants provided an opportunity for sustained attendance for up to three years.

In some programs, notably Community Readers, Afternoon Literacy, and two of the three Theater in Schools programs, the principals or other administrators in the host schools identified students or classes to be served by the programs. In other cases, program staff had to recruit participants with little or no help from school staff. In survey responses, five program directors reported recruitment of participants as a major challenge, and three said it was a minor challenge. In the follow-up interviews conducted at the beginning of the second year, several directors emphasized the need for more aggressive recruiting and said that they were stepping up their efforts in this area.

Together, the 11 funded programs served a total of 307 youth in 2006-07.⁸ Based on DOE data available to the evaluation, just over three-quarters (76 percent) of the program participants were sixth-graders and 20 percent were seventh-graders. The remaining participants were either fifth-graders or eighth-graders. Twenty-two percent of the participants were classified as ELL, with about almost all of these participants concentrated in three programs: Community Readers, Reader's Theater, and Afternoon Literacy.

Looking across the initiative, just over half of the participants (55 percent) for whom 2006 ELA scores were available (N=233) scored at ELA Level 2. Twenty-eight percent scored at ELA Level 3 and 15 percent scored at ELA Level 1, with the remaining 3 percent scoring at ELA Level 4. Exhibit 2 displays the number of participants at each achievement level by program. As these data suggest, some programs were more successful than others in recruiting Level 2 participants.

⁸ This number, which is based on information provided by the programs and DYCD, does not include 60 youth who joined the Theater in Schools programs after the programs re-scheduled their services to occur during regular school hours.

Exhibit 2
Distribution of Spring 2006 ELA Scores, by Program

Program	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Afternoon Literacy (N=42)*	2	24	4	--
Community Readers (N=30)	5	1	--	--
Literacy Partners (N=30)	3	22	2	--
Literacy Lab (N=32)	--	12	13	4
Reader's Theater (N=26)	1	7	2	1
Reading Buddies (N=31)	1	17	7	--
Technology Corner (N=32)	5	14	12	1
Theater in Schools (1) (N=19)	13	3	--	--
Theater in Schools (2) (N=18)	1	13	--	--
Theater in Schools (3) (N=21)	--	4	17	--
Urban Vistas (N=26)	3	11	8	--

Exhibit reads: Two participants in Afternoon Literacy scored at ELA Level 1 in 2006.

* The numbers in each row do not sum to the total enrollment in each program because of incomplete data.

Contact Hours

The programs were generally up and running by November 2006, although program records indicate that enrollment of new participants continued into March 2007, as several programs worked to recruit participants and to replace participants who left the programs after the ELA assessment in mid-January. With some variation, program activities continued until the end of the school year, resulting in approximately seven months of program activities and services, although the amount of program activities and services varied considerably across programs. Based on program reports, the total number of contact hours ranged from 105 to 433, with four programs reporting more than 215 hours of services, three reporting 150 to 175 hours of services, and four reporting 105 to 130 hours of services.⁹ The reported numbers of contact hours include all program service hours offered during the program year and time allocated for all program activities, whether or not they were literacy-related. Data from the site visits indicate that almost all of the contact hours were allocated to literacy-related activities. In addition to the reported number of contact hours, two programs, Community Readers and Afternoon Literacy, also had formal arrangements for the youth they served to participate in

⁹ The evaluation team did not have information about the number of contract hours provided each month. Although DYCD's RFP set minimum thresholds for the number of hours a week of literacy services (5 hours) and for the number of days week that programs should operate (3 days), the RFP did not set thresholds for the total number of contact hours that programs were expected to provide each month or over the course of the first year of program operations.

wrap-around activities available through other after-school programs in the host schools. Although some of these activities did not extend time for literacy learning, program directors pointed out that the prospects of being able to participate in these programs were incentives for youth to participate in the adolescent literacy programs.

Attendance

A key indicator of early program success is attendance. Frequent and sustained attendance increases the likelihood that participants will benefit from program activities and services. Less frequent and irregular attendance reduces the likelihood of meaningful benefits and may signal the need for programs to modify their approaches to make them more appealing to struggling adolescent readers. This section of the report examines two dimensions of program attendance: frequency and duration.

Looking across the initiative, 68 percent of participants attended 100 or fewer hours of program activities, and 38 percent attended fewer than 50 hours of program activities. (See Exhibit 3.) At the other end of the spectrum, 13 percent of the participants attended more than 200 hours of program activities, and 11 percent attended more than 300 hours.

Exhibit 3
Hours of Attendance

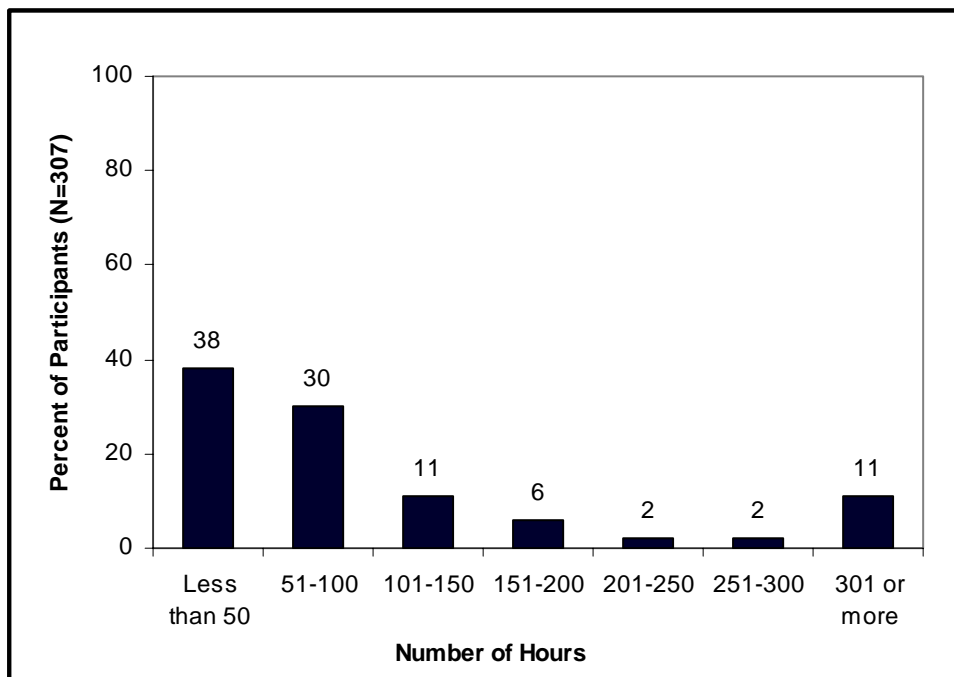


Exhibit reads: Thirty-eight percent of participants attended program activities for fewer than 50 hours.

Exhibits 4 and 5 provide more detailed information on attendance in each program. As the data in Exhibit 4 indicate, the median hours of attendance in the adolescent literacy programs ranged from a high of 332 hours in Community Readers to a low of 24 hours in Urban Vistas. Eight programs had medians of 66 or fewer hours. In addition, across all programs there was extensive variation in individual participation rates.

Exhibit 4 Hours of Attendance, by Program

Program	Median Hours	Range
Community Readers (<i>N=30</i>)	332	225-351
Reader's Theater (<i>N=26</i>)	231	3-385
Literacy Partners (<i>N=30</i>)	112	12-202
Theater in Schools (3) (<i>N=21</i>)	66	24-137
Afternoon Literacy (<i>N=42</i>)	66	2-108
Theater in Schools (2) (<i>N=18</i>)	61	6-180
Theater in Schools (1) (<i>N=19</i>)	60	12-128
Reading Buddies (<i>N=31</i>)	55	3-115
Technology Corner (<i>N=32</i>)	48	2-106
Literacy Lab (<i>N=32</i>)	26	2-152
Urban Vistas (<i>N=26</i>)	24	2-150

Exhibit reads: The median number of hours of program participation for participants in Community Readers was 332, with a range of 225 hours to 351 hours.

The number of months that participants attended each program also varied substantially. As data in Exhibit 5 indicate, more than half of the participants in seven programs attended five or six months or more, with Community Readers retaining all of its participants for six months. The remaining programs retained the majority of participants for four months or less. As the data in Exhibits 4 and 5 also indicate, two programs, Community Readers and Reader's Theater, managed to achieve relatively high median hours of attendance and to hold on to participants for long periods of time.

In general, youth who participated in the adolescent programs also attended school regularly. Looking at participants' average school attendance rates across programs, the evaluation found that the school-by-school rates were almost 90 percent or higher in 2006-2007 and that participants' school attendance rates were higher than those of all students in each of the host schools. The evaluation also compared participants' school attendance rates in 2005-2006 with those in 2006-2007 and found that the rates were almost identical.

Exhibit 5
Number of Months of Participation, by Program

Program	Fewer Than Three Months	Three Months	Four Months	Five Months	Six Months or More
Afternoon Literacy (N=42)	7	3	1	3	28
Community Readers (N=30)	0	0	0	0	30
Literacy Partners (N=30)	5	3	4	1	17
Literacy Lab (N=32)	14	4	1	4	9
Reader's Theater (N=26)	4	2	4	0	16
Reading Buddies (N=31)	2	0	2	7	20
Technology Corner (N=32)	11	0	4	3	14
Theater in Schools (1) (N=19)	4	4	5	4	2
Theater in Schools (2) (N=18)	6	2	4	0	6
Theater in Schools (3) (N=21)	2	2	4	7	6
Urban Vistas (N=26)	10	6	3	1	6

Exhibit reads: Seven Afternoon Literacy participants attended fewer than three months.

This is important because many program participants were making the sometimes difficult transition from elementary school to middle school, which is a time when school attendance may begin to drop off.

Factors That Influenced Attendance in Adolescent Literacy Programs

An overall finding from the evaluation is that programs that demonstrated higher rates of participation tended to share several characteristics. First, they had established more positive relationships with the host schools, as indicated by more frequent communications with principals and other school staff and by more involvement of school staff in various aspects of program planning and implementation. Second, they employed certified teachers, often teachers from the host schools, to provide program services. The programs with high participation rates included both programs described as traditional as well as some described as theme-based.

One possible explanation for the relationship between these two program characteristics and higher participation is that positive working relationships between programs and host schools resulted in recruitment of more participants and reflected a commitment on the part of the school to encourage youth to participate. The director of Community Readers explained a benefit of hiring teachers from the host school as frontline staff as follows: “The teachers are the

gatekeepers. The kids know them from the school day and they (the students) like them (the teachers). This is one of the reasons why they come.” A staff member in another program with solid attendance rates sounded a similar theme: “It is helpful that I have many of these students in my classroom during the regular school day because I can remind them that they have adolescent literacy after school.”

Program directors pointed to attendance-related factors that they viewed as impediments to providing high-quality programming. In their responses to a survey item asking about challenges associated with providing high-quality programming, most directors agreed that recruitment, low attendance, competition from other programs in the host schools, and lack of family involvement were all major or at least minor challenges. Some staff also recognized that adolescent literacy services for struggling readers were a tough sell among the target consumer population. Initially, school staff, parents, and some participants welcomed the promise of help in doing better on the ELA assessment, a focus of many early program activities. However, after the administration of the ELA assessment in January, interest and commitment appeared to wane.

According to staff in several programs, another factor that made it difficult to retain participants was pushback from parents about programs operating too late in the day during the winter, resulting in participants returning home at dusk or after dark on short days.

5. An Early Look at Participant Outcomes

The previous two sections of the report have described characteristics of program organization and operations as well as youth participation patterns during the initiative's first year. The report turns now to an early look at participant outcomes and possible relationships between outcomes and both participation patterns and program characteristics. The findings reported here are suggestive and not definitive.

As noted earlier, the evaluation of the initiative's implementation year focused on two sets of participant outcomes:

- ***DIBELS scores***, including scores from three test points (fall, winter, spring) for 105 participants
- ***RSPS results***, including results from the fall and spring administrations for 116 participants

Changes in Oral Reading Fluency

To obtain a measure of participant literacy outcomes in the start-up year, DYCD required the programs to administer the DIBELS to all program participants three times during the start-up year, in fall, winter, and spring.¹⁰ The DIBELS is an easy-to-administer reading assessment, composed of one-minute measures of oral reading fluency (ORF). The ORF scores are based on the number of words from a passage that students read correctly in one minute.¹¹ At each administration, program participants were given one narrative passage and one expository passage to read, generating one DIBELS score for each type of reading fluency. To gain a richer sense of the ways in which participants' reading ability changed over time, analyses also considered the total words that students read in one minute, the number of errors they made, and the percentage of errors they made. Considering each of these measures allowed the evaluation to examine changes in speed and accuracy separately. For instance, participants may make gains in accuracy but not in speed, or vice versa. The correct words-per-minute score is calculated by subtracting the number of errors from the total words per minute. Thus, while it provides a useful overview of reading fluency that combines both speed and accuracy, it also conflates the two dimensions of reading fluency, potentially obscuring gains if they occur in accuracy but not

¹⁰ Based on conversations with adolescent literacy program staff and the consultant to the initiative, DYCD program staff believe that there might have been errors in the administration of the DIBELS. They attribute these errors to program staff's inexperience in administering the assessment.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, discussions of DIBELS scores refer to this measure of correct words per minute.

speed, or in speed but not accuracy. When important changes occurred in either speed or accuracy, they are noted in the report.

The analyses of DIBELS results reported here focus on the scores of all participants who completed the assessment at each of the three test points. Overall, 105 participants completed the testing cycle, with the number of participants in each program who completed the cycle ranging from 2 to 25.

There are two reasons for limiting the analyses of DIBELS scores to participants who completed the testing cycle. First, the time elapsed between the first and third administrations permits looking at the differences between initial test scores and test scores following relatively extensive program exposure. The second reason is that the DIBELS Benchmark Goals and Indicators of Risk are based on three assessment periods per year. The Benchmark Goals and Indicators of Risk, based on Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, and Germann (1993) and Hasbrouck and Tindal (1992), assume that participants are first tested between the first month and third months of the school year, again between the fourth and sixth months of school, and one final time between the seventh and tenth month of school.¹² By following the recommended testing schedule, results achieved by the initiative's students who completed three DIBELS assessments can be analyzed in the context of national norms. In addition, analyses can determine whether increases or decreases in test scores are large enough to place students in lower-risk or higher-risk categories compared with their initial assessments. On the advice of Gina Biancarosa, who serves as an expert consultant to DYCD on the adolescent literacy initiative, analyses of DIBELS scores reported here do not include scores from the second test point because of inconsistencies in the selection of reading passages used in administering the assessment.

Because only about a third of all participants completed the DIBELS and RSPS (which is discussed later), most of the findings reported here are based on descriptive statistics that convey differences that are relevant or interesting, but not necessarily statistically significant. In the instances where statistical comparisons were possible, the findings were supported by the following analyses:

- Paired samples t-tests that compared students' scores on the initial DIBELS and RSPS assessments with scores on the final assessments
- Independent samples t-tests that compared changes in DIBELS and RSPS scores based on factors at the participant level, such as level

¹² Fuchs, L.S., Fuchs, D., Hamlett, C.L., Walz, L., & Germann, G. (1993). Formative evaluation of academic progress: How much growth can we expect? *School Psychology Review*, 22, 27-48.
Hasbrouck, J.E., & Tindal, G. (1992). Curriculum-based oral reading fluency norms for students in grades 2-5. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 24(3), 41-44.

of attendance and intensity of participation, and factors at the program level, including program type (traditional or theme-based) and the presence or absence of certified teachers from the host school

Again, because of the small sample size, a substantial portion of the following discussion reports descriptive differences among particular programs. It should, therefore, be understood as suggestive, but not conclusive.

Among participants who completed the testing cycle, ORF scores on the narrative portion of the DIBELS improved. (See Exhibit 6.) On average, participants improved their narrative scores by 11 words per minute, and the increase is statistically significant ($p=.000$). Furthermore, participants recorded gains in both speed and accuracy. From the first administration to the third, participants made statistically significant improvements in total words per minute score ($p=.001$), a measure that accounts for how rapidly a participant reads, as well as improvements in both the number and percentage of errors, which are measures of how accurately a participant reads. Over the course of the program year, the average number of words read per minute climbed from 109.4 to 118.8, while the average percentage of errors decreased from 4.6 percent to 2.6 percent.

Exhibit 6
Participant Gains in Narrative Reading Fluency

Measure of Fluency	Initial Administration Average	Final Administration Average	Change
Correct Words Per Minute	105	116	11 wpm
Total Words Per Minute	109	119	10 wpm
Percentage of Errors	4.6	2.6	2 percent

Exhibit reads: At the initial administration, participants achieved an average score of 105 correct words per minute on the narrative portion of the DIBELS. By the final administration, the average had climbed 11 words per minute, to 116.

Although their scores on the narrative portion of the DIBELS improved, participant gains generally did not outpace the gains normally (as defined by norms established by the text developers) expected for youth at their grade level, and some participants continued to fall behind. Thus, while 27.6 percent ($N=29$) of program participants were considered “at risk” based on their initial DIBELS scores, 38 percent ($N=45$) fell into the “at risk” category at the third administration. Exhibit 7 shows the percentage of participants who fell into each of the three risk categories in narrative reading fluency at the initial administration and the final administration.

Exhibit 7 Participant Narrative ORF Scores and Indicators of Risk, by Administration

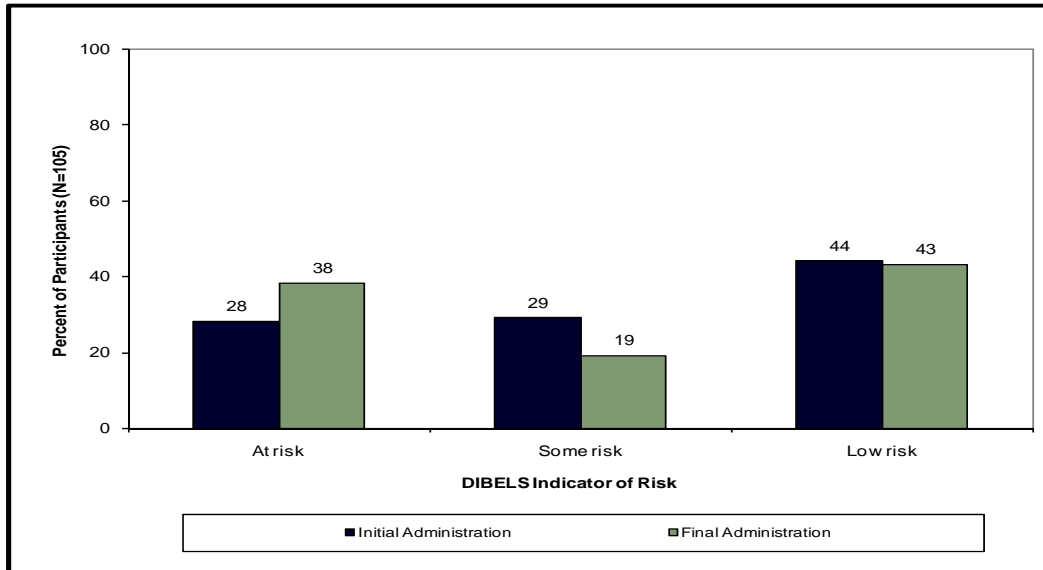


Exhibit reads: Twenty-eight percent of participants were considered “at risk” based on their narrative ORF scores at the first administration; at the final administration, 38 percent were considered “at risk.”

While the percentage of students in the “low risk” category held relatively steady, a substantial number of participants who were considered “some risk” at the first administration fell into the “at risk” category by the spring.

Participants’ percentile scores also dropped slightly over the course of the year, as Exhibit 8 illustrates. Slightly more participants fell into the lower two quartiles at the final administration compared with the initial administration, and slightly fewer participants fell into the upper two quartiles, as shown in Exhibit 8.

On the expository portion of the test, the mean correct words per minute score for the participants who completed the testing cycle declined by 8.4 words per minute between the first and third administrations. The decline is statistically significant ($p=.001$), and it is primarily attributable to decreases in speed rather than accuracy. While program participants recorded statistically significant decreases in the total words read per minute on the expository portion of the DIBELS, there was no statistically significant change in the number of errors made or the percentage of errors between the first and third administrations. Because the average score declined over the course of the year, participants fell further behind DIBELS benchmark goals in expository reading, as shown in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 8
Participant Percentile Scores for Narrative Reading,
by Administration

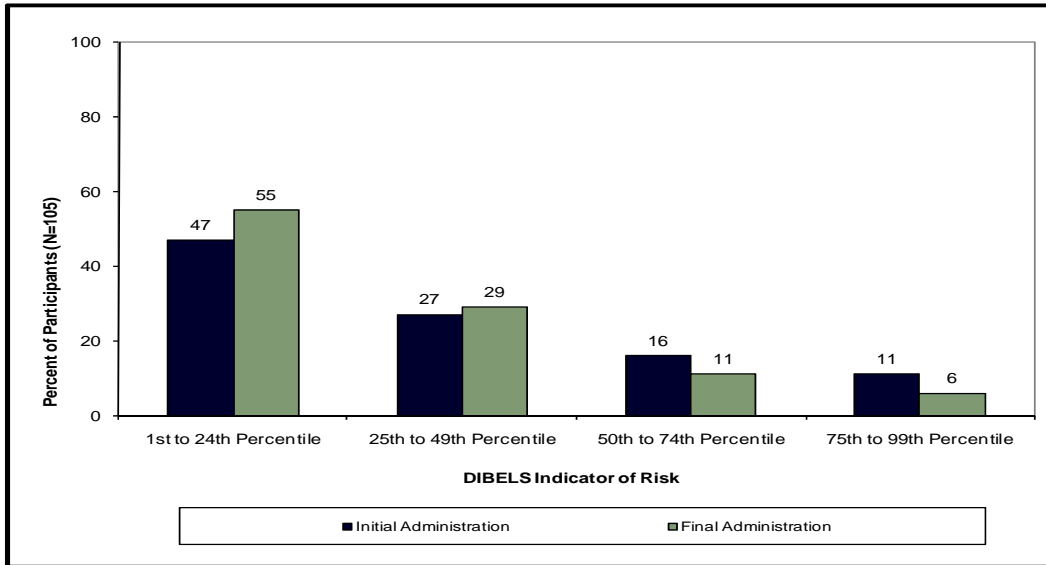


Exhibit reads: Forty-seven percent of participants scored between the 1st and 24th percentiles on the narrative ORF portion of the DIBELS at the first administration; 55 percent scored between the 1st and 24th percentiles at the final administration.

Exhibit 9
Participant Expository ORF Scores and Indicators of Risk,
by Administration

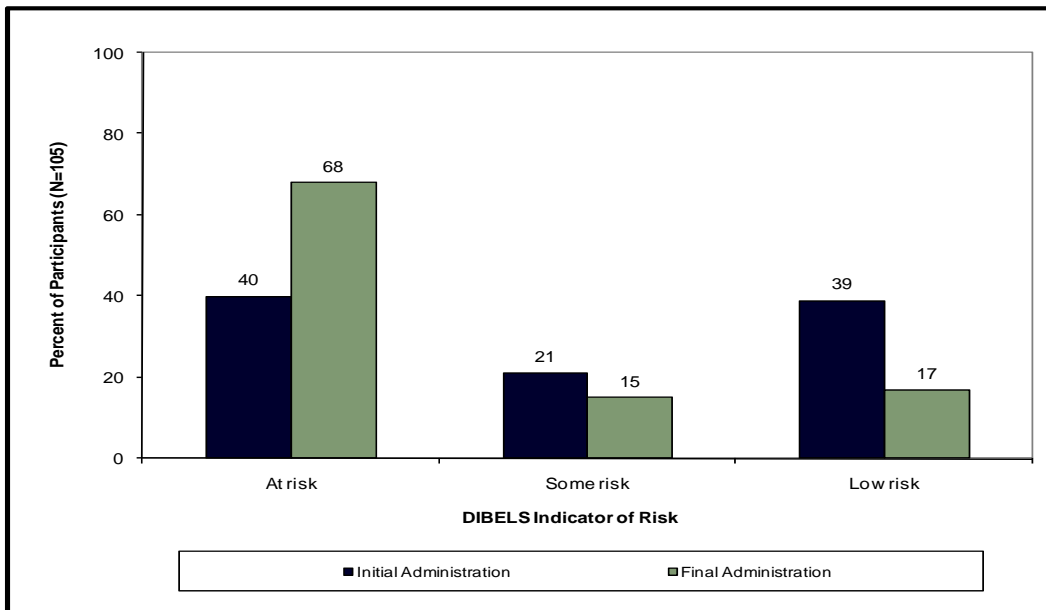


Exhibit reads: Forty percent of participants were considered “at risk” based on their expository ORF scores at the first administration; at the final administration, 68 percent were considered “at risk.”

Participants' percentile scores also dropped substantially between the fall and spring test administrations, as shown in Exhibit 10. While about half of participants (49 percent) scored below the 25th percentile at the initial administration, by the spring 82 percent of participants fell in the lowest quartile. The remaining participants all scored below the 75th percentile in expository reading.

Exhibit 10
Participant Percentile Scores for Expository Reading,
by Administration

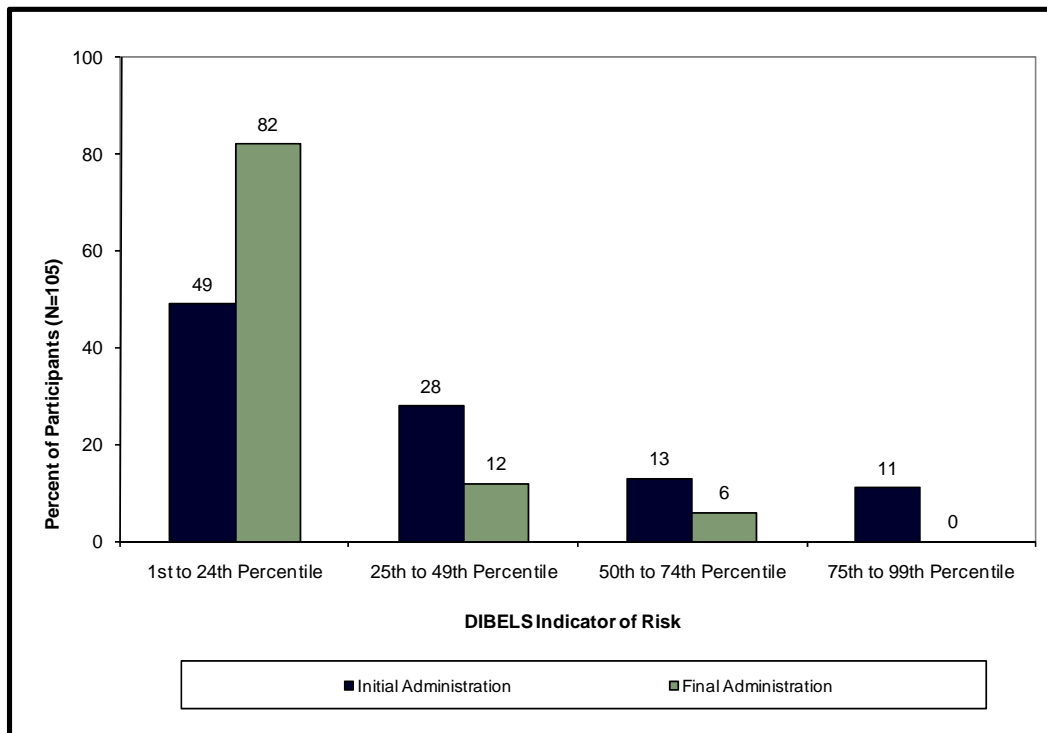


Exhibit reads: Forty-nine percent of participants scored between the 1st and 24th percentiles on the expository ORF portion of the DIBELS at the first administration; 82 percent scored between the 1st and 24th percentiles at the final administration.

Given that literacy instruction generally focuses on narrative reading and students usually do little expository work in school, it is perhaps not surprising that participants would have more difficulty with expository passages.

The evaluation found statistically significant differences in gains in reading fluency associated with participants' initial DIBELS scores and amount of individual participation. Thus, across all programs, participants whose initial DIBELS scores indicated that they were high risk achieved more progress than did other participants. Specifically, the evaluation found an inverse relationship between initial DIBELS score and change in DIBELS score, meaning

that participants who had lower scores at the first test point achieved more positive changes than did their peers. This pattern held for both the narrative scores ($p=.000$, $r= -.359$) and expository scores ($p=.000$, $r= -.524$).

In addition to association between initial DIBELS scores and gains, the evaluation found a positive relationship between cumulative hours of participation and change in expository ORF score ($p=.000$, $r=.362$). In other words, participants who attended more hours of programming tended to experience more positive changes than did their peers on the expository portion of the DIBELS. The relationship between program participation and changes in expository scores is particularly notable because expository scores declined by an average of 8.4 words per minute in the sample as a whole.

Based on the limited data on changes in participants' reading fluency, three programs appeared to achieve promising results. Due to the small size of the sample, it was not possible to conduct significance tests to gauge the differences among individual programs. However, compared with other programs in the initiative with three DIBELS scores for seven or more participants, three programs, Community Readers, Literacy Partners, and Reading Buddies, appeared promising, based on participant scores on the DIBELS.

Among these programs, participants in Community Readers achieved the largest gains in DIBELS scores, with average increases of 18.4 words per minute in narrative reading fluency and 13.5 words per minute in expository reading fluency. Participants in Literacy Partners achieved substantial improvement in expository reading, although the average gain in narrative reading fluency fell below the sample mean of 11 words per minute. Finally, participants in Reading Buddies recorded slightly more favorable results than did the rest of the sample, gaining an average of 16.3 words per minute in narrative reading fluency while losing an average of 5 words per minute in expository reading fluency.

These three programs, all classified as traditional by the evaluation, have established at least reasonably good working relationships with their host schools. In addition, all have good program attendance rates, with Community Readers having especially high attendance rates. The programs vary in their staffing approaches, with Community Readers relying on teachers from the host school as frontline staff and Reading Buddies relying on high-school age tutors working under the close supervision of the program director. Literacy Partners relied on certified teachers who were not from the host school to provide literacy instruction.

Changes in Participants' Perceptions of Themselves as Readers

To complement the use of the DIBELS to track changes in participants' reading fluency, DYCD required projects to administer the RSPS to learn how

program participants viewed themselves as readers and whether these perceptions changed over time. As the developers of the instrument explain:

How an individual feels about herself or himself as a reader could clearly influence whether reading would be sought or avoided, the amount of effort that would occur during reading, and how persistently comprehension would be pursued (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 472).¹³

The RSPS is a 33-item survey composed of four scales created to tap distinct dimensions of a youngster's self-perception as a reader (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 472):

- The *Progress* scale measures whether the student believes her or his reading skills have improved over time
- The *Observational Comparison* scale measures the student's perception of how her or his reading performance compares with the performance of others
- The *Social Feedback* scale measures how feedback from others shapes the student's assessment of his or her reading skills
- The *Physiological States* scale taps the feelings that students experience when they read

Following training from the initiative's expert consultant, program staff administered the RSPS twice during the start-up year—during the fall as participants entered the program and again in the spring near the end of the program year.

Among participants who completed the RSPS at both administrations (N=116), the evaluation found statistically significant increases in the mean score on two of the four RSPS scales: Observational Comparison (p=.002) and Social Feedback (p=.010). The average increase was 1.6 points on the 30-point Observational Comparison scale and 1.5 points on the 45-point Social Feedback scale. Thus, on the whole, participants were more likely to compare themselves favorably to their classmates and to report that they received positive feedback from teachers, peers, and family members at the second administration. Mean scores on all four indicators for both administrations fell within the normal range specified by the survey developers.

¹³ Henk, W.A., & Melnick, S.A. (1995, March). The Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS): A new tool for measuring how children feel about themselves as readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(6), 470-482.

Analysis of the RSPS results did not find a relationship between the amount of time participants attended program activities and changes in self-perceptions as readers.

6. Concluding Observations and Recommendations

The start-up year of DYCD's Adolescent Literacy Initiative was marked by some promising successes. Consistent with DYCD's ambitions for the initiative, the 11 funded programs implemented varied approaches to helping struggling young adolescent readers improve their literacy skills. In addition, several programs found effective ways of retaining participants in the program over five or six months of program operations, thereby increasing the likelihood that these youth could benefit from the programs' literacy learning activities and services.

Programs faced several significant challenges. One was to establish supportive working relationships with the host schools. All but one of the programs managed to establish such a relationship, and some were especially successful. These positive relationships were marked by ongoing and frequent communications between program directors and principals and less often with other school staff. Hiring teachers from the host schools also appeared to contribute to these working relationships, but hiring teachers did not always guarantee that the relationships would be strong.

Despite the successes of some programs, attracting and retaining participants was a challenge. In some cases, programs were left to their own devices to identify and recruit participants without the support of the host school. Second, although the commitment to help participants prepare for the ELA assessment attracted some youth, interest in the program waned in some instances after the test in mid-January. Project-based learning activities and the promise of opportunities to participate in additional recreational activities helped to attract and retain some participants, but the long-term participation patterns suggest that this attraction was not strong for other youth.

The evaluation found that program directors and staff brought varied experiences to the programs, and staffing patterns were generally consistent with the programs' overall approach to literacy instruction. At the same time, the fact that many of the programs took advantage of staff turnover at the end of the program year to hire staff with more classroom experience suggests that the absence of such experience may have been an issue in the first year. All program staff, including the program directors, participated in professional development activities. Program directors gave these activities mixed reviews, although the evaluation identified several promising approaches to professional development. The evaluation also found that many of the routine planning and review activities carried out by program staff had the potential to be valuable professional learning opportunities.

In terms of literacy learning outcomes, it is too soon to judge the programs. Program directors and staff point to products developed by participants

as indicators of literacy learning, although these accounts are anecdotal. Participants in several of the traditional programs achieved positive results on the DIBELS, although the paucity of complete data on reading fluency in other programs, especially the theme-based programs, makes conclusions about the effectiveness of particular configurations of program activities and services speculative and of limited use in program planning, at least in the short term.

Based on these conclusions, the evaluation team offers the following recommendations for subsequent development of DYCD's adolescent literacy initiative:

Recommendation 1: Program providers and directors should continue working to forge effective working relationships with host schools. The success of any school-based after-school program, but especially programs that focus on improving the literacy skills of adolescents who may be struggling in school, depends, in large part, on the strength of the program's working relationship with the host school. Although there is no specific formula for an effective working relationship, those that appeared most effective in this initiative were marked by frequent communications with school principals and other members of the school staff, including regular meetings. In addition, several of the programs that had established effective relationships had hired teachers from the host school as frontline staff.

Looking forward to subsequent development of individual programs, the evaluation team recommends continued efforts to strengthen working relationships with host schools. These efforts should focus on articulating and reaching consensus about expectations and approaches to aligning and/or coordinating after-school adolescent literacy activities and services with school-based ELA programs. In addition, and as necessary, these efforts should focus on ensuring that the adolescent literacy programs have safe and well-maintained facilities in which to operate. Ideally, at least some of the space used for program activities and services should be dedicated to the program.

Recommendation 2: With encouragement and support from DYCD, programs should identify and track participant attainment of program-specific literacy outcomes. Continued use of the DIBELS will help programs track participants' progress in becoming fluent readers. Analysis of DIBELS results can also help programs identify program components that require modification. Because they are the coin of the accountability realm, ELA test results will become increasingly important indicators of program success, particularly as the results achieved by program participants are compared with results achieved by similar groups of adolescents who do not participate in these programs. At the same time, reliance on ELA scores to measure program outcomes may be problematic if programs enroll substantial numbers of participants who remain in the programs for only one year. For these participants, the duration of program

activities prior to the ELA test point may simply be too brief for there to be reasonable expectations of the programs having a discernible impact.

In addition to tracking progress on these two outcome indicators, the evaluation team recommends that programs set participant learning goals that are linked to program approaches and strategies. In addition, programs should identify and track literacy learning indicators that are specific to program approaches and strategies (e.g., samples of participants' writing such as poetry and newsletters, application of computer skills in preparation of literacy products). This goal-setting effort will be especially important for programs that have adopted theme-based approaches to literacy instruction.

An advantage of this expanded approach to program evaluation is that it affords both programs and DYCD an opportunity to learn more about how various program models work and what contributions they make to developing adolescent literacy skills. This approach will also enhance programs' capacity to communicate with school principals and other members of the school community about participant progress and success.

Finally, the evaluation team suggests that DYCD provide technical assistance to help individual programs (1) identify and use appropriate assessment instruments, (2) plan data collection and analysis, and (3) prepare reports.

Recommendation 3: DYCD should work with provider organizations to ensure that each of the programs funded under this initiative is included in DYCD Online. Including these programs in the agency's management information system (MIS) will facilitate review of participation patterns and permit identification of problems that may require attention from DYCD or the provider organizations. In addition, including these programs in the MIS will facilitate reporting on the adolescent literacy initiative as a whole, as well as on individual programs.

Recommendation 4: DYCD and program providers should continue to ensure that frontline staff and program directors have adequate professional development opportunities. Providing high-quality literacy learning activities and services to adolescents who are struggling in school is hard work that requires considerable knowledge and skill. In addition, as just discussed, increasing the capacity to conduct program-specific evaluations may also require training and technical assistance.

The evaluation team recommends that DYCD work with program providers to develop long-term agendas of professional development and technical assistance to support continued program development. Given the variation in program approaches and staffing, it will be important for the professional development agenda to include both initiative-wide activities and activities that are tailored to individual programs or clusters of programs. At a

minimum, the professional development agenda should focus on helping program staff (1) understand the literacy learning needs of adolescents with limited literacy skills and adolescents who may also be classified as ELL, (2) become familiar with instructional strategies (including curricula and assessments) that address these learning needs, and (3) become effective managers of classroom learning activities and learning environments. In addition, the professional development agenda could include sessions that focus on strategies for involving parents in various components of program activities and services and for recruiting and retaining participants.

The evaluation team recommends that, in setting the professional development agenda, DYCD and the program directors look for models of successful professional development activities within the current group of programs. Directors and staff who have planned and implemented these activities can serve as resources to the initiative and to individual programs.

Appendix A
Analysis of ELA Scores

Analysis of Participants' ELA Scores

A key long-term indicator of the initiative's success will be improvements in participants' ELA scores that exceed the improvements made by similar readers who do not participate in programs supported by the initiative. At the same time, holding the funded programs accountable for this standard of success in the first year of operations is not reasonable because of the relatively short period of program participation possible prior to the administration of the ELA in mid-January 2007. In addition, given the fact that most of the programs did not begin providing services until October and continued active recruitment of participants through the beginning of the new calendar year, it is possible that not all of the programs were fully implemented by the January test point. Nevertheless, the evaluation team did look at the changes in ELA scores achieved by participants. The findings from this analysis are presented here.

The evaluation's overall findings about changes in ELA scores can be summarized as follows:

- ***Students whose proficiency levels rose between January 2006 and January 2007 slightly exceeded the number of students whose proficiency levels dropped.*** Twenty percent of the program participants for whom there are two years of ELA data (N=233) achieved a gain of one level (out of a total of four proficiency levels) from the 2006 test to the 2007 test. Sixty-four percent of these participants held steady at the same level across the two years, and 15 percent dropped one level. One percent of students dropped two levels.
- ***Seventy-nine percent of participants who were classified at ELA Level 1 improved to Level 2, and 16 percent of participants classified at ELA Level 2 improved to Level 3.*** Twenty-one percent of the Level 1 participants remained at that level and 81 percent of the Level 2 participants (the initiative's target population) remained at that level in 2007. The gains achieved by Level 1 and Level 2 participants are notable because the ELA assumes that students will make one year of progress to remain at the same level in the next grade.

The evaluation also found a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between cumulative hours of program participation prior to the January ELA test and change in ELA score ($r=.152$, $p=.022$).¹⁴ In addition, the evaluation looked at the relationship between cumulative hours of participation and change in ELA scores separately for students who participated at or above the median number of hours prior to the January test point. The median number of hours of program attendance through January was 23. These analyses found no relationship between cumulative number of hours and change in ELA score for participants who attended at or above the median number of hours. However, there was a statistically significant difference in terms of score change on the ELA between participants who attended at or above the median and participants who attended below the median ($p=.047$). Participants who attended

¹⁴ Analyses estimated the total hours of participation prior to the January test point by adding the reported hours of participation through the end of December and half the reported hours of participation in January.

at or the above the median number of hours improved by an average of eight scale-score points (8.15), while those who attended less than the median improved their ELA scores by an average of just under one point (.99).¹⁵

¹⁵ The evaluation team also ran the analysis by dividing the participants into three groups according to the number of hours they participated, then compared the top third and the bottom third. The highest-attending students gained an average of 9.7 points and the lowest-attending students gained an average of 2.0 points. However, the difference did not reach the threshold for statistical significance. Although the difference in means may appear substantial, when the sizes of the groups are small—as they are when we break the students who have complete ELA data into three groups—differences must be quite large in order to obtain statistically significant results.

Appendix B
Program Directors Survey

DYCD ADOLESCENT LITERACY INITIATIVE

Program Director Survey

Dear Program Director:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. As part of the external evaluation of the Adolescent Literacy Initiative of the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Policy Studies Associates (PSA) is surveying each on-site program director responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of an individual program that receives DYCD funds. The survey is designed to capture basic information about your program and your experience as the on-site program director. This information will help improve adolescent literacy programs.

To protect your privacy, your responses to this survey are confidential. Reports and other communications about this survey will not identify any program directors, programs, or partner schools by name.

When you have finished reading this letter, click on the "Next Page" and proceed to the survey. Read and follow the directions in the survey carefully. We estimate that completing the survey will require 30-40 minutes. As you complete the survey, you can review responses to previous items by clicking on the "Previous Page" button. When you have finished the survey, please click on the "Submit" button. Once you click on the "Submit" button, you will not be able to retrieve your survey or change any of the answers.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Bruce Haslam at PSA. You can reach him at (202)939-5333 or via email at bhaslam@policystudies.com.

Thank you for your help!

Your Program

1) Indicate whether each of the following is a *key objective* of your DYCD-funded adolescent literacy program. A key objective is something that the program focuses on regularly or for which there is a specific program component. (Click on the box for each key objective.)

For each *key objective*, indicate whether you and the staff have set *specific outcomes or targets* to help you determine whether the objective has been achieved. (Click on the box to the right of the objective to indicate that your program has set a specific outcome or target.)

Possible Objectives

	Key objective	Outcome/target set
Provide a safe environment for participants		
Help participants become more fluent readers		
Help participants improve their ability to understand what they read		
Help participants improve their writing skills		
Help participants improve their speaking skills		
Help participants improve their listening skills		
Provide opportunities for cultural enrichment		
Help connect participants to their communities		
Help parents and/or other adults develop their literacy or other skills		
Identify and respond to participants' need for health and/or social services		

2) Use the space below to describe any other key program objectives not listed above.

3) For each activity listed on the left side of the following chart, indicate whether the activity is offered in your program, whether all or most youth who are present when the activity takes place participate, and how much time is set aside for the activity.

Possible Activity

	Is the activity offered?		Do all or most youth participate in the activity?		How much time is set aside?			
	No	Yes	Yes	No	At least 3 to 4 hours a week	About 1 to 3 hours a week	A few hours a month	Less than one hour a month
Homework help								
Group instruction in reading								
Independent reading								
Group instruction in writing								
Participant directed writing activities								
Instruction in computer skills								
Instruction in study skills								
Learning games/activities with a literacy focus (e.g., Pictionary, Scrabble)								
Field trips to museums, libraries, community landmarks, exhibits, performances etc.								
Application and practice of literacy skills in a practical context (e.g., drama/theater, creating a newspaper, conducting and presenting research)								
Recreational activities (e.g., sports, martial arts, clubs)								

4) Use the space below to describe activities and services in your program not listed above. Indicate whether the majority of youth participate and how often these activities or services are available.

5) Counting all of the activities and services available in your program, how many hours of program activities and services are provided each week?

Number of hours _____

6) How much of a *challenge to implementing high-quality programming* is each of the following impediments? (Select ONE in each row.)

Possible Impediments

	A major challenge	A minor challenge	Not a challenge
The space available for our program is inadequate, inappropriate, or unsafe			
We have inadequate instructional materials or programming ideas			
We have insufficient information about the educational needs of the youth in our program			
We cannot recruit enough youth to participate			
Youth do not attend the program regularly enough to improve their literacy skills			
There are too many other programs in the school that compete for participants' attention and time			
The teachers at the school in which our program is located do not respond to our requests for help in recruiting participants or coordinating services			
The administrators in the school in which our program is located do not respond to our requests for help in recruiting participants or coordinating services			
Families are not sufficiently involved in the program			
We do not have sufficient funds to provide high-quality programming			
We do not receive sufficient support or feedback from DYCD			
We do not have sufficient administrative support to fulfill DYCD grant administration and reporting requirements			
We do not have effective strategies and instruments for assessing participant outcomes.			

7) Looking back over the last five days of regular program operations, how many students on average participated each day?

Number of students _____

Your Program Staff

8) Aside from yourself, how many total staff members are currently working onsite in your adolescent literacy program?

Total number of paid staff _____
Total number of volunteer staff _____

9) Of your paid staff members (excluding yourself), how many are in the following categories? (These numbers should equal the total number of paid staff you entered above.)

Enter the number of staff in the box to the left of each option. If you do not have any staff in a category, please enter "0".

Administrative staff (e.g., assistant director, parent coordinator) _____
Direct service staff (e.g., teachers, activity leaders) _____
Support staff (e.g., administrative assistants) _____

Of your paid staff members in the categories above (excluding yourself), how many have the following educational backgrounds?

Enter the number of staff in the box to the left of each option. If you do not have any staff in a category, please enter "0".

10) Administrative staff (e.g., assistant director, parent coordinator)

Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are certified to teach _____
Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are not certified to teach _____
Staff who are current college students _____
Staff who are current high school students _____
Adult staff with a high school degree or less, who are not currently enrolled in college _____

11) Direct service staff (e.g., teachers, activity leaders, artists in residence)

Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are certified to teach _____
Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are not certified to teach _____
Staff who are current college students _____
Staff who are current high school students _____
Adult staff with a high school degree or less, who are not currently enrolled in college _____

12) Support staff (e.g., administrative assistants)

Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are certified to teach _____
Staff with B.A. or B.S. degrees or higher who are not certified to teach _____
Staff who are current college students _____
Staff who are current high school students _____
Adult staff with a high school degree or less, who are not currently enrolled in college _____

Of your paid staff members in the categories above (excluding yourself), how many receive the following salaries?

Enter the number of staff in the box to the left of each option. If you do not have any staff in a category, enter "0".

Specify the annual salary when appropriate. If no one (excluding yourself) at your site receives an annual salary, please leave the box empty.

13) Administrative staff (e.g., assistant director, parent coordinator)

0\$	_____
Between \$6 and \$10.99	_____
Between \$11 and \$15.99	_____
Between \$16 and \$20.99	_____
Between \$21 and \$25.99	_____
Between \$26 and \$30.99	_____
\$31 per hour or higher	_____
Annual salary	_____
Average annual salary	_____

14) Direct service staff (e.g., teachers, activity leaders, artists in residence)

0\$	_____
Between \$6 and \$10.99	_____
Between \$11 and \$15.99	_____
Between \$16 and \$20.99	_____
Between \$21 and \$25.99	_____
Between \$26 and \$30.99	_____
\$31 per hour or higher	_____
Annual salary	_____
Average annual salary	_____

15) Support Staff (e.g. administrative assistants)

0\$	_____
Between \$6 and \$10.99	_____
Between \$11 and \$15.99	_____
Between \$16 and \$20.99	_____
Between \$21 and \$25.99	_____
Between \$26 and \$30.99	_____
\$31 per hour or higher	_____
Annual salary	_____
Average annual salary	_____

16) Does your adolescent literacy program have a parent liaison or parent outreach coordinator? (Select ONE.)

- No
- Yes, as a volunteer position
- Yes, as a paid, part-time position
- Yes, as a paid, full-time position

17) Does your adolescent literacy program have a master teacher or education specialist? (Select ONE.)

- No
- Yes, as a volunteer position
- Yes, as a paid, part-time position
- Yes, as a paid, full-time position

18) How often do you hold staff meetings with your adolescent literacy program staff? (Select ONE.)

- At least once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month
- Never

19) Do you require staff to submit written activity or lesson plans to you or some other supervisor? (Select ONE.)

- I do not ask staff to submit activity plans
- I require most or all staff to submit activity plans on a regular basis
- I require some staff to submit activity plans on a regular basis
- I occasionally ask staff to submit activity plans

20) Do you use a published or externally developed curriculum or program to guide any of your literacy-related activities? (Select ONE.)

- No
- Yes

21) Use the space below to identify the externally developed curriculum or program used by your program.

22) Have members of your *staff who use the curriculum or program received training on how to use the curriculum or program in after-school settings?*

- No
- Yes

23) How much of a *challenge to implementing high-quality programming* is each of the following? (Select ONE in each row.)

Possible Staff Challenges

	A major challenge	A minor challenge	Not a challenge
We cannot find qualified staff to hire			
We cannot find volunteers with time and expertise needed to help our program			
We cannot afford to offer the competitive salaries necessary to hire qualified staff			
We cannot afford to offer potential staff enough hours of paid employment			
Staff do not come to work on a reliable schedule			
Volunteers are not available on a reliable schedule			
Staff do not have the skills to work with English-language learners			
There are limited professional development opportunities for staff			

Professional Development

24) Looking back over the period September 2006 to the present, how many times have *you* participated in each of the following *types of professional development activities*? (Select ONE in each row.)

	5 or more times	3-4 times	1-2 times	Never
Workshops				
Meetings in which a substantial portion of the agenda included professional learning activities				
Site-based technical assistance from DYCD				
Site-based technical assistance from source(s) other than DYCD				

25) Use the space below to describe any other professional development, training, or technical assistance that you participated in?

26) Which of the following *topics* were covered in the professional development in which *you* participated? (Select ALL that apply.)

- Literacy instruction and learning
- Integrating literacy learning into diverse content, including enrichment activities
- Assessing participant learning outcomes and other outcomes
- Maintaining healthy and safe environments
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Family and community engagement
- Program operations and management
- Recruitment and retention of program participants
- Other (please specify)

If you selected other please specify:

27) Looking back over the period September 2006 to the present, how many times has *your staff* participated in each of the following *types of professional development activities*? (Select ONE in each row.)

	5 or more times	3-4 times	1-2 times	Never
Workshops				
Meetings in which a substantial portion of the agenda included professional learning activities				
Site-based technical assistance from DYCD				
Site-based technical assistance from source(s) other than DYCD				

28) Use the space below to describe any other professional development, training, or technical assistance activities your staff participated in.

29) Which of the following *topics* were covered in the professional development in which *your staff* participated? (Select ALL that apply.)

- Literacy instruction and learning
- Integrating literacy learning into diverse content, including enrichment activities
- Assessing participant learning outcomes and other outcomes
- Maintaining healthy and safe environments
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Family and community engagement
- Program operations and management
- Recruitment and retention of program participants
- Other (please specify)

If you selected other please specify:

30) How would you describe the *professional development activities* in which you or your staff has participated since September 2006? (Select ONE.)

- Neither my staff nor I have participated in any professional development or technical assistance activities in the period September 2006 to the present.
- The professional development and technical assistance serve our purposes completely
- The professional development and technical assistance are a good start
- The professional development and technical assistance do not provide sufficient information or guidance to enable us to follow-up or to implement new strategies
- The professional development and technical assistance generally do not serve our purposes

31) To what extent have you and your staff *implemented the ideas and strategies presented* in the professional development and technical assistance activities? (Select ONE.)

- We have implemented the ideas and strategies, and they have improved our project
- We are in the process of implementing the ideas and strategies
- We will try to implement the ideas and strategies later
- We tried to implement the ideas and strategies, but they did not work very well in our project
- We are unlikely to implement any of the ideas or strategies

32) What are the primary obstacles preventing you and your staff from effectively implementing the strategies and techniques learned during the professional development and technical assistance activities? (Select ALL that apply.)

- We have not encountered any obstacles
- We do not have the materials we need
- We do not have adequate space
- We do not have enough staff
- We need further training
- The ideas and strategies are not likely to be useful in our site
- Other (please specify)

If you selected other please specify:

33) What *professional development topics* are likely to be most useful to *your staff* in the future? (Select ALL that apply.)

- Literacy instruction and learning
- Integrating literacy learning into diverse content, including enrichment activities
- Assessing participant learning outcomes and other outcomes
- Maintaining healthy and safe environments
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Family and community engagement
- Program operations and management
- Recruitment and retention of program participants
- Other (please specify)

If you selected other please specify:

34) What *professional development topics* are likely to be most useful to *you* in the future? (Select ALL that apply.)

- Literacy instruction and learning
- Integrating literacy learning into diverse content, including enrichment activities
- Assessing participant learning outcomes and other outcomes
- Maintaining healthy and safe environments
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Family and community engagement
- Program operations and management
- Recruitment and retention of program participants
- Other (please specify)

If you selected other please specify:

Connections with Parents, Community, and School

35) How often do you... (Select ONE in each row.)

Parent and Community Connection

	At least 4 to 5 days a week	About 1 to 3 days a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month
Send materials about the program home to parents?				
Hold events or meetings to which parents are invited?				
Hold events or meetings to which community members are invited?				
Have telephone conversations with parents?				
Meet with one or more parents?				

36) How often do you *discuss the following topics with the principal, teachers, or other key staff* from the school in which your program is located? (Select ONE in each row.)

Possible Topics

	At least 2 to 3 times a month	Once a month	As necessary	Never
Planning literacy program content				
Aligning your program content with the school curriculum				
Homework assignments				
The needs or progress of individual students				
Issues related to classrooms/sharing space				
Discipline policies				
Program targeting, recruitment, enrollment, and retention strategies and policies				

37) Use the space below to identify other topics that you have discussed with the principal, teachers, or other key staff.

Your Background and Experience

38) What types of *jobs* did you have before you became the program director for this DYCD Adolescent Literacy program? How many years did you spend in each job? (Select ONE in each row.)

Your previous experience

	More than 10 years	6-10 years	2-5 years	About 1 year	Less than 1 year	None
Program director in an afterschool program						
Staff member in an afterschool program						
Literacy specialist working outside of a regular school setting						
Classroom teacher						
Classroom aide/teaching assistant (paraprofessional)						
Instructional specialist (e.g., music, art, physical education, reading)						
Pupil support staff (e.g. school counselor, social worker, psychologist)						
School administrator						
Administrator at a child/youth center or at a park or recreation center						
Administrator in a social services organization						
Recreation, youth, or child-care worker						
Social services or health services provider						
Camp counselor/leader						

39) How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences working at this adolescent literacy program? (Select ONE in each row.)

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
I enjoy working in this program				
I have the materials I need to do a good job.				
I have the space I need to do a good job.				
I find the work here rewarding.				
I get the support and feedback I need from my supervisor.				

40) What is your *highest level of education*? (Select ONE.)

- Less than high school
- High school or GED
- Some college, other classes/training not related to a degree
- Completed two-year college degree
- Completed four-year college degree
- Some graduate work
- Master's degree or higher

41) Are you certified to teach? (Select ONE.)

- No
- Yes

42) What is your salary as the director of your adolescent literacy program? (Select ONE.)

- Below \$30,000
- Between \$30,000 and \$34,999
- Between \$35,000 and \$39,999
- Between \$40,000 and \$44,999
- \$45,000 or above
- I am paid an hourly wage (use the space below to indicate your hourly wage)

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.